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A Descriptive Report of a Teacher Training Workshop at the School for International Training, August, 1973

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International Training

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A DESCRIPTIVE REPORT OF A TEACHER TRAINING
WORKSHOP AT THE SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL
TRAINING, AUGUST, 1973

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the require-
ments for the Master of Arts in Teaching degree
at the School for International Training,
Brattleboro, Vermont.

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This report by Peter M. Boggs is accepted in its present form.

Date Jan 25, 1974

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✓ Acknowledgements:

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INTRODUCTION

In August, 1973, a workshop for teachers of English as a second language was held on the campus of The School for International Training.

In this paper I expect to describe the planning for the workshop, the workshop itself, and recommendations for future efforts. This description will concentrate primarily on the goals of the workshop, how they were arrived at, how they were realized in terms of workshop activities, and how satisfactory the goals proved to be.

PLANNING FOR THE WORKSHOP

Some of the objectives of the workshop were expressed in the pre-workshop publicity which was sent to Experiment national offices and interested persons including members of the national organization for Teachers of English as a second language. For example, Tom Todd stated in his letter of September 20, 1972, to appropriate Experiment personnel that various techniques, especially Situational Reinforcement, Silent way, Microwave, and cognitive approaches, would be used as a basis for the seminar. He further stated that the organizers were calling it a "working seminar," because it would be primarily practical, and that they expected all participants to take an active role in experimenting with various techniques and discussing their values and practicality. Mr. Todd emphasized that the schedule would remain flexible and that interests of the participants would be explored and included in the program.

So, with this initial letter, some of the basic aims of the seminar were communicated to potential participants.

The second letter was written by Janet Bing and sent to anyone expressing an interest in the workshop. It further emphasized that the workshop was primarily for experienced teachers and was to be essentially devoted to exploring various methods. The letter stressed the practical rather than theoretical nature of the seminar stating that participants

would be asked to study a language they did not speak and teach demonstration classes. Ms. Bing also added that there would be time for participants to explore various parts of southern Vermont and to become acquainted with roommates and students in other programs. The informality of the atmosphere at SIT was mentioned as was the non-luxuriousness of the dorms.

Attached to this information letter was an application form which asked what methods the applicant was familiar with, how much experience he had, and what expectations he had for the workshop.

The third and final letter to the workshop participants was written by Janet Bing in June, 1973, after the applications had been processed and most of the participants had been selected. The letter was devoted mainly to practical information and suggestions concerning clothing, linen service, location, and description of SIT, etc.; and there was mention of a Montreal trip which was to be offered to students on the weekend of August 17. In addition, Ms. Bing briefly described the other participants, the staff of the workshop, and mentioned three of the guest speakers.

The general tone of the workshop was set by Tom Todd and Janet Bing before the actual planning began. The approach would be practical rather than theoretical and the participants themselves would be expected to take an active role in exploring various methodologies of language teaching. A

degree of flexibility would enable the participants to determine some of the areas of investigation.

The next step in organizing the workshop was the selection of the staff, which rested solely with Janet Bing. Each member was carefully selected with certain definite considerations in mind:

1. The quality of his or her teaching.

This is of such obvious importance that it need not be discussed fully. As simple as this requirement is to state, however, quality of teaching is very difficult to judge objectively. Ms. Bing had seen all the teachers who would demonstrate teaching methods and was satisfied that they were good teachers.

2. Diversity of methodologies

Because an important goal of the workshop was to present a number of different methods of teaching, it was necessary to have a staff willing and able to fulfill this goal. For example, Manju Hertzig had specialized in the Silent Way for two years, Bill Harshbarger could ably demonstrate various audio-lingual techniques, and Lou Spaventa had had considerable exposure to the Microwave methodology.

3. Second language capability

It had been decided that an important way of presenting the various methodologies was through real demonstrations in languages not known by the learners, and therefore it was important that the demonstrating teachers have strong second languages in which to demonstrate. Manju had Hindi, Bill

had Spanish, and Lou had Korean.

4. Personality compatibility and variety

Ms. Bing felt that members of the staff should be able to work together easily and effectively. They should have the desire and ability to communicate with each other and with the participants. She also sought to have a variety of personality types so that there would be a likelihood that each participant might be compatible with at least one staff member.

5. Availability

This obvious characteristic is perhaps the most important, or rather, the most limiting. Ms. Bing strongly felt that the staff should be available for the planning of the workshop; she was limited therefore, to those people on campus or in the immediate vicinity. Another factor considered was that the low salary of \$135 per week was not going to lure any teacher away from other employment; so only teachers who were free or unemployed at the time of the workshop were considered.

In retrospect, Ms. Bing considers that a sense of humor be a major requirement for staff members of such a teacher training workshop.

With these criteria in mind, Ms. Bing chose Manju Hertzig, Bill Harshbarger, Judy Glass, Lou Spaventa, and Peter Boggs to assist her, and requested that Monique Lemaitre, another MAT staff member, participate in the seminar on a part-time basis.

In May, 1973, Ms. Bing called a series of preliminary staff meetings.¹ At the first meeting it was determined that a good way to begin thinking about and planning the August workshop was for each staff member to draw up a list of what he considered to be the most important goals for the workshop. At the second meeting, each staff member presented his list of goals and the relative merits of each stated goal were discussed.

The expectations of the participants as expressed by them on their applications were also examined carefully. The most commonly expressed expectation was that an exposure to and exploration of new methods and techniques of language teaching be offered. The second most common expectation was that an exchange of ideas should occur. The third most common expectation was that something should be learned about people and the United States.

Through a process of combination, compromise, selection and refinement, six goals were formulated and agreed upon to be the goals of the August workshop. They are as follows:

1. Present methods
2. Share ideas
3. Get the participants in the classrooms
4. Provide opportunities for social encounter
5. Provide experience as a language learner
6. Provide a variety of activities and remain flexible

Each goal was further developed so that all staff members understood exactly what they were striving for. Then ideas were discussed for implementing each goal.

1. Note that Lou Spaventa and Peter Boggs did not join the workshop staff until July.

PRESENT METHODS

It was the intention of the staff that during the first two weeks, a number of methods be introduced through demonstration classes, reinforced by the observation of video-tapes and practiced in a peer-teaching group or in an actual English class.

In order to demonstrate the methods in a realistic situation, each participant in the workshop was assigned to study a language which he didn't know. Thus his first exposure to a new method was to be a student.

Originally it was assumed that each of the demonstrating teachers would introduce each of the methods in his language class (Hindi, Spanish, and Korean); For example, Manju would teach hindi to her class using the Silent way the first day, microwave techniques the second day, audio-visual dialogue the third day, etc. After a fair amount of anxiety on the part of the three demonstrating teachers, it occurred to them that each had a different particular specialty, Manju had had much experience with the Silent way, Lou had learned Korean through the microwave technique, and Bill was thoroughly familiar with several of the audio-lingual variations. Therefore, rather than each teacher demonstrating unfamiliar techniques, it was decided that he would be responsible primarily for his specialty. In one simple alteration, the quality of the teaching was improved and the work load and anxiety of the teachers were alleviated. The entire staff agree that in these demonstration classes, the emphasis should

be on the techniques and not on learning the languages.

The morning following each demonstration a video-tape was to be shown in the auditorium, further illustrating or demonstrating the technique. Thereby, if a participant were to miss an afternoon demonstration, he could still see the video-tape of the technique the next day. All the video-tapes were of actual English classes.

The peer teaching groups were designed to provide an opportunity to discuss the methods and to practice the techniques demonstrated on the preceding day. The staff considered this "peer-teaching" to be especially important in order for each participant to acquire experience in using the technique and get feedback from instructors and participants.

It was also hoped by the staff that many of the participants would want to observe actual English classes in the English Language Department.

SHARE IDEAS

The experience and background of the teachers was varied, to say the least. The staff hoped to facilitate an exchange of ideas so that this valuable resource might be tapped. The peer teaching groups would provide a forum for discussion of the demonstrated methods and an opportunity to observe and help each other. A resource center was designated as the hub of the workshop, where the participants could read ESL texts, check announcements on the bulletin

board, drink coffee, and discuss ideas.

The staff also hoped to utilize the teachers as participants in panel discussions on various topics of interest.

The possibility of having the participants write and compile a group of "Bright Ideas" was considered.

GET THE PARTICIPANTS INTO THE CLASSROOM

Each peer teaching group was associated with one English teacher and his English class in the English Language Office. The staff hoped that the participants would observe these classes and through arrangements with the teachers, teach the classes by using the methods which were being introduced. This would enable them to have a more valid reaction to a real experience.

Lou Spaventa, a member of the workshop staff, taught an English class each morning, which was also open to observation by the workshop participants.

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL ENCOUNTER

This follows naturally from the philosophy of the Experiment and the natural predilection of the members of the workshop staff. It is also fun. If the participants get to know each other and the staff, they will have gained something valuable.

The orientation party on the first night was to facilitate this goal, along with the international dinner, excursions, and informal chatter in the resource room during off hours.

PROVIDE EXPERIENCE AS A LANGUAGE LEARNER

One tends to forget the frustrations of learning a second language and needs to be reminded from time to time. As was mentioned before, in order to thoroughly evaluate a method of teaching, one should examine it from the point of view of the learner. To serve both of these ends, each participant was assigned to a class studying a language he did not know: Hindi, Spanish or Korean.

PROVIDE A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES AND REMAIN FLEXIBLE IN ORDER TO ACCOMMODATE SUGGESTIONS BY THE PARTICIPANTS

This is a catch-all objective which was to answer specific requests from participants, introduce alternative activities which might encourage language learning and offer a variation in the daily schedule. The staff hoped that people might choose to attend those activities which were attractive to them and feel free to miss those which were of little interest or relevance.

As the beginning of the workshop approached, the schedule was planned in more detail, and specific assignments were made.

Judy Glass was to prepare an orientation packet, welcoming the participants and giving them a general description of the program including a statement of the objectives for the workshop. Ms. Bing wrote a three page paper which Judy was to rewrite and include in the orientation literature.

In her paper Ms. Bing clearly explained how the various methods were to be presented. In addition to lucid descriptions of the procedures, she enumerated the assumptions

behind them. Each goal for the workshop except "Provide opportunities for social encounter" was also included in the paper.*

* A complete copy of Ms. Bing's paper is in the appendix.

THE WORKSHOP

On Sunday, August 5, 1973, the participants for the workshop for Teachers of English as a Second Language arrived at SIT. There were 26 participants from 12 different countries: 4 Germans, 4 French, 6 Latin American and Spanish, 2 Italians, 5 Americans, 1 Pakistani, 1 Dane, 1 Swede, 1 Luxembourger, and 1 Malaysian. Five of the participants were relatively inexperienced teachers also participating in the Teacher Ambassador Program with an average age of 26.6 years. The other 21 teachers ranged in age from 20 - 50 years old with an average age of 32.7 years. Their backgrounds were varied, some having taught in elementary schools, others in high schools, and a few at universities and to adults.

Upon arrival, the teachers received an orientation packet with their rooming assignment, information about fees, linen, meals, etc., and most important, Judy Glass' letter outlining the program of the workshop. Although Judy includes many of the procedures and objectives in this letter of welcome, it is poorly written and unorganized.* Unfortunately this opportunity to clarify the goals and the reasoning behind them was missed and the workshop got off to a confused start. In part 3 of this IPP, I will devote some attention to this missed opportunity.

* A complete copy of Judy's letter is in the appendix.

I would like to organize my discussion of the activities in the workshop and their evaluation, in such a way as to be more useful and accessible to the reader. Therefore, rather than adhering to the order in which they were presented, I will group the activities according to the goals they were intended to fulfill. (To see the order of presentation, see the schedules in the appendix.)

Written evaluations of the workshop were submitted by seventeen of the participants following the first week and by twenty participants at the end of the final week. After each activity, I will write the raw data of this participant evaluation. The scale is as follows:

- 1 - did not attend
- 5 - very valuable
- 4 - interesting
- 3 - not helpful
- 2 - worthless to me

A number in parentheses, e.g. (9), signifies the number of people recording the given response. ((8) - 4 means that eight people found an activity interesting.)

PRESENT METHODS

Ray Clark's Overview Lecture	(5)-1		(10)-4	(6)-5
<u>Illustrations</u>				
1 - Silent way Demonstration		(1)-3	(9)-4	(10)-5
2 - Microwave Demonstration	(7)-2	(7)-3	(5)-4	(2)-5
3 - Audio-Visual Narrative	(5)-1	(5)-3	(6)-4	
4 - Audio-Visual Dialogue	(3)-1	(7)-3	(10)-4	(1)-5
5 - Situational Reinforcement		(5)-3	(6)-4	
6 - Letter Operation	(5)-1	(7)-3	(3)-4	(9)-5

Demonstrations (Cont'd)

English - Popcorn operation	(1)-1	(1)-2	(4)-3	(5)-4	(2)-5
Hindian - Lipson Squares	(5)-1			(5)-4	(6)-5
Video Tapes	(5)-1	(1)-2	(9)-3	(4)-4	(2)-5
Peer Teaching		(2)-2	(7)-3	(9)-4	(3)-5
Practice Teaching	(8)-1		(1)-3	(5)-4	(1)-5
Observation of English Class	(1)-1		(3)-3	(9)-4	(3)-5
Hindi Class	(8)-1			(2)-4	(6)-5
Hindi Class	(9)-1	(2)-2	(2)-3	(3)-4	
English Class	(2)-1	(1)-2	(4)-3	(9)-4	

On the first day of the workshop, Mr. Raymond Clark delivered a lecture which gave the participants an overview of the methods which would be presented.

During the first two weeks of the workshop a number of ESL methods were introduced from three different points of view: demonstrations, video-tapes, and peer teaching. These various methods were discussed, practiced and discussed some more. Because each language class used different methods, had a different teacher and studied a different language, I will discuss them separately.

Mangu's Silent way demonstration and class in Hindi was an unqualified success. Several people including two of the more skeptical workshoppers were so impressed with the Silent way as an effective departure from traditional approaches to teaching that they planned to attend seminars in the Silent

way with Caleb Gattegno in New York City. There was also a good deal of admiration for Manju's teaching and surprise at the amount of Hindi learned in only a few hours.

The microwave demonstration and Korean class, on the other hand, was not well received at all. A lack of interest in learning Korean on the part of the class members, severe heat, and perhaps the lack of novelty for most workshop members combined to make for a disastrous demonstration, and after the first meeting on Tuesday, the class met only two or three more times. The fact that Lou taught for the English Department in the mornings and therefore had less contact with the workshop participants might have also affected the performance of the class.

The Spanish class was taught through an eclectic approach. Four methods were introduced: Situational Reinforcement, Audio-Visual Narrative, Audio-Visual Dialogue, demonstrated by Bill Marshbarger, and a letter operation, demonstrated by Judy Glass. These methods were fairly well liked, especially by the less experienced teachers. But they were not radical departures from traditional audio-lingual, and therefore, did not excite many of the participants. Two or three of the participants were outraged that Judy Glass was not fluent in Spanish, but gave a demonstration anyway. In my opinion the procedure of an operation was being demonstrated, not Judy's ability in Spanish. It can be distracting though, if someone is making fundamental grammatical errors while teaching a language.

In addition to these methods presented in the three language classes, two more demonstrations were given. Bill Dant of the Foreign Language Office demonstrated an operation in English. The procedure of making popcorn, however, was too long and complicated to be effective in a language lesson. Jan Bing also demonstrated a Lipson square in Persian. It was well liked, as indicated by the evaluation results.

Almost every morning during the first two weeks, a video-tape of an English class was shown in the auditorium. The method used on the tape was the same as the one which had been demonstrated on the previous day. Since the English students on the tapes were not beginners, our workshop participants were given the opportunity of seeing the method used with intermediate and advanced students (in addition to the initial demonstration which was with beginners.)

The idea of the video-tapes seems to be a good one, but in actual practice, it is deadly dull. Not to mention the ubiquitous mechanical difficulties, the tapes always look and sound uninspiring. The ratings reflect this opinion as only six reactions were favorable and fifteen people either did not attend the sessions or found them of little help. Given the effort involved in taping the classes and keeping the machine running properly, I feel that it is hardly worth doing for such a mediocre response.

Another important approach to the investigation of the methods was the peer teaching. Originally the plan was that

each person in the group would practice a particular method for a few minutes the day following the presentation of this method. However, particularly as the workshop progressed, these sessions turned more into discussion groups. Sometimes the participants practiced the methods, but often they wanted to discuss an aspect of a method, teaching in general, or a specific grammatical point. Unfortunately, these peer teaching groups occasionally turned into gripe sessions with certain individuals expressing dissatisfaction with one thing or another. (This will be discussed later on in the paper.) In spite of the inconsistent performance of at least two out of three of the peer teaching groups (the peer teaching group of Janet Bing and Judy Glass seemed to concentrate effectively on practicing the methods), the groups provided a useful forum for talking about topics of interest to the participants.

Observation of English classes was an apparently successful approach with twelve positive responses and four negative ones. Fifteen participants observed a total of 49 classes. Lou Spaventa's class usually had three or four people a day observing and Brent Mosher's, Phil Stantial's and Lee Gillespie's classes had regular visitors. Since a number of participants were intrigued by the Silent way, Jack Millett's class was also observed quite often because he was using the Silent way to teach advanced students.

The presentation of methods, which was perhaps the main emphasis of the workshop, met with a mixed evaluation. The

less experienced teachers were very appreciative of most of the activities, while the more sophisticated teachers, particularly from France and Germany, were more familiar with the audio lingual approach and wanted something different and more applicable to advanced classes.

SHARE IDEAS

Most of the activities of the workshop included some time for discussion and the sharing of opinions. Peer teaching groups were especially well suited for this and it is unfortunate that more control was not exercised in moving this expression of ideas in a more positive direction. The evening workshops arranged by Judy Glass often required the participants to share their experiences or knowledge with others, but because Judy devoted an entire IPP to these workshops, I will not include them in my paper.

Almost every free moment, two or three people could be found in the Resource Center talking about one aspect of teaching or another. In fact, during the entire three weeks, the staff and participants succeeded in creating a human, relaxed atmosphere in which people could easily express themselves without trepidation.

GET THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE CLASSROOM

After a fair amount of trouble in arranging with the English department for opportunities to practice teach on

real classes, only seven workshop participants actually did practice teach. Six of the seven people thought it was beneficial, but the small number who took advantage of this opportunity hardly justify the effort in coordinating such a program. Perhaps the staff did not encourage the participants enough, but when asked to practice teach, some of the more outspoken participants said that they teach ten months out of the year and refused to teach during their "vacation."

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR
SOCIAL ENCOUNTER

International dinner	(1)-1	(1)-3	(3)-4	(11)-5
Windham theater trip	(8)-1	(1)-2	(5)-4	(2)-5
Montreal trip	(12)-1		(1)-4	(4)-5
Party in Gordon Boyce's* basement				
Folk dancing in auditorium*				
Trip to Sturbridge Village*				
Resource room as lounge*				

* these items were not on the evaluation and therefore no scores are available.

Those activities which were evaluated were very well liked. However, the Windham theater trip and the Montreal trip were only taken advantage of by a few of the workshop participants.

Many of the evaluations included expressions of dissatisfaction with the lack of available transportation.

most of the participants were used to coming and going as they pleased, and felt stranded on the SII campus. However, the staff made a real effort to provide social activities for the participants and offered their services as chauffeurs to alleviate the transportation problem.

PROVIDE EXPERIENCE AS A LANGUAGE LEARNER

This has already been discussed. See Presentation of Methods: Hindi class, Korean class and Spanish class.

PROVIDE A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES AND REMAIN FLEXIBLE

Theater games #1	(2)-1	(2)-2	(3)-3	(5)-4	(9)-5
Theater games #2	(8)-1	(1)-2	(1)-3	(4)-4	(2)-5
English Phonology and Grammar	(5)-1		(6)-3	(4)-4	(1)-5
Use of film in ESL Classroom	(2)-1		(2)-3	(9)-4	(3)-5
Dick Yorky - Adapting Materials	(5)-1		(1)-3	(8)-4	(3)-5
J. Berwald - Individualization	(3)-1	(5)-2		(6)-4	(2)-5
SRA Reading Lab	(3)-1		(2)-3	(9)-4	(2)-5
Values Clarification Exercise	(5)-1		(1)-3	(9)-4	(1)-5
Teaching writing - Monique Lemaitre, Lou Spaventa, Manjula Bhaskaran	(2)-1	(1)-2	(2)-3	(7)-4	(4)-5
Resource Center	(3)-1		(3)-3	(10)-4	(5)-5
John Rassias Audio Lingual			(6)-3	(7)-4	(8)-5
Judy Glass Evening workshops					
Movies:					
"What if the Dream Comes True"	(3)-1		(1)-3	(10)-4	(1)-5
"The Chair"*					
"History of Jazz"*					

* not included on the evaluations

The mere length of the list of activities which fall under this heading indicate that there was a good deal of variety. The evening workshops, which are not included in this paper, went even further toward offering variety and were specifically aimed at being responsive to the desires of the participants.

The movies that were shown were liked very much by the participants and staff, but there were not enough of them. I feel certain movies owned by SII should be available to every group studying here. For example, the Black History Series narrated by Bill Cosby would have been very enlightening and greatly appreciated by the foreign participants.

Almost every activity of the final week was provided in response to participant requests, expressed on the application forms and during the workshop.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The way the goals of the workshop were handled has some significance. Since Judy missed the chance to present and explain the goals right in the beginning with her orientation packet, the participants were forced to guess why the staff was doing things the way they were. They could not be expected to know in advance our objectives and how we were planning to reach them. Therefore, especially during the second week of the workshop, people began to complain and wonder why they were studying foreign languages, why they were being asked to teach in the peer teaching groups and in English classes, why there were so few lectures, etc. At this point it was decided that the participants be read a list of the six goals and then discuss whether or not the goals had been met. This was done in Manju's and Peter's group, and the participants were forced to admit that the goals of the staff were indeed being met.

Unfortunately, the goals of the staff may have been totally different from the goals of the teachers.

By the end of the second week it was probably too late to defend the assumptions on which the goals were based or the goals themselves, as some people had already decided that the workshop had little to offer them.

Let me add here that those people highly critical of the program were very few in number, but they were also very vocal. The shadow they cast on the workshop could have

been avoided, and this will be discussed in the concluding section of the IPP.

Some of the problems encountered in the workshop can easily be avoided in future efforts of this kind. The secret is simply that the staff and participants must reach agreement on the goals for the workshop before the actual program begins.

Before arriving the participants will have stated their expectations on the application forms; but these statements are inevitably so vague and brief and general that they prove unhelpful as an indication of what the participants think or want. On written applications one is likely to express himself in "high blown phrases" and how he wishes he was. Therefore after the participants arrive a thorough investigation must be made into their assumptions and goals.

On the morning of the first day the workshop participants should be divided among several small discussion groups with one staff member presiding over each group. This staff member should begin his investigation by asking questions such as the following:

- Are you a good teacher?
- Why do you think you are or aren't?
- How do you see the role of the teacher?
- Is he the giver of knowledge?
- Is he a catalyst or facilitator?
- Is he a "buddy" to the students?
- Is he an entertainer, a taskmaster, a model of excellency, the center of attention?
- How about the role of the student?
- Does he teach himself or does the teacher "teach" him?
- Is he a blank sheet on which the teacher writes?
- Is he assumed to know nothing or a great deal?

How do you think a person learns a language?
What are your goals and expectations of this
workshop?

Why do you think they are important?

Do you consider yourself to be a basket waiting
to be filled to the brim with tricks?

If you were given a bagful of tricks, how would
it help you to be a better teacher?

Once these questions and others have been asked, answered, and thoroughly discussed by the participants, then there's something to work with; the staff knows something about the participants and what they are after. This doesn't mean that they are given exactly what they ask for - not at all. In fact, before the participants even arrive, the staff has a good idea of what it has to offer them. Now the task is to get everyone's goals together. One cannot assume that what they ask for is what they need, just as one cannot assume that just because a person is used to learning by listening to lectures, that this is the best way to learn. What can safely be assumed is that people do not automatically and happily accept what is offered them. Everyone has to get on the same wave length first. This means listening to their ideas, challenging them and then convincing them to operate with certain assumptions for awhile. (One conceivable argument is that since there are a variety of goals for this workshop, given the amount of time and resources, some are going to have to be consolidated, some disregarded and only a few adopted.)

I think that it is essential for the staff and participants to agree on a set of goals. To ask the participants to

evaluate the workshop according to a set of goals they have not agreed to seems a waste of energy. Unless and until the goals of the staff and the goals of the participants are similar, there is no basis for proceeding with the program.

An example of how one should proceed in getting together on one or two of the goals follows:

One should explore people's assumptions about how learning takes place by asking certain questions.

How do people learn to do things?

Why do you think this?

Are there things which you've learned to do better or more easily than others?

Do you account for this difference?

Then one should present an organized outline on various ways of learning to perform a task - memorizing a procedure, listening to a lecture, reading instructions, watching someone do it, etc. Then challenge each of these or discuss the limitations of each. After all of the preliminary preparation, one is ready to state his preference for experiential learning, and discuss the advantages of this approach. How else can a person learn to ride a bicycle, to swim, to read, to write, to teach - only by experiencing these things can one really learn to do them.

What you accomplish through such a discussion is an agreement in principle to the superiority or at least to the validity of experiential learning. Thereafter, people will be reluctant to question the relevance of peer teaching, practice teaching, or language study (to learn what a method feels like from the student's point of view.); nor will the staff hear statements

such as "I'm on vacation and don't feel like working."

My point is simply this: the staff cannot assume that the participants know what it is doing. If there is a good reason for conducting a seminar in a certain manner, why not state the reason and defend it so that the air is cleared and people are ready to work. Continued heel dragging or sporadic criticism surfacing at inopportune times is not a necessary element of a workshop of this sort. It must be dealt with before the actual presentations begin.

If everyone, staff and participants, tentatively agree on the goals and the philosophical assumptions of the workshop, then there is very little room to criticize these goals. There might be some question about our success at meeting these goals, but certainly not about the goals themselves.