


1973

Summer Student Teaching at S.I.T.: A Subjective Account

Susan Jill Garner

School for International Training

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SUMMER STUDENT TEACHING AT S.I.T.:

A SUBJECTIVE ACCOUNT

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

August 31, 1973

This report by Susan J. Garner is accepted in its present form.

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INTRODUCTION

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During most of the year at S.I.T., I had expected that I would do my summer student teaching in the city of Quebec, in Canada. I had requested this with a definite purpose in mind: while completing my summer student teaching requirement in English as a second language, I wished to continue my study of French, which I had started at S.I.T. during the fall of 1972. I was even prepared to write a paper on the experience and was rather excited at the prospect of finally learning to speak French.

This was not to be, however. After three months of trying to get a reply about a position teaching English to French speakers for the Experiment in International Living in Canada, I started looking for something else. The M.A.T. department had told me that if I couldn't get anything else, I could always teach in the summer program for international students of English at S.I.T. As summer drew closer, nothing came up, so I was hired by the English Language Office to teach a three-week English course to Japanese students. As might be understood, I came to the job with a different frame of mind than I would have had in Canada. This was now a job, not an adventure.

When I started, I was very dismayed at what I first perceived as sloppy organization where I was to work: I couldn't know who my students were nor what level of class I would have until a half-hour before the first class was to begin, nor were there

any particular texts that were used that I could plan from. It seemed, that day, an impossible task that would have to be done on a catch-as-catch-can basis. I would somehow have to get to know my students and familiarize myself with all the materials appropriate to their level (after finding out what these materials were) all in one afternoon. As it usually happens, though, things were not all as bad as they initially seemed. I decided to do the best I could with whatever level of familiarity with materials I had reached, and let it go at that. "One step at a time," in other words.

I believe we (all five teachers of the Japanese group) were fortunate to have the coordinator we did, since he impressed me as being the most organized and accessible person in the English department. He came to see my class twice, offered helpful suggestions, and gave me a copy of his comments in written form. This last was much appreciated. He was available to discuss classes (or anything else) with, yet did not ever try to impose any particular method as "the better way", always respecting my views as a professional. I also got a lot of help from the supervision given to me by one of the M.A.T. staff, Ray Clark. Although because of a scheduling mix-up he was only able to visit my class once, I found our discussion of that class and my students to be very helpful and practical, and I used several of his suggestions in subsequent classes.

The philosophy of teaching that I have developed over the last five years is a very personal one. As I have mentioned above, I do not believe that materials or techniques per se are what makes an effective teacher. The best text can be ruined by an uncaring, boring teacher, and even the most interesting and dynamic technique can be inappropriately or ineffectively used. What I believe does make a difference is the teacher's attitude toward the students in his/her class. Although it may perhaps sound somewhat simplistic, I believe the teacher must actively demonstrate to his/her students that he cares about them as persons and realizes that they are persons, not just learning machines. This involves many things: recognition of physical abilities, personalities, personal problems or triumphs, needs, desires, etc. He must also demonstrate very clearly to the student that he cares very deeply what, how, why, and if the student learns. If the student believes the teacher "couldn't care less" what or whether he is learning, he is likely to adopt that very same attitude. Learning must be important, to both student and teacher, or little may take place.

The English Language Office had already given me somewhat of a shock, as noted above. (The inherent assumption there was probably something like "If the place is this disorganized, they can't really be that serious about teaching.") Of course that was a very wrong assumption. ~~This may even be a prime~~ example of the Peter Principle; there are no cleared desks at E.L.O.! They are all concerned professionals whom I enjoyed

working with. The teachers are always ready to help, cheerful, and though I believe they take teaching seriously, they have a great sense of humor and seem to know when a joke is needed.

~~I enjoyed being around them and was glad to have them there~~ when I was planning. There seemed to be a closeness among them that I never suspected before joining the staff, but was immediately drawn into as soon as I began to teach there.

My students, at first glance, appeared pretty much alike. The three non-Japanese, of course, did stand out from the rest from the very beginning, but gradually they all began to differentiate themselves in my mind as I got more acquainted with them.

Akiko was a beautiful young girl with long graceful hands, a pleasing personality, and a quiet and humble manner. She could easily have been a leader since she had a sort of quiet self-confidence too. Her English had been well learned, and she had the best pronunciation of all the students in the class. She was always willing to participate and help out other students.

Atsuo, a man of about thirty years old, continually surprised me. An extremely quiet person, he gave the impression of being a "Casper Milquetoast" type. He even said once that his life was dull and boring, and he didn't expect that it would ever be otherwise since he lacked ability (in general). It was said in a very matter-of-fact way, so possibly it should not have occurred to me as it did that he probably did not have opinions

on anything else, either. He most certainly did! It was rather difficult to get him to discuss anything, but when he did, his dry sense of humor and wit really came out. He could argue vehemently for his point of view when necessary. He, like several others in the class, was an English teacher.

Francesco was my one Italian student. His mother was American, and he had relatives in Boston, but his English left a lot to be desired. He was just finished (or finishing) with high school in Italy (a lyceum) and wanted to come to the United States to study at a university. Francesco was young, good-looking, very likable and eager to please--what I call a "huggy-bear". It was a joy to have him in class, when he came. That was the one thing that irritated me about him: he often didn't make it to class in the morning because he had slept late. About mid-way through the course he and Yoko got a little romance going, but even so, he didn't make it to class any more often.

Keiko was also a young student, very quiet like her Japanese classmates. A thoughtful, introspective girl, and very intelligent. The most important people in her life were her parents, she said, because they allowed her to go her own way and did not confine her to the traditional Japanese woman's role. She was very likable, and frequently came to talk with me between and after classes.

Roland, one of the two Frenchmen, was one of my two problem students. He was essentially a nice enough person when he was able to overlook the fact that he was French, but he was very disdainful about everything that wasn't French when he couldn't.

I felt it was important to be patient with him, and to go out of my way to be firm but pleasant. Sure enough, this treatment eventually worked and he more or less stopped bad-mouthing everything. He was a rather bad influence on Yves, who was younger and more impressionable. The two reminded me somewhat of American fraternity types, who have to keep up the "macho" image in front of each other, but alone are just normal people.

Shingo, a dentist and a somewhat older man although he did not look it, might secretly be the Japanese Superman. He is a quiet, mild-mannered, and pleasant person, and extremely polite. He is also a fifth-degree black belt in karate, which he demonstrated for the school in the Japanese farewell presentation. His English was probably the second-best in the class. It was interesting to me that karate was the most important thing in his life. Apparently it had changed his life for the better, and given him a new outlook on things. He has his own karate school, and enjoys teaching there.

Takeshi, so painfully shy that practically every sentence contained a "perhaps" or a "maybe", and with a pronounced stutter, really was a bit of a "Casper Milquetoast". But even he opened up after a while. It was he, for instance,

who brought up the subject of wife-swapping during the discussion on the last day of class, and he who later that morning at Howard Johnson's wanted to know about the custom of kissing in the United States. He was another person whom I felt it was important to be patient with. I thought his stuttering might get a little better if he was not pressured, but I don't think it ever did.

Yoko was the wholesome, cute, sweet-sixteen type, and could even have been mistaken for a Japanese-American teenager as long as she didn't speak (she had an awful accent). She was bright and hard-working, but her mind had a tendency to wander. It was hard to get her to concentrate, perhaps because she was homesick. She even came up to me one day and apologized for being so distracted, but said that she was very homesick and felt very sad. She could often be seen around campus walking hand-in-hand with Francesco, all of which reinforced the "cute" image I had of her.

Yoshiko was constantly ill and missing from class. I think much of this was psychological in origin, because she was an extremely nervous person, and almost flinched when she was called on to respond in class. She giggled a lot, but it was more from nervousness than from hilarity. I felt a bit sorry for her--she was the one person I could do nothing for; I noticed little or no change in her between the first day of class and the last.

Yves, the other Frenchman, was the student who changed the most, I think. The first day he came, he practically refused to open his mouth except to speak French. He had a false bravado, "superior" attitude, and every other sentence was punctuated with "Merde!" This outer crust gradually melted away, leaving a rather nice young man. With both him and the other Frenchman, I played it very seriously in an effort to make them deal with me on that level. It worked! It made me so happy when Yves finally spoke English to me for a whole evening, of his own accord. I learned a lot from him, too, about dealing with students like him. While in the beginning I had some hostile feelings toward him, my conscious efforts to see him as a person and not a disruptive influence helped to change my feelings toward him so that we could work together.

ACCOUNT OF THE CLASSES

DAY ONE--THURSDAY

On the first day I followed a suggestion of Dave Rein, which was to give each student a copy of a letter introducing myself and telling a little about my background. Each student read it to himself, and then there was a short question period. This was my first exposure to the Japanese students' shyness and reluctance to initiate response. I found out then that, within the classroom situation, it was going to be necessary to prompt each person in some way. If a yes-no type question were asked to the class in general, I would usually get only lowered eyes and perhaps an occasional silent nod of the head. If an information question were thrown out to the class as a whole, most students would study every crack or mark on the ceiling or floor rather than volunteer an answer. I say most students, because this was not true of the Italian student in my class, nor of the two French students who would come the next day. Rather it was a bit the opposite with them: in order to keep them from monopolizing the class, it was sometimes necessary to avoid calling on them to respond. On that first day, however, there were only eight Japanese and one Italian student and the problem was to get any of them to speak. To do this, the next part of the lesson was for each student to write a similar letter to me, telling me about himself and his background, and then for each to read his letter to the class. Since they had so much trouble responding spontaneously

to an unstructured situation, I decided to inject a little structure into the exercise and asked them to remember basic "vital statistics" about each classmate. After each person finished, then, I rapidly asked such questions as "What is his/her occupation?", "What city does X come from?", "How old is he/she?", etc. This finally broke the ice. They seemed to open up a little and began to participate more. Thus I learned that they needed at least some structure. In the short time remaining, we discussed (I explained, mostly) a handout on "Things to Do in and Around SIT".

DAY TWO--FRIDAY

I feel that a person must take a certain amount of responsibility for his own learning and therefore that students should have some say in the planning of a course. So, on the first full day of class, I indicated we should "get down to business" by discussing what they, the students, wanted to get out of the class. Remembering the need for structure, I decided that specific questions would bring more specific answers, and asked the following: 1) "What is your goal for this course?" and 2) "If you could learn one thing well, what would it be?" There followed a discussion of what a goal is. (I wondered what this said about Japanese and Italian cultures, but decided that perhaps I was jumping to conclusions.) The result of this exercise, predictably from what came out of yesterday's personal history letters, was that 1) they wished to be able

to converse better in English, and 2) they wished to make friends with people of many different nationalities. (I seemed to have a hard time making them stick to the topic in this exercise, and it was not the last time it happened!) In a word, they were expecting Culture. In retrospect, I should've attached much more importance to this from the very beginning.

I felt there ought to be continuity and structure in the course, with at least some review grammar along with conversation and pronunciation. Since they really knew grammar on a fairly advanced level, it would be necessary only to review briefly the basics, such as sentence patterns, tenses, etc. I am afraid I failed in the continuity/structure department, however, since I didn't map out a sequence before the start of the course, and I probably wouldn't have stuck to it even if I had. The end result was that I started out this second day of class with oral drills on the various sentence patterns with "be" and thereafter did particular grammar points as they were indicated by difficulties or confusion in class or in conversations with the students.

To wind up the morning class (not including lab) on a conversational note, I divided the class into pairs and had them think of an object and describe it to their partner, who had to guess what it was. As an example, I had a student try to describe something while I drew it from his description on the board. Needless to say, I played dumb in an effort to elicit precision. It had its desired effect, and the class buzzed with varied conversation and questions

for the next twenty minutes, when we went to lab.

Lab turned out to be a not-quite-total disaster that morning, since it seems that no matter how much one familiarizes oneself with operating procedures, there is always some crucial aspect that somehow got left out of the instructions and, of course, the lab technician is invariably elsewhere. Luckily for us all, however, there were experienced and available teachers right across the hall. We started with the first lessons of the two books we would be using, one on pronunciation and one on utterance-response sentence patterns.

In the afternoon, we took a tour of the campus grounds, went into some of the buildings, and met most of the people they would be dealing with. When we returned we did a listening comprehension exercise followed by questions by each student to the rest; then the two Frenchmen who were to have joined the class right after lunch finally arrived and we played a name-profession game. ("My name is Mary and I'm a muscle-builder. I'd like to introduce you to some of my friends ", etc.) The two Frenchmen were reluctant to participate, but I insisted from the very beginning that they participate like the rest. Throughout the three weeks I had problems with them, but I believe this first encounter did a lot to set down standards and promote understanding of what I expected of them.

DAY THREE--MONDAY

This morning we started out with an exercise which I knew would be difficult for them: the use of articles. It seems that no matter how well a Japanese student learns English, he will still have some uncertainty over how to use "a", "an", and "the". Of course, it was simple for the three non-Japanese. We spent most of the morning on a one-page dittoed passage with blanks in front of all the nouns. It was much too abstract, and I quickly realized that I had been careless in my choice of an exercise. I should have started with a structured, limited choice exercise and progressed to a less structured, more abstract one--but I did just the opposite. I believe this had the effect of giving them a sense of failure from the beginning, which is something I try to work against! If it were possible to accomplish only one thing in class, I would try to bring out the confidence that I know all students have.

In preparation for the hour in lab, I used the first utterance-response pair from each section of that day's chapter as a dictation exercise. This was challenging for them, and later allowed them to get through the tape with greater ease and understanding. They used the dictation as a "cue-card" from then on in the lab hour every day.

The afternoon was taken up with some written/oral exercises which followed up the listening comprehension passage that had

been worked on the preceding Friday afternoon. We then tried making up dialogues to go with some pictures that I had brought. Total flop! I had ignored their need for structure, and, even worse, it was too contrived and unreal a situation to merit their interest and effort. (Moral: The needs of the student and class must be satisfied first if any real work is to be accomplished.)

DAY FOUR--TUESDAY

By this time it had become evident that the best time for drills was the morning, when the class was fresh and needed something lively. Thus we began the day with oral drills (simple past with questions and negatives) and then worked a bit more with articles. This time, of course, I was more careful about the type of exercise we did. Part of these exercises was done in writing on Xeroxed handouts, since there was no way to make them oral without making them too simple. We generally discussed such exercises after completing them, and I felt that it was good that they have something written to study from should they want to.

We continued using dictation of sample sentences from utterance-response drills as preparation for lab, then and almost every day. Lab itself, as the students became more accustomed to its workings and what they had to do, became smoother and more fruitful for them. Today I also read some listening comprehension

selections with multiple-choice questions after each one, and we discussed the answers later in class. This became a more or less regular feature in lab, when we had time for it. It ~~was challenging, and it was always different.~~

David Rein came to observe the afternoon class, and even the Frenchmen were on their good behavior. We repeated Friday's procedure of having the class listen to a passage and ask each other questions about it. I think the reason they liked this particular method so much was that not only were they being challenged, but they were challenging their classmates. (Student power at work?) We also started on something new: practice in summarizing using a story that was broken up into short passages. It was good pronunciation practice for the Japanese, who had much more trouble with r-l discrimination when reading aloud. The summarizing proved to be very challenging--especially since it was a guided summary where it was necessary to construct a sentence from an already existing skeleton form. We continued this type of summary from time to time throughout the course, and occasionally varied it by doing unstructured oral summaries.

The last twenty minutes of the day was great fun--I taught some tongue-twisters which everyone tried with great relish and many laughs.

DAY FIVE--WEDNESDAY

Having noticed many students' confusion on how to express the idea of requiring a certain amount of time to do something (i.e., "It takes an hour to do my homework."), we spent some time on a few drills using "it takes". We also did a general review drill (oral), and another set of oral drills contrasting the use of "some" and "any". Things seemed to be dragging a bit, so I thought that perhaps I would try switching times for activities; for example, we could try conversational activities in the morning. I felt that the activities themselves were basically sound, but the routine was becoming too fixed.

Lab continued to be a good solid hour of aural/oral practice. I occasionally went around to individual booths during the playback part of the hour to help individual students with a particular problem.

After lunch we continued the listening comprehension selection we had started the day before, with me asking questions of the class this time. I should have known they wouldn't like this as well since it does not involve as much challenge or participation as when they do the asking for each other.

For the last hour of class we talked about the most important person and the most important event in our lives. I don't think it was as successful as it might have been, because too many of the class were too young to have a sense of some person or event

which has had a great effect on them or even changed their lives. The three older students--the three Japanese men--each had something to say which obviously came "from the heart". The rest of the students were somewhat at a loss, though, this simply not being a part of their lives yet. My question-of-the-day to myself was "Half flop or half success?" and being essentially an optimist, I said, "Half success!"

DAY SIX--THURSDAY

Today being my birthday, I set out on my forty-minute commute to S.I.T. humming, all spiffied up in my best duds, and ready to teach what had to be the best and most exciting class to the most intelligent and marvelous students ever. (With an opening like that, who could lose?) And since prophecies tend to be self-fulfilling, it did even turn out to be one of my better days. This proved to me once again how much attitude affects a class.

Since I had a "surprise" in store for them in the afternoon, we used the morning to do what normally would have been done in the afternoon. This was also partially a result of yesterday's decision to vary the daily schedule. I told them that next week they would be going on a fact-finding trip to downtown Brattleboro, and that it might be useful to practice following and asking directions. We used a Xeroxed lesson from Mastering American English, and it proved to be just puzzle-like enough to

be fun. I had forgotten how much fun puzzles were, and decided to find other puzzle-like things to do. We then moved on to another activity--reading and summarizing "The Search", the story I mentioned before. The class seemed to enjoy the story, so I began to think of it as possibly a regular activity. They did need a lot of work in reading aloud and summaries, in both of which there was a lot of room for improvement. This time we tried writing the sentences, and it was much better that way. All the students could then work at their own pace, the pressure was off, and I could help individuals without slowing up the entire class. I also think that both of the morning's activities were good practice in logical, sequential thinking, which is important in any language.

Lab was a review of previous lessons.

The surprise I had was pre-empted by a surprise they had for me--they sat me down, sang "Happy Birthday", and presented me with a lovely gift (cologne) and a card signed by all. Only then could we leave for an afternoon of ice-cream and conversation at Howard Johnson's, which was my treat for them. And what a nice afternoon it was. Even though two other classes went at the same time, Harry Starkey got us all down there fairly quickly and we only had to wait some fifteen minutes for adjoining tables, even though thirty-five of us had descended on them in the middle of rush hour. I made certain that the two Frenchmen sat at different tables, and that there were equal

distributions of men and women. It was great! The Japanese were too polite to speak Japanese in front of the Frenchmen, who of course wouldn't have understood, and each Frenchman had to speak English since there were no other French speakers at his table. The result of this was a marvelous discussion about Japanese and French food and customs, and how bad the food was at S.I.T. I resolved to do at least one more afternoon or morning at HoJo's. It seemed to accomplish something I couldn't, and that was getting everyone talking freely to each other.

DAY SEVEN--FRIDAY

Ah, Friday at last! I was beginning to wonder if I would get through my first full week of teaching still in possession of any energy at all. I did, of course. All of us, both the students and I, were feeling the effects of an intensive week. In recognition of this, I spent the morning in "low-pressure" activities--work on reading comprehension, some/any contrasts, and crossword puzzles in simple English. The crossword puzzles were useful for those students who could work on their own, but for a couple of students (i.e., the Frenchmen) who were not able to work without supervision or other interaction, I'm afraid it was a flop. At this point I was becoming more and more distressed at the amount of directing I was doing in class. Feeling as I do that learning a language is participating in that language, I felt that many students were not "doing their

share" when they sat back and waited to be called on rather than volunteering their contribution. Something had to be done, but what that something was hadn't become evident yet.

After lunch, we briefly went over the homework that had been assigned the day before, then did some more work with written summaries. This still proved to be somewhat difficult, and all felt it was valuable to practice controlled sentence construction in this way. I had thought we could try play-reading this afternoon, and this impressed me as being a good time to have a little confrontation on the subject of responsibility for one's own learning and for participation in the class. I put the names of the characters (parts) on the board and since there were half as many characters as members in the class, they formed groups of two, each of which was to choose a part to read. As I had anticipated, there was a long, pregnant silence. We sat for a while, and finally I said that I wasn't about to do any more holding of hands, and that from then on, each student would have to be responsible for his/her own participation. We waited for a bit longer; more silence. Then finally one of the girls chose a part to read, and slowly, one by one, the rest of the class followed suit. Victory at last! A small doubt crept into my mind, however: was this heavy-handedness really only another, albeit disguised, form of autocracy?

DAY EIGHT--MONDAY

Monday came after a well deserved rest over the weekend--I was glad the English Language Office didn't have classes on Saturdays, and I thought we should all be ready and willing to start out fresh again. How I could've been so forgetful of my own behavior as a student of just a few months before, I don't know. As I should have known, Monday is not one of the better days of the week. I very quickly was reminded of this when half the class dragged in late. To wake things up a bit, then, we started with some oral drill. Then we continued work on "The Search" and the controlled summary exercises, and to keep a little pressure on, I put a time limit on each part of the exercise. Then we discussed the results.

Surprisingly, the next thing that happened was a pretty spontaneous discussion of current events. There were many questions asked of me about Watergate and other items in the news, and many students had an opinion to express. I thought I should make as much of it as I could, and so asked some of the more quiet students (mostly the women) what they thought. What this really represented, though, was me taking over again, trying to manage the discussion, and of course it soon died. (Moral: Trying to prolong a good thing after its natural end accomplishes little if anything.) Realizing this, I went on to the next activity, which was the daily dictation/preparation for lab.

An opportunity had come up to join in another class for square dancing during the afternoon, and I took it. George Young

taught a few basic dances, and it was a lot of fun. My students were able to understand and follow his directions quite well, I thought.

I was still a bit bothered by the morning's discussion. The men students, who were usually the most quiet in class, were the ones who had spoken up; the women had barely spoken at all. I wondered if perhaps women did not participate in political discussions in Japan. Or could it be the presence of the men which had such a dampening effect?

DAY NINE--TUESDAY

"The Search" was getting more exciting, so they decided to read several sections at once. The reading aloud practice they were getting had improved their ability in this area considerably, and it was a good opportunity for me to help them work on specific and usually characteristic pronunciation faults. As usual, we summarized what we had read, but today I asked for an oral summary of everything we had read. Since there was no pressure for one person to remember it all, everyone contributed something and each helped to correct the others. We got ready for lab with a dictation, at which even the slower Frenchman (Yves) was getting better.

Ed Ellis had finally returned from his vacation, and the daily UPI print-out sheet of the news was once again on the lab console.

I had not remembered that such a thing existed until I saw it there, and I was really elated at the prospect of having it every day to read to the class. I read it the last thing and then asked a few questions about what I had read. They had, of course, recorded it, and so were able to go back over their tapes to find the answers.

After lunch each person read a selection from the listening comprehension readings that we had been doing, and the person who answered the question correctly then read the next for the class. They didn't always like it this way as well as when I read the selections--it was harder for them to understand each other's imperfect accents. Even though it was frustrating for us all, I still felt it was better that we continue to try it this way every so often. I guess it was really part of my continuing battle to stop being "The Teacher" and get the class --all of us--to work together.

A sheet contrasting "much", "many", and "lots of/a lot" followed. I asked for someone to explain why he would use one instead of another, and there was a volunteer right away! They must be getting better.

During the last hour we read again the same play we had done on the previous Friday, this time for expression. To this end I asked for five volunteers to read the parts and five volunteers to be "coaches" watching for pronunciation problems and "directing"

the "actors"; there was much less trouble this time in getting them to participate. I actually sat back and listened.

The final half hour of class was, in my opinion, totally wasted. I had been invited by two other teachers to join their classes in learning some American folk songs. My class accepted the invitation, and off we went, arriving at the appointed time. The other teachers, however, didn't seem to give as much importance to the time as I did, for even after we got started (late), there didn't seem to have been any planning at all of what was to be learned, or how. Consequently, most of my students sat around the edge of the room looking completely bored. When they finally got around to a song that the students had the words for, no one was interested in singing. It was even hard to listen, since the tape recorder was neither very clear nor very loud. I, for one, felt cheated, and felt bad for my students.

DAY TEN--WEDNESDAY

Ah, today was the big day! I had planned since the week before to have the class go to Brattleboro on a fact-finding hunt and this was the first day I could reserve a Bluebird to take them all down and pick them up when they finished.

It was also a big day because Roland, the more articulate of the Frenchmen, was finally going to give a report he had been

preparing on prostitution in the United States. (Was this going to be my golden opportunity to get the women students talking?) He took over first thing after a short follow-up on the crossword puzzles we had done the previous Friday (which, I might add, could profitably have been followed up much sooner). He must be more used to speaking in front of groups, since he used several good techniques--writing key points on the blackboard, outlining as he went along, and stopping to explain each major point before going on to the next. Actually, this should have been quite evident to me from the start, since I knew he was a lawyer. Questions followed, and I asked that each student be ready to ask at least one question. This assured that the women participate at least to a minimum degree, but unfortunately it didn't go beyond that except in one case. One of the women, with much hesitation, brought up the old question of the virgin bride (in terms of prostitution), and that really livened things up!

I suspended part of the normal lab exercises to give more time to the discussion of Roland's report, and was glad I did. Instead of the usual exercises, I read the news at a faster-than-usual rate to make it more like the "real" news reports, followed with questions, and read the listening comprehension selections at a normal speed but with no pause for answers during the reading. The rest of the hour was left for them to play the tape back and get the answers.

After lunch we all went to Brattleboro, they divided into two groups of five, and off they went. I wandered around for a while, sat and drank lemonade for a while, and generally just waited. I refused to help them at all. One and three-quarters of an hour later we all got back together, met the Bluebird, and came back to S.I.T. They had discovered bookstores, jelly donuts, and town selectmen, and we would discuss the rest tomorrow.

DAY ELEVEN--THURSDAY

Although the day before had provided a lot of material for discussion in today's class, it just didn't come off as it should have. I think this was just one of those days when everything and everyone dragged. The night before had been the farewell party for the three-week Brazilian group, and almost everyone had stayed up late and drunk a lot of beer. I had done the same, but even though I left at 11:00 p.m. when I could no longer hold my eyes open, I was tired and slightly hung-over, too. Perhaps this was just an isolated case, but I would rather believe that it is an example of what effect the physical condition of the teacher has on the class. I also had a suspicion that not all of my students were fact-finding when they were in Brattleboro, because some had conveniently forgotten to bring their answers and couldn't remember the answers to even a few of the more obvious questions. The discussion, as a result,

did not involve enough of the class. This was another problem for me--what is a teacher obligated to do about the student who does not particularly care about learning, or the "lazy" student who just can't seem to make it to his/her morning class because he/she is sleeping? Personally, I am inclined to side with Caleb Gattegno and only worry about those students I can work with. With those I can't work with, I limit myself to demonstrating my concern to the missing student when I see him/her next.

Unfortunately, the day went on as it had been in the morning--slow, dragging. One of the problems which I should have seen immediately and changed was that there were just too many sedentary writing and listening exercises and not enough speaking. In retrospect, I can see that a knowledge of theatre games would have helped immeasurably then: even if I did have a badly planned afternoon, which I did, I could have had something to fall back on. This is a trick of the trade, as it were, which I am just now realizing, since in my introduction to educational methods, in college I was taught never to deviate from a lesson plan. (After all, a finished lesson plan had to be perfect, and why should one want to deviate from the perfect?) All in all, even though this was undoubtedly the worst day of teaching, it was very important in terms of what I was learning.

DAY TWELVE--FRIDAY

This was also an important day in the process of my learning how to be a teacher, but this time because of the contrast with the previous day. Today's class was so good that one of my "shrinking violets" came up and told me how much she liked it after we had finished for the day.

I had resolved that this class had to be much more active--the students should do the talking, not me. For this reason we spent a large part of the morning on a tried-and-true listening comprehension exercise where the students made up their own questions to ask each other about the readings. I was there more as a resource than as a teacher.

For the last part of the morning I prepared or motivated (how I hate that word!) them for a movie about the history of American music which they would see instead of going to lab this morning. I hadn't seen the movie yet either, but I knew there would be many things that they wouldn't be familiar with: terms, names of people, places, etc. Therefore, I wrote these things on the board, telling a little bit about each thing and answering questions as I went along. When we went to the movie, I felt they would get just a little more out of it than if they had seen it "cold". I know I did.

In the afternoon we read and summarized a bit more of "The Search". I made sure that the latter was an oral, whole-class activity

this time, and I tried to keep it snappy. We didn't spend too much time on it--less than usual--but moved on to an even more oral activity.

I had never used the Max materials; everyone praised them so much I was a bit skeptical. But since they had been recommended by Ray Clark one day after a discussion of a class he had observed, I decided to try them. Thank heavens I did: they were great. The class liked the very human Max, who got into some of the same situations they did at one time or another. I read the narratives (two of them) for the class and with the help of some key words on the board, they retold the stories, sometimes the same, sometimes changing person or tense.

With the day over, I walked to the office feeling better than I had all week.

DAY THIRTEEN--MONDAY

Today was another good day, especially in the morning. Unfortunately it wasn't as good as it might have been in the afternoon. The morning went very quickly in a series of rapid-fire drills and listening comprehension/question asking exercises. We also tried another Xerox on articles (a, an, the), which of course was always challenging to the majority of the class. We prepared for lab as usual, with me dictating sample sentences from the day's lesson in order for them to have a guide while using the tape.

Unfortunately, I couldn't find the UPI news print-out sheet to read to them. I really missed having it, because I felt that it was one of the most "real" things they could listen to. The questions about the day's news were always potential conversation provokers, too.

The afternoon was essentially the same as the Friday before: reading and summarizing "The Search", and a couple of narratives from Max. We were nearing the end of the story in "The Search", it was getting more exciting, and we were reading longer sections at a time. I could still sense that this was something that everybody enjoyed doing.

Not so with Max, however. Even though the lesson was varied this afternoon, with the students making up their own narrative to the second picture, it still wasn't quite as snappy as it had been the day before (Friday), although it was much better than that awful Thursday of last week. I don't know even now why I didn't feel as good about it as I did about the other Max session; there seemed to be something about it that I couldn't put my finger on. It is entirely possible, I suppose, that since they had never really made up a narrative or anything else of that kind, they were a bit slower than normal. Perhaps I was a bit too impatient?

DAY FOURTEEN--TUESDAY

This was to be the last full day of class, and I wanted to

continue trying my best to make it lively, especially in the morning. We had an oral review/drills contrasting "there is" and "it is", a Xerox on the use of gerunds after certain verbs, ~~and listening comprehension selections which the students took~~ turns reading. It was still difficult for them to understand each other's accents.

I dictated the sentences for lab, we made sure everyone had the correct version, and left for lab. The news was missing again, so I had to settle for reading Monday's news. After I finished reading it, I asked a fairly long list of questions about what I had read, and allowed extra time in lab for them to answer. I guess I didn't make this clear enough, because when we started discussing the answers later in class, only the first two had been done and there were protests that they had all thought this was for tomorrow. What do you do when that happens? I let it drop for the time. I did give them an assignment for the next class, however. Each student chose one of the questions as a topic to find out more about from the newspapers in the library.

I had been very reluctant to try role play with my class, since I was sure it would fail because of their shyness and reluctance to invent. How wrong I was! I guess the fact that they were supposed to be someone else took the pressure off and allowed them to create what they thought the other person should be saying.

This is just what I had wanted them to do all along, but had shied away from in the form of role play. Now that they were taking to it so well, first in the form of a job interview complete with application blank, then an arrival at a homestay family complete with an Uncle Harry, neighbor Ed Wilson, and three kids, I was genuinely sorry I had not had more faith in them from the beginning. It was only now that I did try it because they had finally begun to open up more in the last week; they now seemed ready for something as unstructured as role play. What a shame that tomorrow would be our last class together!

The last half hour was spent at the library, where I helped each student to find a newspaper that might contain the information he was looking for. I had hoped this would give them enough time to complete a good bit of the assignment so they could stay on and finish after class if they wished. I had forgotten (or perhaps had just not consciously remembered) that the Japanese farewell dinner was that day--all the women left right at 3:00, and the men soon thereafter.

DAY FIFTEEN--WEDNESDAY

The last day had finally arrived. Such last days always bring about a sense of fatalism in me: a sort of "now-that-it's-over-there's-nothing-more-I-can-do" feeling. I wished we could've had more time together, because I could see a confidence in my

students that wasn't there earlier. To cite an example, at the beginning the two French students had been inseparable. I had really had to "sit" on them even to make them sit on opposite sides of the room during class so that they wouldn't speak French to each other all during class. Roland, the older, was going to leave three days early to go to California. Of course Yves had decided he was going with him. As time went on, there was less and less trouble with them (with only Monday morning regressions), and I heard less and less about California from Yves. The day before Yves left for his homestay (alone), he spent what must have been at least three hours chatting in English! Mon dieu!

With this sense of confidence, it was possible, of late, to do many things which I hadn't felt possible earlier, such as the role play. Another thing happened this morning which I never would have imagined coming from my class--a spontaneous and rather heated discussion about controversial topics such as wife-swapping, and sex in general. We also talked about tradition in Japan, and why it was so strong (which is what led to the topic of sex), and differences in ability levels. Again, it was mostly the men who spoke, but the women did get their chance later.

Being goal-oriented as I am, I insisted on at least hearing what they had done in the library last class, if not the full report. It was disappointing, probably because of all the excitement over the farewell dinner and presentation of Japanese culture. They

simply hadn't had enough time to do a good job.

Yves offered to take everyone to Howard Johnson's for a snack. He had asked me about it earlier, so I had allotted time for it and we left immediately. It was a nice surprise for the class, and a good ending to the course. Everyone, even the women, was really conversing in English. It made me feel tremendously good.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

What I would like to say first in conclusion is not really a conclusion, per se, but rather some concluding thoughts on what this teaching experience has reinforced in my thinking. Put simply, a student's needs must be satisfied if learning is to take place. I am referring here not only to physical needs, such as hunger, but also to emotional needs: the student must feel that he is liked, that he is important, that he can succeed, and that he can control what he does. This latter need, most certainly, argues for student-directed classes. If nothing else, students who run their own class are participating to a much greater extent than those in a teacher-centered classroom. I strove hard to get away from this, and believe that I did, near the end of the three weeks.

The most important conclusion that can be drawn from the experience I have just been through, however, has to do with planning. This paper itself would have been much easier to do, and undoubtedly more complete, had I planned what I was going to write before the first class. I would then have kept a detailed diary of each day, notes about related events, and miscellanea. I did not plan to write on any particular topic, however, so I was forced to write it all at once from memory and the general notes that I had kept. (I felt that it must be done as close to the fact as possible, since memories of feelings are so subject to change, in order for it to be valid.) Another prime example which comes to mind is the class. If I had sat down and thought about my students' goals, and the reasons behind their sitting in English

classes day after day for three weeks, I would have structured the course a bit differently. I probably would have (and should have, eventually, even without having planned this way) seen that ~~the reason the students were there was to prepare for their home-~~ stays. I might have done more work with American culture, role plays, theatre techniques, and music. This brings me to another great personal revelation. Although the "shopping market of language teaching gimmicks", where every new and flashy technique is hailed as the answer to the problem of the moment, is personally offensive to me, too much emphasis on "the basics" can be just as deadly, even when one tries to "keep it moving" or "make it snappy". More advanced students, like mine, probably need very little review, even if their spoken English isn't all that grammatical. The course could have been better planned, too, had I known what my students would be like beforehand; the teaching would have been easier and perhaps better if I had been experienced and familiar with the English Language Office.

Finally, I believe I did accomplish my goal for the course, at least to a certain extent, and that was to better the level of English that my students spoke. The majority did score higher on the second test, but I cannot be sure that this is really an indicator. What is an indicator for me is their behavior in class and outside of it, and they were definitely more open, confident, and verbally competent.