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English Language Program Proposal for the Instituto Mexicano De Comercio Exterior

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School for International Training

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM PROPOSAL
FOR THE
INSTITUTO MEXICANO DE COMERCIO EXTERIOR

March 6, 1981

INTRODUCTION

A specially designed English language program for the administration and staff of the Instituto Mexicano de Comercio Exterior must be equal to the excellence and diversity that the Institute's various directions demand today. At the same time, it must also be flexible and creative in meeting those and other demands tomorrow. Obviously, sensitivity and skill in the knowledge and use of English is vitally important to IMCE employees now, especially through the Center for International Studies, because they seek to grow in understanding of themselves and their relationships with others in the world, particularly with those who are involved in foreign trade. This importance will surely increase as rapidly as Mexico itself is developing and enlarging in its role in the international community.

Therefore, while portions of this proposal will discuss different aspects of the language program, the purpose and goal underlying each suggestion is the Institute's growing need for international communicative competence, cross-cultural awareness, and sensitivity. We will examine four specific areas: a needs survey, the program personnel, scheduling, and the curriculum, thereby suggesting ways to establish and maintain this program for IMCE. It is hoped that these suggestions will stimulate others that you view as relevant to the needs of the Institute, and that by working together we can re-affirm a growing relationship of trust among the people of our world for the future.

NEEDS SURVEY

For all employees of the Instituto Mexicano de Comercio Exterior, including members of both administration and staff, ask the following and any other questions relevant to individual language learning needs. Writing the questionnaire in both Spanish and English will facilitate complete comprehension by all employees.

1. Do you use English in your work?

How often?

When/In what ways?

2. Have you ever studied English?

To what level?

How long ago/When did you stop studying(if you have)?

Where did you study?

3. Do you want to study English?

Why?

At what level?

4. Considering your present job responsibilities, could you study English, if it were offered?

At what time?

For how many hours per day?

5. What areas of English are you especially interested in studying?

By compiling the results of a questionnaire such as the above, the Center for International Studies will be better able to assess the language experience and needs of the Institute's personnel. The results would also be helpful in giving both the English language program co-ordinator and teachers some ideas of the motivations of their students.

PERSONNEL

<u>Job Title & Description</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Salary</u> pesos/hour				
I. <u>Language Co-ordinator(s):</u> Supervision and co-ordination of teachers (1 co-ordinator for every 5 teachers), curriculum, and programs; administration of on-going written teacher evaluations, in-service teacher-training workshops, and final evaluations by students of teachers, and course content; direct responsibility for program administration to IMCE's Director of the Center for International Studies; substitute teaching; attendance and leadership at staff meetings; personnel recruitment.	40 per week: 8:00-12:00 & 1:00- 5:00	<u>Step:1-4</u> 325	<u>5-8</u> 350	<u>9-12</u> 375	<u>13-16</u> 400	<u>17-20</u> 425
		325 X 40 hours/week = \$52,000/month X 12 months = \$624,000/year				
III. <u>Teacher(s):</u> Responsibility for preparation, adaptation, and enrichment of curriculum in beginning, intermediate, or advanced class (not to exceed 12 students per class); participation in teacher-training workshops; application of teaching suggestions from co-ordinator and students in continuing development of educational techniques and approaches; attendance at staff meetings; optional responsibility for private classes, to be arranged at the convenience of teacher and interested student(s).	25 (class hours) per week: 8:00-11:00 & 12:00- 2:00	300	325	350	375	400
		300 X 25 hours/week = \$30,000/month X 12 months = \$360,000/year				

Benefits

Air transportation from the employee's permanent address provided to Mexico City. Assistance and/or recommendation of adequate housing within a proximity convenient to the Center for International Studies and the employee. Salary scale adjustments commensurate with the local cost of living increase annually.

Requirements

Teaching contract for one year minimum. Teacher responsibility for minimum two hours class preparation time per day. Salary steps signify total participation in one Summer, Fall, Winter, and Spring program (steps 1-4) consecutively, before salary increase is considered.

SCHEDULE

- I. Summer: August 3 - October 9
Fall: October 12 - December 18
Winter: January 11 - March 19
Spring: March 22 - May 28
(10 continuous weeks per term)
- II. Summer: June 22 - August 28
Fall: August 31 - November 6
Winter: November 9 - February 5
Spring: February 8 - April 16
(10 continuous weeks per term)
- III. Summer: June 22 - August 28
Fall: September 7 - November 13
Winter: November 23 - February 19
Spring: March 1 - May 7
(10 week term, with 1 week between terms)

Hours

Monday through Friday:
9:00-12:00 & 1:00-3:00 or
8:00-11:00 & 12:00-2:00
(X 10 weeks/term)

Sharon L. Voss

IPP

August 1, 1982

The Process and Product of Writing ESL Programs

The experience of teaching language often brings with it significant opportunities not only to refine oneself professionally, but also to increase public awareness of effective programs and to promote their effectiveness with learners. In the past year, as a student of the School for International Training's Master of Arts in Teaching program, I was placed for my teaching internship in Mexico City, specifically to organize and implement an English as a Second Language program for the Instituto Mexicano de Comercio Exterior (IMCE). IMCE was the inviting organization, working through the Experiment in International Living's Mexico office, which had requested that I teach three hours daily for three months. Upon arrival at IMCE, I found that my responsibilities included two groups of twenty beginning and intermediate students each, that would study for four and one-half weeks consecutively. At the close of the three month internship, IMCE requested my opinions and ideas on ESL programs that would be of maximum benefit to members and potential members of their institution. Thus, I wrote the preceding ESL program proposal and submitted it to them.

This government proposal was my first experience with writing this particular type of program, although my teacher-training responsibilities in

the past have required a similar kind of planning, application of practical components, and program evaluation. My ESL internship in Mexico City was also especially helpful in giving me opportunities to experiment with what was and was not effective in program design and application, since there was no pre-established plan for accomplishing my teaching responsibilities to the Ministry of Foreign Trade. Before the internship, while working as personnel recruiter for the Foreign Language Office of the Experiment, I gained awareness of how their programs were organized. The process used in the teacher-training course during the year at S.I.T. gave me practice in describing programs, planning lessons, and illustrating techniques for theoretical student populations with a variety of needs. Using these skills to comply with the request made by the Ministry of Foreign Trade was another opportunity to investigate how professional experience and academic theory related and applied to program design.

In this paper, I will first describe the needs, constraints, style, and administrative hierarchy of the IMCE with regard to an English as a Second Language program, and analyze how these factors influenced the language training program design submitted to that organization in March, 1981. The intent of this analysis is to elucidate my personal awareness of questions developed in the decision-making process of writing this particular program. Ultimately, the paper is a documentation of my professional growth with regard to evaluating the appropriateness of choices made before and during that design. I am concerned here with the process through which I made and evaluated these choices. I emphasize the term "personal" in this description. The paper is not intended to be a final

definition for me. It is a statement of my position at that time with regard to techniques that worked in presenting the IMCE with an ESL program proposal.

In order to meet the above objectives, I will first describe the rationale behind the inviting organization's interest in requesting a program. I will discuss the elicited and observed messages about the proposal from IMCE with regard to its perceived linguistic goals, limitations, style, and program administration. Following this discussion, we may have a broader perspective from which to analyze how each of these components (goals, limitations, style, and program administration) both influenced program design and contributed interculturally to teaching and learning English as a Second Language.

Following this discussion, I will examine questions related to five major areas where I needed to decide how and what to do before proceeding with the remainder of the proposal. These include a definition of student needs within a limited amount of time, finding a basis for syllabus writing, choosing materials and determining their influence on content and approach, evaluating the program, and marketing it to administrators. With this description, analysis, and examination, I will have discussed techniques that were appropriate at the time that the proposal was written, and which may be valid in some contexts in future.

In describing the IMCE's contribution to the content and style of the program, we should first examine the felt needs or goals of the organization with regard to ESL. However, since IMCE never specifically articulated these, I can only speak from my view of what their objectives were.

From my perspective as an instructor, they included each of the following to varying degrees: 1) a survey to assess areas and frequency of English usage, 2) an assessment of the proficiency levels of employees in specific job categories, 3) (optionally) an attitude questionnaire regarding how employees feel about studying English and how much personal time and energy they would be willing to contribute, 4) an English as a Second Language program presented by an experienced staff which is committed to developing program goals and objectives, 5) an evaluation instrument for all levels of program administration and implementation, including student, teacher, and coordinator success, materials and curriculum appropriateness and flexibility, and finally, 6) adaptability in a program whose objectives may change with the time and resources of its originators.

Second, we should investigate what limitations might prohibit some of the above needs from being met. Probably the over-riding concern in 1981 (and one that has increased in importance since then for this developing country) is one of financing. The initial investment for a fully staffed program would total over 900,000 pesos (\$.00) for the first year, if we consider only the salaries of two teachers and materials development expenses. This estimate does not, however, include initial transportation and housing costs which, while being somewhat negotiable, still are substantial. Also, the amount of time needed to propose, define, staff, and evaluate an institution-wide employee educational program could at the present time hardly be superimposed over any administrator's already overloaded schedule. For me, one of the more crucial challenges to the Institute would be their ability to hire qualified personnel from within the organization to

co-administer the program with an English-speaking director. While the program needs a representative from IMCE to speak for the Institute, it also needs someone capable of allowing a program co-director freedom to make educated choices about staffing and curriculum. Fourth, the organization needs to clarify its goals and objectives for the program in order to determine whether or not the current design is acceptable. Finally, the lack of specific on-the-job incentives for employees at lower levels of the professional hierarchy to make a serious commitment to the practice of learned English language skills may raise the question of who should study for how long.

Third, considering the style and approach of the IMCE employee as a representative of a Latin culture, we as Americans may interpret protocol, signs of agreement and approval, and interest in extending professional relationships as slightly formal, over enthusiastic, and unnecessarily bureaucratic. In other words, an American's perceptions of Mexican program cooperation are equally as culture-bound as the reverse. For example, Senor Hector Orrico, director of the Internal Education Department that invited the ESL internship initially, asked for time to consider the program which I had written, to submit it for budgetary approval annually, and then to turn the entire program over to a different department (External Education) for administration and coordinating. While assuring me of the proposal's value and validity to his Institute, Sr. Orrico also suggested that budgetary approval would be impossible for the current year and could at best be hoped for sometime during 1982 or 1983. My first reaction, using American values and attitudes, was that of hearing a somewhat hilarious contradiction and a familiar bureaucratic put-off in the message, "Yes, we'd really like to do

this, but I don't know when and I don't know how." My secondary belief, however, (and one reason behind my continuing interest in this program) was that Sr. Orrico was being honest in his interest and support. He was at the same time graphically illustrating the part of his culture which will act on an idea (or program) at the time and in the way that the Mexican administrator (not the American advisor) chooses.

We may also consider the cultural differences between male and female roles as professionals in México. Too often, even in positions of equality within the system, women defer to men the responsibility for decision-making. Thus, receiving a program design from a female, much less an American, may not carry exactly the same weight as if it were written by an American male. Furthermore, since students and teachers play comparatively traditional roles in Mexican education, my anticipation of dialogue about program content and course curriculum may be unrealistic. Students are expected to learn what their teacher decides is good for them; Experts have all the answers, etc. Therefore, one requires time and proximity to hear specifically what the IMCE needs and to use the most appropriate means to getting needs met. Because of this, I suggest that the IMCE-internship experience be continued and expanded, especially because that would keep reinforcing an awareness of personnel availability and restate our interest in continuing programs. Considering that approximately half of the Institute's need for English language skills lie in technical areas such as merchandise presentation and marketing, hosting international trade fairs, and entertaining visiting government representatives, IMCE also must decide to what extent its program will be based on general and technical language areas.

Fourth, and last in our description of how IMCE contributed to the language program proposal, is the realization of the role which the admin-

istrative hierarchy plays in deciding whether or not this program is adopted. While the Director of Internal Education was verbally extremely enthusiastic about a continuing ESL program, he alone was not influential enough in the hierarchy to convince his superiors that overcoming obstacles and supporting the program would be worthwhile. He was, however, helpful in introducing me to the Director of Personnel, whose support would strengthen that of Sr. Orrico when the program is considered for approval. Basically, an extended internship or any kind of continuing dialogue with IMCE's administrators would facilitate increasing awareness of and interest in the groundwork which had just been established. In contrast however, the need for annual budgetary approval and evaluation because of fluctuations in the Institute's profit margin would at best be restrictive to hiring any long-term program personnel. Still, this particular constraint may only be the conjecture of the Internal Education Department, and was not verified by other knowledgeable personnel.

How did the needs, constraints, cultural and business style, and administrative hierarchy at the IMCE influence the program especially designed for them? We begin that analysis by referring to the Needs Survey constructed for distribution to all employees of the Institute (see program proposal, page 2). Question #1 assesses both areas and frequency of English language usage. Question #2 elicits information regarding formal language training experience and expertise. Question #3 requests background information into individual motivations for studying and what goals may be attractive as incentives. Obviously the Survey would be printed bilingually in English and Spanish to assist potential beginning students in completing the

questionnaire.

Following the Needs Survey, the Personnel and sample Schedule sections offer suggestions as to what may be the Institute's program options. Preceding these three, however, the Introduction emphasizes that the content of the program design is meant to stimulate ideas and suggestions, and not to be absolute or mandatory in any way. The Curriculum Design outline which follows the Sample Schedule seeks to give the Institute a general impression of what I see a potential beginning student needing for communicative competence at the professional level of a market representative or manager. The first half of the design could be expanded and enriched to include employees whose major exposure to English is in routine office procedures. The second half may be more useful to an advanced class whose use of English is more frequent and occurs also in social situations. Again, the entire Curriculum is an example of a course in general English. No mention is made of specific technical areas because students and/or administrators can then be free to request what they feel is practical and necessary. This needs to be further clarified in the Introduction to the proposal.

Program evaluation techniques may include the following: daily and/or weekly feedback sessions between students and teachers, either formally or informally arranged; teacher and class observations and written evaluation by either coordinator or fellow instructor(s); term reports, including written and oral student evaluations of instructor(s) and course content to program and IMCE directors; annual and/or semi-annual goal and objective evaluation and revision by administrators, including both program personnel and IMCE representatives. The necessity for adaptability is implied.

in the above outline for instructor, course, and program evaluation and can be satisfied as long as administrators and staff remain committed to continuing excellence in the quality of the program which they create.

While the constraints surrounding adoption of this program by IMCE are practically universal in governmental agencies throughout the contemporary world, the design recognizes these in at least the following ways: by limiting financial commitment to paid personnel to two years, renewability contingent upon student and course evaluations; by using an English-speaking director who is familiar both with the goals and objectives of IMCE and with the needs and limitations of teachers; by making sample schedules culturally feasible to both IMCE employees and (possibly American) teachers; by allowing for revision and development at all levels through various types of evaluation; and by presenting a sample needs survey whereby the Institute's motivations, goals, and objectives may be clarified.

We will next examine the answers to those questions referred to in the introduction, concerning how choices were made during the program design, including, but not exclusively with regard to, the program syllabus. First, how could the linguistic needs of students be assessed within the limited time frame of four and one-half to nine weeks? Fortunately, I received the evaluation results for each of my students on a language proficiency test given by a language institute in Mexico City, on the day that I arrived to meet departmental personnel. In other words, it was not necessary to begin a personal assessment of student needs without at least some indicator of their ability and skill. Assuming these test results to be

completely accurate, however, was an optimistic oversight. Since scores placed most students at beginning-intermediate to advanced proficiency levels, I expected most to be capable of answering my questions about their needs and expectations for course content, on the first day of class. From personal language learning experience, I had learned to appreciate an instructor's interest in what I saw as important to obtaining control over specific parts of the language. What I found, of course, was that many of them seemed unable, at that time but not later, to communicate either where they had worked or where they wanted to concentrate in learning English. In contrast to these rather arbitrary, and seemingly inaccurate test scores, then, results from the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency would be more student-specific with regard to skill level and linguistic needs assessment.

At the beginning of the first four and one-half week class, I planned for what I saw, or sometimes estimated, to be the average skill level in a certain area, gaining a clearer perspective during class work on where specific students were or were not working in relation to my objective. I could modify my expectations by what I saw happening and proceed with further planning from a slightly greater awareness. This process continued on a daily basis throughout the first complete session, as I generally alternated between notional-functional and situational approaches to lesson planning. For the second group, I found myself planning for the "invisible average" just as much, but I was that much more accurate, because of experience with the first group, in providing suggestions and approaches to how students could work in the language area where they were then concentrating.

As my time at IMCE progressed, the Director of Internal Education was gradually more open to giving me comments, criticisms, and materials based on what he was hearing from students and felt would be helpful as supplementary course content. I reviewed both his comments and materials and used what I felt was appropriate at that time. Finally, my own observations of differences between American and Mexican culture, both in the classroom and the homestay situation, gave me material on which to base an ongoing series of lessons. For example, topics like domestic and professional sexual stereotyping, extended family relationships, comparison of educational systems, professional attitudes about time and work, behavior with respect to authority, and the like, were all interesting to consider and discuss.

The three major bases used to form a program syllabus were, therefore, 1) the observed progress of students during the internship, 2) the experience of teaching within the IMCE hierarchy, seeing how it worked for and/or against employees, and 3) what I felt students needed to concentrate on still further in both general and specific subject areas of English. Obviously, the first category seemed to carry the greatest influence at the time of writing the program, since I could observe student interest and achievement first-hand in class. It often became evident that a topic was new material for some students while simultaneously old and familiar to others. I tried to bridge these gaps in student interest and language experience by choosing discussion areas in the syllabus relevant to all employees. The idea of introducing information regarding the administrative levels of IMCE, for example, was generally suitable since all students

fit into that structure at some point, either by seeking to define it or by using it as a means to their own career development and advancement. In addition, subject areas like Communication Patterns, Travelling, and Socializing, while perhaps new to some personnel, could also be helpful in review to more advanced students, broadening their linguistic capabilities. Recalling categories for syllabus plans from the Fall term Methods course supplemented these other, more inherent linguistic concerns.

Materials for both classes came from the following sources: teacher and student-constructed (60%), personal texts and purchased materials (20%), library texts (all from the Benjamin Franklin Library in Mexico City; 10%), IMCE's international trade instruction manuals and trade journals (10%). In direct contrast to other interning teachers outside Mexico City, the variety of resources available to me increased with my length of stay, and was really limited only by the amount of time I had to explore the city and my work environment.

Initially, I used as many textbook sources as possible, since by using photocopies each student could have a printed basis for visualizing the topic under discussion. These provided the stimulus for dialogues, grammar and intonation exercises, and a comparative analysis between spoken and written English at one time or between typical English and Spanish conversational responses in others. A routine began to emerge from our classtime as students started to refine conversational skills by correcting grammar and concentrating on accuracy, moved to various forms of pronunciation practice, from there to the discovery or manipulation of a specific component of any one of the four skill areas, and finally worked to control a part of the

language that was already familiar to their learning experience, judging from their capability in previous classes.

Listening skill practices were reinforced with Joan Morley's Exercises in Listening, from cassette tapes of songs from which we could study lyrics, from a British-made tape series of foreign trade dialogues and product demonstrations used to supplement training manuals, and so forth. However, students worked more in the speaking skill area than anywhere else, because this form of English was what they normally had the opportunity to practice least. Class members concentrated on technical writing skills by comparing samples of business letters to those which they had written independently and brought to share in class. The culmination of this exercise was that each student's work be corrected first by one other student and later evaluated in small groups which I supervised. The class did not take time to work on reading skills specifically, since much of their work in other areas also facilitated this.

The techniques described here are but a few of those which could be applied at various points in the syllabus outlined in the program design. Listening skills practices and foreign trade demonstration tapes correlate with Greetings and Leave-taking or Requesting Information and Assistance areas, for instance. Telephone interviews, social issues debates, and product demonstrations may be useful in Communication Patterns and Human Relations areas respectively. Writing business letters would facilitate discussion and experience in both Correspondence and Business Procedures, and so forth.

The syllabus and lesson plans from which I worked for the first four

and one-half weeks were based on a combination of situational and notional-functional concepts that I evaluated as appropriate for beginning and intermediate students to control in their work and professional social lives. Situations organized from a personal orientation (Greetings and Leave-taking, Requesting Information, Giving Assistance, etc.) to those of social and goal-achievement concerns could easily have filled three times the course limitations. Notional-functional awareness developed parallel to the situational, from Introductions and Leave-taking through Travel and Hosting International Guests. With both approaches, I found a surplus of learning materials for one topical area and virtually none for another. In cases of the latter, I used either self-constructed materials or student-imagined props or situations to control the environment. Overall, however, I gradually became more selective about how much of each morning's work I was responsible for structuring, and moved to a greater consideration of where students were indicating they wanted to be.

By the beginning of the second class, it was obvious from the experience of the first group that we needed to concentrate far more energy into the quality rather than the quantity of topical or situational areas covered, especially since the second class was more of a beginning than intermediate proficiency level. In all the texts, tapes, games, and other equipment available for the second course, students focussed more of their attention on recognizing and refining language skills that they already had, and on practicing in new or unfamiliar areas.

This was important to me as their instructor because of their proficiency level in comparison with the first group. Beginning and intermediate students naturally need awareness of and practice using the tools of lang-

uage which advanced students already control. If the course had been merely entertaining them with demonstrations of what skills they still needed in English (understanding unfamiliar verb tenses, advanced vocabulary usage, facility with appropriate forms of business communication, technical reading comprehension, etc.), the result would have destroyed motivation and interest. Instead, the second group needed to build confidence by using those skills which they already had, to expand their repertoire of language skills, and to practice newer skills until they became integrated into their foundation of language experience. Another factor that supported more work in quality than quantity was my realization that, even with the more advanced group, brief encounters with a specific technique or single exposure to a correction in grammar, for instance, were never effective in changing inaccuracies in student language. Since one definition of language is that it is a kind of communicative behavior, it needs to be reinforced positively when it is acceptable, and corrected - often repeatedly - when it is unacceptable, just as modification theory teaches about other behavior. This definition assumes that the ESL learner works on the correctness and appropriateness of his language, its quality, as much as and more than on the volumes, or quantity, which he is able to speak.

Why the situational and notional-functional approaches were appropriate is evident when we compare these with other approaches to language learning, especially in the context of the Mexican educational and social environment. Most secondary level graduates of public school have had some exposure to grammatically structured courses. A completely topical approach would restrict beginning students to minimal practice of speaking skills and encourage the more advanced to monopolize skills practices.

An audio-lingual approach would probably be familiar to more experienced language learners, and is acceptable at the technique level to reinforce some skills, but would not allow the flexibility necessary at the syllabus planning level to include students from a wide range of competency and professional backgrounds. Thus, the degree of freedom which each approach allows individual students became a deciding factor in selecting situational and notional-functional approaches to program design. They offer the widest range of opportunities for students to progress in speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills at their own rate within the framework of the lesson plan.

As outlined previously, evaluation techniques should be continuous on a daily, weekly, termly, and semi-annual to annual basis. The way this may be most effectively accomplished is the following: Teachers assume responsibility for evaluating individual and collective student progress and adjust lesson plans and schedules accordingly, using student feedback as an important part of this process. Weekly evaluation, at the teacher's discretion, may be either oral or written but should reflect the student's opinions, questions, and concerns about what has or has not been learned. They may also be asked to suggest ways to improve course work in future during this session. Term evaluations should again include written and oral student feedback on both teacher capabilities and course content. A coordinator or head teacher would also provide written teacher evaluations after a minimum of one visit per term to each class. Semi-annual and annual goal-setting, planning, evaluation, and revision sessions should be scheduled to first review student and staff input from written evaluations, second to hear contributions from staff

regarding materials and curriculum adaptation and development, and third, to plan and review plans for the immediate and long-range future. Administrative personnel need to be present for at least the termly and semi-annual meetings, and may ideally also visit the weekly classroom meetings for this purpose.

Support for the effectiveness of the evaluation process above is the following: First, students are quite capable of and willing to verbalize both their approval and disapproval of course content and process. Practically on a daily basis, my IMCE classes exemplified this fact. Weekly feedback sessions, once each class became familiar with motivation and goals for the task, were successful. Second, although there was no printed evaluation format at the end of each course, many students gave specific ideas and opinions orally about what to revise or continue in the content and process of the class generally. Third, a semi-annual evaluation and planning meeting will work comfortably into what is already a regular schedule of evaluative conferences for administrators.

But all of these considerations still do not market an effectively working program within the IMCE organization. What is necessary for this to happen? First, and not surprisingly, the cost of the program must be accepted as a necessary part of the already over-worked IMCE budget. Motivation toward this, however, will occur when IMCE administrators are certain of both the program's effectiveness and its reliability in improving the professional expertise of its employees. Again, the maintenance and expansion of this internship site for M.A.T.'s interested in teaching ESL seems the most practical means to that end.

Second, work by a number of teachers to get curriculum, materials,

syllabus, and lesson plans coordinated before the actual course work begins, would both support the program's validity and prove that IMCE's investment increases the professional and social communicative competence of its employees. Program organization, then, in the midst of any number of other variables, is crucial to program marketability.

Third, prospective ESL instructors in this program must present the students' and administrator's continuing interest in language learning as their highest priority when meeting IMCE representatives, when planning and teaching lessons, when conducting feedback sessions, always. If communicative competence is the ultimate goal of the teacher, she will consequently exhibit that objective in planning lessons to practice, develop, and control the language skills of learners. This presupposes the ongoing evaluation described earlier. Teaching and learning need to be viewed from as many perspectives as possible to strengthen awareness of individual linguistic needs. Staff members must be committed to continually revising familiar approaches and to the creative use of new concepts and techniques.

Finally, to increase this program's marketability, one needs to be sensitive to the cross-cultural dimensions inherent in a Mexican governmental organization's adaptation of a program offered, once again, by "Big Brother to the North", as we may be perceived. Mexico, as any country, wants to succeed internationally on its own terms. While recognizing that it needs English (temporarily?) to do so, Mexico has yet to fully come to terms with the obvious communicative challenge of daily increasing foreign trade opportunities with non-Spanish speaking countries. From a Midwestern United States perspective, we have a similar problem. Some people believe, for example, that foreign language study is a waste of time

in an educational system that can barely teach students to read. The misunderstanding is the same. In fact, the need for foreign language study in the Midwestern United States may be less than it currently is in Mexico. That need will inevitably be re-emphasized in the immediate future, and will motivate a more serious investment in the solution of international - as well as domestic - problems of communication.

However, while we are waiting, listening, and planning to openly work together for a common best interest, intercultural barriers break down. If the goal is meeting the English language needs of the Institute, we have a negotiable plan. If we are willing to work together to establish and develop that plan, the results can be rewarding to both IMCE and the ESL staff.

In conclusion, my experience in writing this program design has been valuable in a number of ways: It has reaffirmed the importance of the relationship between teacher and students, between the writer and the reader, and between the program and the institution when our implicit goal is language learning, communicating, and cultural understanding. Before writing, I watched, listened, observed, and evaluated (based on my experience) to discover if, in the process, I could meet the basically unspecified objectives of the IMCE with regard to learning English. IMCE accepted the program as written - as a proposal. I have not communicated with them since leaving Mexico, but assume that the program design is either filed, awaiting budgetary approval, or being implemented by ESL instructors not associated with the Experiment. Any one of these possibilities may have occurred, however, because this program, like any other, can only exist in relationship to the institution which adopts it. In other words, when both parts of that dynamic

are present and interacting in their support of agreed upon goals, when both are sharing the experience of developing a program, the resultant investment pays in dividends for both.

Also, from the questions raised and solutions developed in writing, I learned that the decision-making process implies making choices in a way very similar to learning. When I make a decision, I weigh the possible results against an objective, and determine which choice most nearly meets that objective. When I learn, I often compare my response to a question or problem with a model or norm (if there is one). This model may at times correlate with the objective in the decision-making process. I observe whether my response to a question is the same or different than the given model (or whether my choice will meet the proposed objective), the degree of difference (or how nearly I have met my objective), and any reasons for the difference (or why this choice is best). Thus, the comparison.

The decision-making process is continuous, like the image of three dynamic circles moving parallel through time, the program and the institution (teacher and learner) sharing either side of the experience and the goal of communicative competence or cultural understanding (learning). Both sides in this dynamic choose what the middle circle will contain. Again, I combined both my perceptions of what constitutes competence and understanding with that I perceived IMCE's definition of the same to be for its employees. Throughout that process, I made judgements: as to approach, organization, sequencing, quantity and quality, means or lack of explanation, word usage, tense, voice, mood, etc. Program design is a decision-making process.

Finally, and continually growing in my awareness of processes, deter-

mining the appropriateness of planning programs at a given time is important to whether the program is accepted, rejected, or ignored. This is not the first good idea that has been proposed at a seemingly unsuitable time, however. Lack of proximity to the institution and program cost have been cited as two apparent deterrents to appropriateness, and thus acceptability for now. I have already stated that IMCE has yet to assess the real value of implementing a program similar to the one proposed. Time, the growing need for cross-cultural understanding, and an increasing dependence for all countries on participation in foreign trade agreements will be factors supporting the need for an ESL program. Even if the proposal's timing looks inappropriate currently, I suggest that it is at worst slightly ahead of schedule, and certainly nutritious food for thought.