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A Handbook for ESL Teacher Training at Okinawa Christian School

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A Handbook for ESL Teacher Training

at Okinawa Christian School

by Dan Jerome

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Abstract:

The handbook has been designed for use as the text in a two or three day teacher-training course as well as a reference book of information useful throughout the academic year of the school. Because many of the ESL teachers at the school are inexperienced and/or untrained in the field, the information and suggestions have been written in non-technical language using a question/answer style that attempts to deal with the practical issues with which new teachers are most concerned. More than a "how-to" book, however, the handbook suggests matters of philosophical importance that will help teachers see beyond the immediate concerns of a single class and appreciate the broader issues of second language acquisition.

ERIC Descriptors: EFL, ESL, Language Instruction, Teacher Training

Contents

Page numbers appear in the upper right corner of each page. The Roman numeral indicates which of the three major parts of the handbook the page is in. The second number refers to the section within the part, and the third number to the page of that section. Therefore, page number III-5-2 is the second page of section five, part three.

Introduction

If I were to critique this handbook, I would certainly point out that the writer had tackled an enormous task and suggest that he was being a bit presumptuous in supposing that he could do justice to all the topics indicated in the table of contents. Considering that volumes have been written on each of the topics included in parts II and III, that criticism is certainly well taken. In my own defense, however, I must point out that the main purpose of this handbook is to build awareness—and indeed that word is one which reoccurs frequently throughout the pages of the handbook. Armed with this awareness, we are better equipped to find for oursevles more complete answers to the questions raised.

I have written the handbook primarily for teachers who have had little experience and/or training in teaching ESL although I believe it may be valuable to more experienced teachers who want to develop their skills and enhance their understanding of what is involved in teaching someone to enter into a new language. I have, therefore, attempted to avoid using technical jargon and concepts that may be of interest to a linguist but of marginal practical value to an ESL teacher at Okinawa Christian School. The questions which begin each section are meant to reflect the kinds of concerns that new teachers really have.

Part I of the handbook has topics that help to explain the history, structure, and program of the school and its ESL department. We teach students within a context and the better we understand how that context works, the better we can function within it.

The middle part of the handbook deals with general issues related to teaching ESL. It includes an excellent article from the JALT Newsletter, the official publication of the Japan Association of Language Teachers, which gives a good overview of the field and closes with practical suggestions on lesson planning and material adaptation.

The final part raises specific questions about the ordinary problems we face in school with classroom management and evaluation. The choice of topics is somewhat arbitrary although I have made an attempt to include the most common concerns of new teachers to the program.

It is my intent to modify and supplement all three sections and develop appendices with even more specific teaching suggestions as time goes on. Although I am not interested in writing a "how-to" book, I do want the book to be of practical value. Since the school and the ESL program is likely to make changes, I want the format of the handbook to be flexible enough to reflect and accommodate those changes.

Question: What is the history of Okinawa Christian School? How and when did it get started?

Begun in the early 1960's as a school for missionary children, OCS has evolved into something quite different. After passing through several stages of development resulting from political and sociological factors on the island, the school today retains a basically American-style education but attracts a much broader student population (about 325) than it did in its early days. The school has five major departments: (1) kindergarten for three, four, and five-year-olds; (2) elementary including grades one through six; (3) secondary including junior and senior high school: (4) English as a Second Language (ESL) including a small elementary division and a much larger (about sixty) young adult group; (5) afternoon ESL classes for Japanese elementary and junior high school children who meet twice a week. Adult ESL classes meet once a week in the evening. The school is private (that is, students pay a modest tuition and no government aid is available) and parochial (Protestant evangelical but nondenominational and not affiliated with any church). The board of directors is made up of long-time American missionaries.

Question: How did the ESL program come to be?

Okinawa Christian School has had an ESL program for many years, but it has changed significantly since its early days when it was called Basic English (BE). Before Okinawa reverted to Japanese control there were thousands of Filipino and other non-American, non-Japanese civilians living in Okinawa who were not eligible for and/or could not afford the U.S. military (D.O.D.) base schools. There were also large numbers of bi-racial children who also needed an English language education. OCS began its BE program primarily as a way of preparing these students for the "regular" academic program offered in its elementary and secondary schools. Because of space limitations, it met at first in a small building (now an abandoned church on the beach at Makiminato Point) away from the main campus.

After reversion, many internationals were obliged to leave the island and Japanese students found it to be in their best interests to have a Japanese education. Although there were still significant numbers of bi-racial children and other "special cases" who needed an English language education but did not have the language skills to cope with admission into the "regular" OCS program, the BE program declined in importance and enrollment. In 1976 the name of the program was changed to ESL and considerable study was initiated into its purpose and curriculum. Studies showed that few of the students who had recently completed the old BE or even the new ESL programs were doing well in regular high school courses, and the drop-out rate was alarmingly high. By having a completely open enrollment policy, the school was in fact reducing its credibility with potential capable students and was bringing in mostly poor students who could not pass the entrance exams for the better Japanese high schools. They came to OCS because it was one of the few places that would take them.

The program is now geared primarily for high school graduates and others who do not necessarily plan to enter the high school program upon completion of the six ESL levels. There are, however, still a few students in that category, too. There is an effort to integrate some ESL and high school activities, but there is also a recognition that the two programs have different kinds of students and different needs. The students share the same facilities

and some teachers, but there is no longer any effort to think of the ESL program as a pre-high school course.

Question: What kinds of students come to the ESL program at OCS? What kinds of English language experiences have they had so far?

Although we can never accurately and completely predict what kind of students we are going to have in class before meeting them, some general assumptions can be made about them. As we get to know the students better, these assumptions, of course, must be modified. This list is given primarily for the teacher who has little or no experience teaching Japanese young adults and may find the differences between these students and American students to be disconcerting and frustrating.

(1) Although English is a required subject for students in Japan through junior and senior high school, speaking and listening skills are not emphasized. In fact, few Japanese English teachers are fluent in the language, so one can hardly expect the students to be any better. We should not, of course, assume that this lack of speaking ability is a reflection on the students' intelligence or ability to learn if given the opportunity. Students are almost certainly able to read better than they can write, speak, or understand spoken English. Composition and speaking are usually the weakest skills.

(2) In the usual Japanese classroom, the teacher dominates the situation. Students are not expected nor do they desire to volunteer their personal opinions or answer if not called on by name. The lecture method is used almost exclusively, and to an American's way of thinking the students are quite passive. Students are used to memorizing facts and are not often asked to do anything that requires creativity or originality. Unless students have had previous experience with an American teacher, they may find this first experience to be confusing and/or embarrassing. We must avoid the two extremes of filling up class time with our own chatter because the students do not readily speak up, or trying to force students to talk before they are ready and/or able.

(3) A characteristic of most Asian students is their desire to identify

themselves with a group. Another way of expressing this is to say that a student usually will try to avoid situations in which he might be "put on the spot". Students may, for example, not wish to answer a factual question ("What's the answer to number five?") without first consulting with those around them--especially if there is the least bit of doubt about the correctness of the answer. They may also sit together is a group; a student is not likely to choose a seat by himself where he might attract our undivided attention. This characteristic, by the way, is probably more typical of female than of male students though, of course, there are exceptions to every rule.

(4) Most ESL students are graduates of Japanese high school while some have completed only compulsory education which is roughly equivalent to eighth grade in the American system. A few are college students or university graduates, and the school also accepts some professional people, housewives, and other older adults. The range of ages in a class may be quite wide since level placement is determined by English ability rather than age or other educational experiences. This wide range does not usually cause problems in the dynamics of the classroom, but we should certainly be aware of the age differences and be careful not to embarrass an older student or demand a level of maturity that is not realistic to expect in a younger student. We may also need to be sensitive to cultural factors which require some students to defer to others depending on age, assumed social standing, and educational background.

(5) Most are Okinawans though there are usually a few Japanese "mainlanders", Chinese, and other nationalities in each class. Though Okinawa is, of course, an integral part of the Japanese nation, there is still a lingering feeling of difference between those from the main islands of the country and those from Okinawa. Many, for example, will identify themselves as Okinawans first and then Japanese much as Hawaiians maintain a special identity apart from their U.S. citizenship. This is seldom a problem among young people, and rarely have there been conflicts among the students

because of their race or national origin.

Question: How are students admitted into the ESL program?

Although the admissions process is an administrative responsibility that does not normally require faculty input, it may be useful for teachers to understand under what circumstances students are admitted. The following two lists offer a good over-view of the requirements and procedure for admission into the ESL program.

Admission Requirements

A junior high graduate needs:

(1) a transcript from the junior high school from which s/he graduated
(2) a written statement of goals for entering the ESL program (may be written in Japanese)
(3) one teacher or counselor recommendation
(4) an interview with at least one parent present

A high school drop-out needs:

(1) numbers one through four as stated above
(2) a letter from the principal stating why the student dropped out

A high school graduate needs:

(1) a transcript from the high school from which s/he graduated
(2) a written statement of goals for entering the ESL program (may be written in Japanese)
(3) an interview

A college or university student needs:

(1) the same requirements as a high school graduate

A college or university graduate needs:

(1) a written statement of goals for entering the ESL program (may be written in English or Japanese)
(2) an interview

Admissions Procedure

(1) Fill out an application and bring all necessary papers to the school office (see admissions requirements)

(2) Have an interview with the ESL counselor or the OCS principal

(3) Take the placement test. Cost is ¥3,000

(4) Pay the first tuition payment at the office

Question: How is the program structured?

The ESL program has six levels ranging from Level I for beginners to Level IV for the advanced students. The length of time for each level varies somewhat depending on the time of year when it is offered, but generally speaking a student can complete a level in twelve to fifteen weeks.

The chart below indicates when each level is offered:

Session	Levels Offered			
Spring (April-July)	I	III	IV	VI
Fall (September-December)	I	II	IV	V
Winter (January-March)	II	III	V	VI

The timing of this schedule reflects an accommodation to both the Japanese and American school year calendars, personnel limitations of the school, and projected student enrollment.

New students are accepted at three differect times throughout the year (April, September, and January). If a student were to begin at Level I of the program and do well enough to pass from one level to the next without repetition, s/he could complete the entire ESL program in two years.

Students in the ESL program attend classes only in the mornings although some choose to remain on campus in the afternoon to study or participate in certain nonacademic courses such as physical education. Students in the upper levels of the program are sometimes permitted to enroll in other courses depending on their specific needs and goals.

All levels have five classes each morning. They are Speaking, Conversation, Writing, Reading, and Bible. Except for the Bible class which is about thirty minutes long, each class is about fifty minutes. Once a week students attend a chapel program instead of Bible class. Occasionally some classes are combined (perhaps Conversation IV and V, for example) because of scheduling needs or class size. Every effort is made, however, to keep class size below twenty and in the upper levels, class size tends to be quite small—about five or six.

Although there has been increasing emphasis on strengthening the structure of the program and standardizing the admissions policies, curriculum, and other administrative details, the school does allow some students to

audit some high school courses, attend only selected courses, and in other ways personalize their course of study. It is understood, however, that this is the exception rather than the rule, and students are urged to conform to a structure which is designed to meet the needs of most students in the program.

Students who complete Level VI of the program receive a certificate and are honored at a graduation ceremony. Records are kept in the office of all students' work, of course, and transcripts are available upon request.

Question: How do students progress from one level to the next?

There is a relatively flexible system for passing or failing to pass from one level to the next. Because of the subjective nature of so much of the course work, it is difficult to rely on number or letter grades as an absolute determining factor, but even when the grades indicate one way (passing or failing), there are a number of other considerations that may outweigh the report card evidence. In most cases there is no question, but with some students "on the borderline", a conference among the student's teachers, consultation with the student and/or the parent(s), or cummulative test scores may indicate that a student should repeat a level, be passed on, skip a level, or even leave the program. Another option may be to allow a student to move on to the next level for a probationary time.

In general, it is important for teacher and students to understand that (a) passing from one level to the next is not automatic. This may be a new idea to students coming from Japanese schools where it is very rare for a student to be held back. (b) Report card and test grades largely determine whether or not a person will pass. (c) There is some flexibility in the system, especially when a student would ordinarily be kept back but the level to be repeated is not being offered during the next term.

Note: A policy initiated during the spring term of 1982 is that students' final course grades are to be computed by giving equal weight to the course post-test and classwork (homework, quizzes, tests, etc.) In other words, 50% of the final grade is the post-test and 50% is classwork.

Question: As a teacher with little experience and/or training in ESL, what should I know about the field that will help me understand what I am getting into?

There was a time when ESL was not much of a "field" at all. Unfortunately, there are still some lingering doubts about ESL being a legitimate academic pursuit. The undeniable fact that some totally "untrained" teachers have had success in teaching English as a second or foreign language has lent credence to the notion that anyone who can speak English can teach English. This, of course, is the exception and speaks more about the art of teaching and the apparently natural gift and intuition that some people have than it does about the science of understanding how languages are learned and taught.

With the influx of millions of non-English speaking refugees into the United States and the almost universal recognition of English as the international language, however, an extraordinary amount of research has gone into ESL-related issues. There is increasing awareness that we cannot count on well-meaning but ill-prepared laymen to tackle the enormous task of leading these millions of people to a level of fluency that will allow them to function in a complex society or even communicate the basic needs of life. What complicates the matter is that new research and experimentation sometimes seems to negate long-established ideas about how languages are best learned, and the new teacher is left with the bewildering task of having to pick and choose between a vast array of methods, materials, and techniques.

As an over-view of some of the most influential thinking about ESL that has taken place over the past century, I have included here an article from an issue of the Japan Association of Language Teacher's Newsletter. The article is quite long, and because it summarizes so much material, it is impossible to shorten. It should, however, serve as a useful reference to some approaches and methodologies being used today.

AN ECLECTIC METHOD?

John F. Haskell

Many changes are taking place in language education today--as always--and there are many newcomers to the field who might appreciate a defining of terms. The following is an overview of English language teaching methodology with some general conclusions of a somewhat "eclectic" nature.

I. Grammar-translation Method

The Grammar-translation method, sometimes called the "traditional" method, consisted of the following basic tenets:

A. Read, then translate (into the student's native language).
B. Learn (often, "copy into your notebook"), the rules (again, in the student's native language).
C. Memorize (lists of) vocabulary items and their meanings (in the student's native language).
D. Write sentences (in the target language) using the memorized rules and vocabulary.
E. Read "good" literature (no matter how stylistically or grammatically complex or archaic), history, and other aspects of the target language culture.

Note: Foreign Language (FL) education, using this method did not generally intend to produce "speakers" of the language, only provide the broad liberal arts education necessary to produce a "well educated person" (who could read a foreign language). FL education was usually limited to those entering or in college. ESL (EFL) taught with the grammar-translation method was meant to be for language replacement rather than addition. Students were placed in regular English classes and expected to swim or sink, learn or leave.

Until W.W. I, bilingual ecuation (education in languages other than English) was common in the U.S. Anti-foreign attitudes during the first half of this century were reflected in such diverse ways as the closing of German schools, the placement of Japanese-Americans into camps, and the delay of Hawaiian statehood until 1959.

II. The Direct Method

As an approach to language teaching, the direct method was "ahead of its time." Devised by Gouin at the end of the nineteenth century and all but abandoned in the twentieth century except for a few stalwarts such as Harold Palmer, Otto Jespersen, and Emile de Sauzé, who held on until the thirties. The basic elements of the direct method are:

A. Exclusive use of the target language in the classroom. No translation or use of the students' language.
B. Step by step progression of material--generally from easy to difficult.
C. Meaningful exercises, i.e., meaningful use of the language.
D. Early use of writing.

E. Student self-correction of errors (mistakes). Students need to understand their errors.
F. Explicit formation of rules.

De Sauze, in the 1920's, added:

Note: Interestingly enough, most methodologies or approaches to language teaching that have developed in the twentieth century reflect the basic tenets of the direct method, in whole or in part--as you will see below.

III. The Audio-lingual or Aural-Oral Method

The 1940's saw a growing need for "other" language speakers both in the armed services and in the field of diplomacy, and at the same time there was a growing need to deal with the influx of foreign scholars that thronged into U.S. universities as European universities were closed by the war. Linguists Kenneth Pike, Charles Fries, and others, long experienced in working with American Indian languages and Bible translation, helped to develop an A-L (Audio-lingual) approach to language teaching. A-L methodology was the result of a "resurrection" of the direct method and the influence of structural linguistics and behavioral psychology.

Structural linguistics said (1) natural language learning occurs first through listening, then speaking, and then reading and writing. (2) Language is made up of three systems: phonology (sounds), morphology (word formation), and syntax (the arrangement of words in sentences) and these systems work exclusive of meaning. (3) Language appropriateness is determined by usage and not by prescription (the rules culled from grammar books and based on principles of written language). (4) All languages are different and unique (contrastive analysis). (5) Language (that is used) is constantly changing.

Behavioral-psychology learning theory (as advanced by B. F. Skinner, among others) said that language was a conditioned habit and that language learning was a mechanical process of stimulus-response strengthened by reinforcement of correct responses (behavior modification).

Sociology (and politics) still championed the "melting pot" theory and pedagogy (education) viewed English language learning by immigrants as language (and culture) replacement.

The resulting methodology consisted of:

A. Exclusive use of the target language.
B. Step-by-step progression of materials based on linguistic sequencing.
C. Use of language comparison (contrastive analysis) to "predict" error.
D. Mim-Mem (mimicry/imitation and memorization).
E. Mastery of language systems (in pronunciation classes, grammar classes, reading classes, conversation classes, and writing/composition classes). Structures and rules learned by example, demonstration not formulation, analogy rather than analysis.
F. Use of mechanical drilling to teach production and discrimination (choral and individual drills, substitution, transformation and completion drills, etc). Emphasis on question/answer (stimulus-response) type teaching.

G. Vocabulary building deferred until "intermediate" stage. Strict vocabulary control at beginning stages; emphasis on words with regular spelling and pronunciation, and high frequency, to reduce interference with mastery of structure.
H. Emphasis on speaking.
I. Use of language laboratories to provide practice.
J. Emphasis on language as communication rather than translation.

Note: The "classical" approaches to the A-L method are represented by such "methods" as (1) the Michigan Method, which came directly from Fries and Lado and the University of Michigan and was developed primarily for college level students. (2) The Army Method, which also came out of the University of Michigan and is now used at the Defense Language Institute and was aimed at intensive language learning for military and diplomatic personnel. (3) The Berlitz Method, which is the best known of the commercial adaptations of the A-L method, directed at people traveling overseas.

IV. Transition

In the late 1950's and early 1960's structural linguistics came under attack by Noam Chomsky and others (as did behavioral psychology). Developmental learning theory and the growth of the ESL teaching profession (TESOL) with its humanistic approach to teaching/learning produced many changes in second language teaching practices. Support for these changes was based upon research in a variety of fields.

A. In linguistics, Chomsky stated: (1) Language is innate (a product of a thinking brain and not habit formation). (2) Language is rule governed behavior. (3) "Correctness" is determined by the users of the language and is based on understanding (i.e., meaning cannot be separated from language). (4) All languages have "universals" or similarities (e.g., processes or elements in their basic systems). (5) Surface grammar (what we see, say and hear) is only a manifestation of deep grammar (the meaning, rules, and processes which we use to produce language). (6) Our language competence (*our ability* to use language) is not always accurately reflected in our performance (*how* we use the language).

B. Cognitive-mentalist psychology (as opposed to the behaviorists) states: (1) Language learning is the result of active brain utilization, not passive response to outside stimulus. (2) Child acquisition of language is reflective of, shows parallels to the developmental stages of his physical growth. (3) All children, whatever their language, go through similar stages and apply similar strategies in language acquisition.

C. In sociology: (1) studies in dialectology, particularly "Black English," brought new insights and emphasis on language variety (*non-standard* as opposed to *substandard*). (2) Bilingual education studies indicated the need for affective modes in education (understanding the emotional needs of children).

D. Pedagogy: (1) prompted by the Supreme Court (Lau vs. Nichols) finally found a legal (if not moral) justification for at least a "transitional" bilingual/bicultural language program for non-English speaking students. (2) Studies in second language acquisition showed the use of similar strategies and developmental patterns to those used in first language acquisition. (3) There was a re-emergence of bilingual education with emphasis (as a result of such programs as the Hawaii English Program and Black English studies) on language as an additive process rather than a replacement one. (4) Emphasis on individualization. (5) Growing (but still faint) concern for training, certification, and full-time employment of adult education, ESL, and bilingual teachers.

V. Variations on a Theme

A number of new approaches to second language teaching have come into being as a result, I think, of many teachers feeling that the basic A-L approach (as defined above) is somehow neither as affective or effective as it might be. As research and new thinking have provided new information about language acquisition, language learning, and learning in general, the A-L approach has been modified and often given new names to emphasize the major thrust of the modification (or the name of the author). The best progress has been made thanks to sensitive, thinking, trained teachers whose common sense and experience have provided us with new techniques and approaches. Below are some of the new/old methodologies (and non-methods). They are all basically direct method and audio-lingual in approach (with the exception of Counseling-Learning) and in large part are influenced by the cognitive-affective (humanistic and developmental) psychology and pedagogy of today.

A. Total Physical Response. Sometimes the *Asher* method. Utilizes extended periods of listening and following commands before speaking. Students learn by physically performing actions based first on commands of the teacher and then by commands from other students.

B. Aural Approach. The aural approach of *Wintz and Reed* asks the beginning language student to first listen to the teacher (or tape recorder). The only overt behavior is selecting pictures indicated in each utterance. Speaking occurs after basic grammar and vocabulary are learned. *Joan Morley* also suggests early and extensive listening but utilizes written response.

C. St. Cloud. Sometimes called the *CREDIF* Method or the *Audio-visual* method. Students are encouraged to speak by means of situations as presented by film and filmstrips.

D. Suggestopedia. Also called *Suggestology* or the *Lozanov* method. Uses non-verbal elements (tone of voice, music, facial gestures) as major factors of communication. Learning is in a comfortable "living-room" type of situation. Students listen to learn.

E. The Silent Way or *Gattegno* method. The teacher supplies a minimal amount of oral support and information. Student is required to "work it out" for himself. Visual stimulation by rods and charts and later, reading materials. No mechanical drilling of any kind. Emphasis on a "feeling" for the language.

F. Situational Reinforcement. Lessons using language (patterns, vocabulary) from situations which are reinforced by the reality of the situation itself. Situation dialogues and realia are used.

G. Modular Learning (or learning modules). Units (or modules) of lessons in some general sequence of difficulty of language, revolving around a single topic or theme, and encouraging a variety of patterns and structures in each lesson, reused and reinforced in succeeding lessons. Emphasis on realistic dialogue and topics of interest to the learner.

H. Pragmatics. The suggestion that emphasis in language teaching should be on linguistic forms in situational settings, recognizing that they are inseparable.

I. Counseling-Learning. Also called *Community Language Learning*. Student centered approach with the teacher acting as a counselor or mediator at the beginning and gradually becoming a part of the language learning group (community). Language based on what the student wants to say. Translation used in initial stages (student says what he wants to say and the teacher/counselor/mediator shows him how to say it in the target language) until student feels comfortable and capable of initiating or responding by himself.

Note: A number of other terms have been used of late with reference to method, technique or approach to language learning, teaching, or program planning. They are part and parcel of present day language teaching. (1) *Individualization*. An approach to classroom organization which emphasizes individual differences and the need to deal with each student as a separate individual. (2) *Sector Analysis*. A linguistic approach to language that emphasizes the manipulation of various elements in a sentence (connectives, nouns, substitute words, X-words and Wh-words, etc.) and a recognition of the variety of slots. Stress on student being able to identify elements before being asked to use them. (3) *Error Analysis*. Suggests a variety of causes of error (besides language interference) such as poor teaching and poor learning strategies, and language fossilization. (4) *Cognitive approach*. The acceptance that the student is a thinking human being who brings knowledge about language to his learning situation and also brings human experience and an innate learning ability. (5) *Communicative Competence*. A term, much in vogue of late, from a theory of language learning suggested by Dell Hymes. Perhaps similar in importance, in present language learning/teaching pedagogy, and to the same extent that Chomsky's theory of language (linguistics) is. Although the term is used indiscriminately in almost all new materials and in all discussions and evaluations of materials, most writers and speakers seem to be referring to that manifestation of communication which reflects our interest in the child as a human being, Piaget's developmental levels, Currans' whole learner concept, non-verbal communication, and a renewed interest in culture as a component of language learning. Perhaps its current popularity reflects our need for a comfortable cover term for the changes occurring in language teaching/learning practice--one that feels more comfortable than, say, eclectic.

VI. An Eclectic Method?

An eclectic *methodology* (or approach) is one which utilizes the best (most appropriate and/or useful) parts of existing *methods*. There is the danger in eclecticism, of creating a Frankenstein monster rather than a Cinderella. The use of the term "an eclectic method" suggests, in one sense, the need for a single, best, method to follow. It also suggests an inability to *be* eclectic.

As in the "pragmatic" approach of Oller and the "ethnomethodology" which Eskey finds appealing, there is a growing awareness among ESL teachers of the need to be concerned with teaching "appropriate" use of language. If not an eclectic *method*, then, perhaps we can come to terms with some general principles or attitudes, some conclusions that can be drawn from current research and thinking in the field.

A. Language learning must be meaningful, real.

B. Translation is a specialized language skill and is inappropriate for the beginning language learner (and most teachers) to rely on as a method of learning. It is a crutch that, though immediately useful, becomes harder and harder to throw away the longer it is used. As used in Counseling-Learning, it may be a useful tool in establishing an initial basis for comfortable communication.

C. Language learning should be done in the target language.

D. Mimicry, memorization, and pattern practice do not "teach" language. They may sometimes be appropriate techniques for a variety of classroom needs but are in general disfavor because of their mechanical (meaningless) nature, their overuse by teachers, and their tendency to be stilted and boring.

E. Reading aloud (oral reading) while useful during the decoding stage (when students, new to the English alphabet, are learning to associate letters and words with already learned language), does not teach reading. It is not useful as a tool for correcting pronunciation, and in fact, inhibits good reading skills acquisition. It promotes word reading (not useful in reading nor accurate for conversational pronunciation) and does not allow for normal regressions in reading; nor facilitate comprehension.

F. Vocabulary acquisition, the use of a large and varied vocabulary, should come early. Vocabulary should be dealt with in meaningful contexts. Retention is not required of all new items; but continuous, appropriate usage is encouraged. Lists of words promote translation and are another crutch that is hard to get rid of; e.g., multiplication tables, days of the week.

G. Reading and writing should not be delayed but taught as soon as the student is ready. Spelling interference is not felt to be the problem it once was.

H. Although structure is still generally accepted as being most efficiently taught in some organized way, language acquisition (developmental) strategies should be taken into consideration rather than exclusively linguistic ones. Teachers need not insist upon mastery of one pattern before moving on to another, nor the presentation of one item at a time, but should provide ample opportunity for reinforcement and continuous use of all patterns and structures in meaningful real contexts.

I. Most student errors are not caused by language interference (less than 10 percent according to Burt and Dulay and then, mostly in the area of pronunciation.) Learning strategies, incorrectly applied, are the cause of some 67 percent of student error. Attention should be placed on the regularities and the universals of language rather than on differences.

J. The first step in any class/program should be to determine what the student needs (and perhaps, more importantly, wants) to learn.

K. Second language students bring a great deal of experience and knowledge about language to their learning situation. Language learning is facilitated by helping the student relate to his own experience.

L. Communicative competence suggests that appropriateness and utility are crucial variables in language acquisition (and language learning must consider such things as non-verbal communication, kinesics, culture, stress, rhythm, intonation, and vowel reduction).

M. Language learning will not occur unless the student is able, wants to, makes a personal committment to learn. In whatever way you measure or define motivation, it will be the student's choice and decision that determines his language learning success. The expectation of the teacher and the program, and the support of the "community" will greatly influence that decision.

Note: As Larry Anger suggests, language learning can and should be enjoyable. Darlene Larsón likes to quote Benjamin Franklin on education and I think it is an appropriate maxim to conclude with. "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn."

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Question: The words "method" and "technique" seem to be used interchangeably among ESL teachers. Is there, in fact, any difference in the words as they relate to ESL teaching?

It is certainly true that the words are often used interchangeably, and among people who have a mutual understanding of what they are talking about, there is no problem. For the purposes of this discussion, however, there is a definite value in making a distinction between them and adding still another term useful to pedagogical training. I have chosen some quotations and ideas from an article by Edward Anthony entitled "Approach, Method, and Technique" that explain the differences. Basically, Anthony suggests that "techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach".[1]

An approach—any approach—is a "set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language and the nature of language teaching and learning. It states a point of view, a philosophy, an article of faith—something which one believes but cannot necessarily prove. It is often unarguable except in terms of the effectiveness of the methods which grow out of it."[2] In other words, our approaches to teaching are determined by all that we believe to be true about what language is, how language is learned, and how it is best taught. Whether or not we are consciously aware of our beliefs, they are going to effect what happens in the classroom even more than the particular textbook, activity, or style of discipline we choose. But unless we make a deliberate effort to study the language teaching and learning processes, the many choices we must make in class are likely to be based on a confused muddle of notions that grow out of our own experiences as teachers/learners. Rather than act purposefully on what we have learned to be true, we merely react to past experiences and emotions. Those experiences are vital, of course, but without an awareness of why we choose one technique over another, for example, there is not likely to be much consistency or coherence in the choices. Awareness of our basic assumptions about language, teaching, and learning, therefore, and the ability to state those assumptions articulately is extremely important. For a further discussion and examples of assumptions, see Part II, section 3.

Next in the hierarchical list of terms is "method". Method, says Anthony, is "an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based on the selected 'approach'. An 'approach' is axiomatic; a 'method' is procedural".[3] When evaluating a textbook, we should not only be trying to determine the author's underlying assumptions about language, teaching, and learning, but also check the methodology of the book, that is, how activities and grammatical items, for example, are presented. Within one approach there may be many methods, and we must choose according to the age, first language, culture, and previous ESL experiences of the student. Once again awareness is vital. We must not only know as much as possible about our students, but should, ideally, be familiar with a number of methodologies from which to choose, each of which must be, of course, consistent with our approach.

The last term discussed by Anthony is "technique". This is the one which most teachers understandably spend the most time working on because it has to do with what actually takes place in the classroom. Technique, says Anthony, is "implementational...a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective."[4] We fill our class times with techniques—activities which we hope will help students learn. We are delighted when they work and more often than not, irritated and frustrated when they do not. There are, of course, any number of reasons why a lesson may not accomplish the goal we have in mind for it, but one which we often overlook is that we failed to consider the appropriateness of a particular technique to the class for which it was intended. A technique may be a great success with one group of students but with another group, a dismal failure because the age, level of ability, culture, etc. is different. Furthermore, if a technique is inconsistent with the approach and method, it is likely to cause confusion or fail to accomplish its goal.

The use of songs is often an effective technique when teaching English to young children. In a class of junior high students, self-conscious about their changing voices, the same technique might cause acute embarrassment. A discussion about some topic of current interest might be just the right technique for a class of gregarious South American students learning English, but with more reserved Japanese, we might need to work out a way of adapting

that same technique to the cultural characteristics of the class. Some teachers are especially skilled in getting their students involved in role-playing activities, skits, and other theatrics, but that technique is going to be successful only when both the teacher and the students feel comfortable about it.

A final consideration in the whole issue of approach, method, and technique is that all must be subservient to the actual learning. No matter how much fun a technique is or how logical a method may be on paper or how orthodox an approach appears, the bottom line must be whether or not students are learning.

To summarize, then, we are well advised to think through our basic assumptions about language, teaching, and learning. These assumptions collectively determine our approach to a class. Based on the assumptions of our approach, we can decide which method(s) are appropriate to our particular situations. Once this procedural question has been resolved, the choice and adaption of techniques to be used in a given lesson becomes much easier and more logical.

[1]Edward M. Anthony, "Approach, Method and Technique," English Language Teaching. Jan. 1963, p. 63.

[2] Anthony, p. 63.

[3] Anthony, p. 65.

[4] Anthony, p. 66.

Question: Since I am new at this business, I do not really have any assumptions about ESL teaching. Those that I might have are not really reliable since they are based more on my limited experience with language learning than with any study or teaching experience. If assumptions are all that important, how can I go about getting some?

The fact is that all teachers operate with some set of assumptions though we may not always be consciously aware of what they are or how they manifest themselves in our teaching. One of the purposes of this manual and orientation is to help you become aware of what your personal assumptions are about language, teaching, and learning. In the process, you may wish to change, delete, or add to the assumptions you currently hold. Furthermore, your beliefs are almost certain to be modified as you become more involved in teaching.

Too few teachers make the effort to articulate what it is they believe about their work and as a result, the presentation is often muddled and there is little coherence to the course. Particularly in an ESL course where there is so much at stake not just in terms of the subject taught but also in terms of how students relate to the language, it is vital for us to have a clear sense of what we are teaching, how students learn, and what the best ways of facilitating the learning are. All of that should be established before attempting to choose a method, a text, or a technique.

The following list of assumptions about language, learning, and teaching is meant to be a stimulus for your own thinking about a personal approach to teaching. Each assumption is listed without explanation or supporting evidence. Rather than thinking them over in terms of whether you agree with them or not, I suggest that you read them only as examples of what assumptions are. Be reminded that they are quite different from goals and objectives and that they are personal statements of belief which may vary significantly even among equally trained teachers. Some of the assumptions listed come close to contradicting one another and are, in fact, included to show

the diversity of thought on a given issue.

Assumptions about language:

(1) The so-called "function words" (such as prepositions) of a language are more valuable to the beginning and intermediate learner of language than long lists of "luxury vocabulary" such as nouns and adjectives.

(2) More than a set of learned habits, language is a personal expression of one's self used in communication with others.

(3) The more abstract an idea to be communicated, the more complex the language needed to express it.

Assumptions about learning:

(1) People learn best what they want and need to learn.

(2) Learning about language, though useful, is different from learning the language itself.

(3) Language learners can learn from their mistakes. Students should be given the opportunity to experiment with a language without fear of teacher disapproval.

(4) As a new language learner, a student is often reduced to expressing himself in the simplest, childlike forms. If this causes humiliation, it can inhibit further learning.

Assumptions about teaching:

(1) Teaching must always be subservient to learning.

(2) Techniques and tools that are not consistent with an approach are only "tricks" and "hit or miss" attempts at teaching.

(3) Techniques and tools must be adapted to the student, not the other way around.

(4) Teaching how to learn is at least as important as teaching the subject matter.

(5) Correction is effective only when the student is ready for it. Self-correction is best.

Question: There seems to be so much that I could teach about English. How do I go about setting limits on what I should or should not teach in a given course?

To some extent, of course, the scope of a class is limited by its title, and some courses within the OCS ESL program have texts or materials which further determine the parameters of the course content. A few courses have a fairly complete curriculum which makes quite clear what each course should include. Teachers at OCS are given considerable freedom in course planning, but there is no doubt that such freedom is a mixed blessing. Some teachers may appreciate the challenge of creating a course while others find such freedom threatening and confusing. In any case, there is a need to set limits so both we and the students have some sense of direction and purpose in the course.

One good way to begin the task of designing a course is listing all the skills which seem to be appropriate for a given course. This process may require some group "brainstorming"—particularly if you are new to the level of the skill area (Reading, Writing, etc.). It is best to be exhaustive in the list but remain within the boundaries implied by the course name and level. Do not be concerned if you find that some skills are more or less specific than others at this point. There will be opportunites later in this limit-setting process to refine this initial list of skills. The list below suggests some skills that might be used in an ESL I Writing class. It is by no means exhaustive but does give an idea about the kinds of things that can be included on such a list.

1. write sentences
2. spelling
3. handwriting
4. syntax
5. end-sentence punctuation
6. subject-verb agreement
7. commas in series and compound sentences
8. articles (the, a, an)
9. copying
10. capitalization of proper names
11. short paragraphs
12. dialog writing

Next, group the skills into categories. You may find now or later that

Question: What are some suggestions I should keep in mind as I go about planning a lesson?

Except for the time spent in actual teaching, teachers probably spend the greatest amount of their working time in lesson planning. (And if they do not, they should!) Most teachers develop a personal style of lesson planning based on their experience of what works and what does not as well as the curriculum demands of the course. Unfortunately, too many of us are at least sometimes guilty of poor planning or even no planning at all. The result is almost always a wasted class period, wasted time, and wasted money. Demands on our time usually preclude elaborate lesson planning, and unless we are careful, we can easily slide into the "what-shall-I-do-today" syndrome.

There are several preventative measures that can be taken to avoid the dilemma of groping among a myriad number of choices for each day's lesson plan. The first, of course, is to have a clear sense of what the course is supposed to be about. This has already been discussed in the previous section (Part II, section 4), and its value for limiting the options in daily lesson plans cannot be over-estimated.

Another method which many teachers find helpful is the use of a cycle. Most of us have had at least a limited exposure to cyclical lesson plans in elementary school, for example, when we could expect spelling tests on Fridays or a new story on Mondays. The idea of a lesson plan cycle is to determine certain kinds of activities that are regularly used on the same day of each cycle. Cycles do not necessarily have to correspond with the days of the week, and, in fact, because of holidays, special assemblies, and other class cancellations, it is often easier not to build the cycle around a calendar week. There are a number of advantages in using a cycle, not the least of which is the time saved in lesson planning. If the students and the teacher know that 26 Steps, for example, is always used on the third and fourth days of the cycle, well, then, that settles it! The teacher knows that papers have to be corrected for those days and the students know that they will need to bring certain materials to class. Many students like this kind of regularity, and it helps to give the course a forward momentum. Some may argue that such regularity breeds boredom and indeed that is a

there are some skills from the first list which can be eliminated or refined. As you arrange the skills into categories, begin to assign priorities to the items within the group. There may be some which seem equally important, but there will certainly be others which stand out as particularly important or decidely less important. The categories below illustrate:

I. Word-level skills
   - A. spelling
   - B. handwriting (letter formation)
   - C. formation of plurals
   - D. capitalization
   - E. comparative and superlative forms of adjectives
   - F. capitalization

II. Sentence-level skills
   - A. basic parts of a sentence (subject, verb)
   - B. syntax
   - C. initial capitalization
   - D. end-punctuation
   - E. subject-verb agreement

III. Discourse/paragraph level skills
   - A. transition words
   - B. short paragraphs
   - C. dialog writing
   - D. indentation
   - E. consistency in verb tense

The next step in the process is to arrange these skill categories into some kind of sequence. This can be done in a number of different ways. Some skills are clearly sequential according to their levels of linguistic difficulty. Other teachers may wish to arrange skill categories according to the time which is likely to be spent in dealing with them. In other words, skill categories at the top of the list will get more attention than those at the bottom. Another way to sequence would be to use a "cycle plan" (see Part II, section 5) as the basis for arranging skill categories. It is even possible to have a combination of these three methods, or simply work with all three methods as a way of further refining and experimenting with the skills and categories. Some examples are given below:

I. Linguistic difficulty

A. pre-writing skills (copying, handwriting)
B. word level skills
C. sentence-level skills
D. discourse/paragraph skills

II. Time spent
A. sentences
B. words
C. discourse/paragraphs

III. Cycle (for a five-day cycle plan)
A. spelling, grammar points
B. 10 Steps
C. 10 Steps
D. spelling, paragraph writing
E. paragraph re-write, writing game

The last step in the process of setting up a course curriculum is determining goals--that is, what do you want students to be able to do with a skill? For example, if one of the skills is "writing paragraphs", a possible goal for this skill might be: "the student will be able to write an original paragraph based on his/her own experience or opinion using at least five sentences. The student will use sentence writing skills previously learned and show mastery of topic sentences, transitional words and phrases, and paragraph form (indentation, margins, etc.)". If that goal seems rather complicated and difficult to articulate, it is because it is! You may need help in writing course goals, and peer input may be useful in doing this. Goals may--even should--be adjusted and refined as student needs and abilities become clearer, but it is always easier to adjust something than it is to flounder about with no clear goal in mind at all.

A final reminder: the process of setting limits by listing specific skills to be taught, arranging those skills into categories, sequencing the categories and skills, and writing goals is time-consuming and is not an especially easy job to do. The rewards, however, make it all well worth the time and trouble. Both you and the students have a clear sense of direction, evaluation can be much more focused and revealing, and lesson planning is unquestionably easier because the "what's" and "when's" have already been

at least partially determined. Good course planning frees us to concentrate on the issues of technique and classroom management that are demanding enough without other distractions.

assignment based on specific writing skill

Day 5: writing "game"

Listening / Conversation

Day 1: drills and exercises with new words and expressions

Day 2: listening skills activities

Day 3: structured small-group conversations

Day 4: pronunciation and language "melody" practice

Day 5: dialogue practice

Whether or not a teacher chooses to use this kind of format, there is still the individual lesson plan which needs to be planned. If we have worked out the process suggested in the last section (Part II, section 4), however, we have a definite starting point and can readily focus on the specific skills to be taught and the techniques to be used in teaching them.

The following four questions may be useful for teachers to consider when developing a plan in which new material is going to be presented:

(1) What am I going to teach? That is, what is the specific skill I want my students to learn?

(2) What do I want students to do with that skill? This refers to the goal-setting process suggested in the last section (Part II, section 4). At this point, however, it may be necessary to further clarify and focus the course goal to a lesson objective. Generally speaking, an objective is more specific than a goal, and the more specifc you can be in writing a lesson plan objective the better.

(3) How will I know if students have learned what I have taught? This step requires you to look ahead, perhaps to the end of the lesson, a cycle, or even the course. What sort of evaluation will you use to determine what the students have learned? This does not mean, of course, that you must write a test before presenting the material to be tested, but it does mean that you should have a clear sense of how students are to be evaluated. In some cases, it is wise for the students to have that information, too. You may use something as informal as listening in on group conversations

or deciding ahead of time which "discrete points" of your lesson you want to observe in student responses (example: listen specifically for subject-verb agreement). A quiz or test is a more formal method of evaluation.

(4) How will I prepare the students to demonstrate their learning? The implication of this question is that the method of presentation and practice is going to be appropriate to the already established method of evaluation. Students who are going to have an oral evaluation should have ample opportunity for supervised practice in the specific skills on which they will be evaluated. The value of this question is also in directing us to the techniques which are most appropriate. Notice, by the way, that the issue of techniques to be used does not come up until a number of other more basic issues have been resolved.

The timing of a lesson plan is often as difficult to work out as is the question of what to include in the plan. The model below, which by no means solves all the problems of timing, suggests an ideal toward which we can work:

Presentation (the shortest amount of time)
Practice (controlled and focused on the specific skill)
Use (less controlled and more integrated with other skills; significantly more time than the presentation)[1]

There is still a whole range of other issues to be considered in lesson planning all of which will have at least an indirect bearing on all the lesson planning issues discussed above. If the issues above are somewhat general in nature—that is, they must be adapted to a class in order to have meaning—these other issues are more specific and, in fact, help define the context in which the lesson is to be used. The following list illustrates:

(1) How large is my class? What difference might that make in the choice of activies I have planned?

(2) What are the facilities in my classroom? Does it make a difference

that students will be working at tables in the library or the desks in a classroom?

(3) What is happening in the students' other ESL classes which could (even should!) have some bearing on what I plan in mine?

(4) What are the particular strengths of my class which I could use to develop weaker areas? Are they talkative? Is there a strong sense of group solidarity? Do students often help one another? Are they unusually consistent in their attendance?

(5) What holidays (Japanese or American) or special school events are about to happen which could be used to stimulate interest and skill-development in the class?

(6) What are the particular and general student goals for learning English which have some bearing on the types of activities used in class? Are students learning English for travel purposes, future schooling, business?

[1] The model and four preceeding questions about lesson plan timing are adapted from an unpublished article by Pat Moran, The School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont, 1982.

Question: What guidelines can I follow when trying to adapt materials to the particular needs of my class?

Creativity is sometimes claimed to be the most important quality a teacher can have. The teacher who uses the most interesting and varied activities in class and has the "biggest bag of tricks" from which to choose is supposedly the best. There is a proliferation of books on the market which features page after page of learning "games" and activites, and the most popular workshops at ESL teacher conventions are those which promise to be practical by providing new stunts and tricks to plug into just about any class. The fact is that all these games and activities are only as useful and helpful to student learning as the teacher is able to adapt them to a particular class. The bag of tricks is important to have and the bigger the bag and the more varied the activities the teacher can provide, the better. But no book or workshop can tell us which technique is right for our classes nor can they tell us how to adapt them to our students' particular needs. Only we can do that. "One size fits all" may be fine for tube socks but not for ESL activities. The ultimate activity has not yet been invented that can work in every class the same way every time.

The appendices of this handbook will include a number of suggestions of activities for classroom use as well as a reference list of texts from which materials can be taken. From time to time in-service training workshops will offer new ideas which can be incorporated into ESL classes. It is important to establish now, however, some guidelines for adapting all these ideas to specific situations. Perhaps one way to differentiate between the science and art of teaching is to think of the science as the knowledge and awareness of various methodologies and techniques and the art as the skill with which they are used. We teachers need to be constantly learning about the science of teacher, i.e., the tricks of the trade, and then increasing our "artistic" skill by learning how to make all those tricks work for our students.

In looking back on my own experience I recognize that there has sometimes been an imbalance in the art and science of my teaching. With my background in teaching high school English to native speakers of English, I was not

prepared for the set of new problems I encountered when I entered the ESL classroom. First, I did not have the "science" of the field in that I knew very littel about second-language acquisition and was unfamiliar with ESL methodology. As a result, I tried to use techniques that had worked well with native speakers but were unsuccessful with ESL students. Even after I began to acquire some knowledge about the field and appropriate techniques, I was not always skillful in implementing that knowledge. I over-used some of the best techniques to the point of boredom for the students, I often lacked a clear purpose in planning a given activity, and I was not always successful in gearing the level of difficulty in an activity to a class.

The kinds of problems I encountered as a new ESL teacher may be met by considering the following general issues in adapting materials and activities for the ESL classroom:

(1) Unless the lesson has a clearly defined purpose, the focus is likely to be misplaced on the activity itself rather than the linguistic (or whatever) skill it is supposed to be developing. Part II, sections 4 and 5 on setting limits and making lesson plans deal with this issue at length.

(2) Supplemental materials and activities can and should enhance the learning process. They provide opportunities for practice and use after presentation (see the paradigm for lesson planning and effective use of time in Part II, section 5). Practice not only makes perfect but it also makes permanent, and students need the opportunity to work with new skills in a variety of ways before mastery is achieved.

(3) Although the ESL program at OCS divides the class schedule into different skill areas (Reading, Composition, etc.), it is understood that the skill areas often reinforce one another, and teachers are certainly not restricted from having students do some writing in the Speaking class nor should students be expected to sit in silence during the Reading class. The priorities of a class are defined by its title, but supplemental activities and materials can incorporate other skill areas that reinforce the priority skills of a given class. We should, therefore, make a conscious and delib-

erate effort to choose supplemental activities and materials that sometimes isolate and sometimes combine skill areas purposefully.

(4) Part of the human dimension of learning involves variety and the opportunity to make choices. The best activities can lose their effectiveness when overused, and students can become too dependent on us if they are never given the opportunity to make choices. By offering a variety of supplemental materials and activities from which students can choose, students become more actively involved in the learning process, classes are more interesting, and the needs of individual students within a class are more likely to be met. (See page II-6-6 for more about this topic.)

(5) Despite the placement test given at the time of registration and all our efforts to create homogeneous classes based on achievement ability, there are, of course, no truly homogeneous classes. In choosing and adapting activities and materials, we do well in gearing our teaching toward the middle. This is not to say that we neglect the students who have trouble keeping up with the others or the ones who seem to have a greater apptitude for language learning, but there is value in having a general sense of the "class average" and teaching to it when the class is working together. There are other techniques which can be used to encourage or further challenge the students who do not fit in the theoretical middle.

Up to this point I have been discussing general considerations for both activities and materials. There are some other issues to be addressed that apply to each more specifically. For the purposes of this discussion, we will define "activities" as games and exercises that involve the whole class working together or at least in small groups. "Materials" are exercises or drills taken from a test which are more likely to be done individually. First, activities:

(1) The careful planning of logistics for an activity is extremely important and can, in fact, "make or break" it. There are at least four factors to be considered:

(a) class size: Is this activity best suited for a large or small group? Can it be adapted to one or the other? Is noise going

to be a factor if a large group is involved? What are the consequences if three people are absent or if all twenty-three students show up for a change? Does the activity require groups of two or three? If so, what do you do with the "extra" people?

(b) facilities and equipment: Plan ahead what is needed and be sure it is all ready to use. Is the room large enough? What are you going to do with the desks/tables/typewriters, etc.? Do you need chalk/paper/A-V equipment? Does the player work? Have you tried it?

(c) length of time needed: Some activites are short and can be repeated as many times as desired. What criteria will you use in deciding how often to repeat an activity? Other activities are longer and perhaps more complex. Is it best to introduce the activity at the beginning of the class or in the middle. Will the affect of the activity be ruined if it is not completed by the end of the class period? Is the length of the activity justified by what can be learned from it? How can I keep the pace of activity moving along so that we can work within the time limitations while maintaining interest and insuring that the learning process is really happening?

(2) The choice of activities is sometimes determined by the personality of the students who will be asked to participate in them. For example, role playing may work with one group but be disastrous in another. Could the role playing activity, however, be modified so that students could remain in their seats, play roles that reflect their own personalities and experiences, or "perform" only for each other rather than in front of the whole class? Some groups may enjoy activities that involve lots of physical activity and others may not. Perhaps the "rules" could be changed to permit students to remain in their seats. There may be groups who are hesitant about working together at all and the teacher may have to decide whether it is worth the trouble of breaking down whatever barriers there might be to commaraderie among the students.

(3) The complexity of a task is a factor particularly with classes at

the lower levels. No matter how valuable the anticipated results of an activity might be, it is not likely to be successful if students are baffled by the directions. The teacher needs to know exactly what is supposed to happen--what the rules of the game are, for example--and be able to explain them simply and clearly. Making up the rules as the game is being played is no good.

(4) Finally, there is the fun factor. Learning can be fun, and the work involved made less onerous when students are enjoying what they are doing. Students can, in fact, be so involved in the fun of an activity that they are not even conscious of the learning process going on. This is certainly not to say that learning is necessarily going on just because students are having a good time, but it does mean that sometimes a follow-up discussion is helpful in directing students' attention to the linguistic skills they were using to complete whatever the task was. Competition often helps activities be more fun--so long as the teams are equally divided--and even the dullest drills can be made more interesting by using sentences that have inside jokes about the class or poke fun at the teacher. (Poking fun at individual students is more dangerous and can backfire embarrassingly.)

Some of the issues listed above may have applicability for materials, but the following list is specifically related to them:

(1) Is the vocabulary and sentence structure of reading material (isolated sentences in exercises, drills, reading selections, etc.) appropriate to the ability level of the students? Does the purpose of the lesson allow for a level of reading that is challenging and necessitates sophisticated reading skills (determining meaning from context, for example) or would such a reading level detract from the main purpose of the material? Can the material be revised or rewritten to better suit the class? Should I pre-teach difficult vocabulary and clarify meanings of complex sentences?

(2) There are times when a teacher will find some material from a book (an exercise or drill, for example) in which the format is appropriate but the actual items in the exercise are not. Using the book material as a model, it is usually not very difficult to rewrite items to suit the particular needs of a given class.

(3) Many students appreciate and benefit from the opportunity of choosing between one or another exercise or even whether or not to do it at all. The reading packets used in ESL I Reading class are examples of this. On a more limited scale, students may have the choice of doing the odd or even numbered items in an exercise or choose between two different kinds of exercises that deal with the same skill. Once a teacher is familiar with all the options that can be used in practicing and using a particular skill, it is not very difficult to make them available. Some students may wish to tackle a more challenging exercise or do something creative while others learn best from a more structured approach. When we can present a range of things to do, students can choose those which are best suited to their learning styles and needs. Students who are not used to making choices such as these may need time to determine just what their criteria are in making choices, and we should not be surprised if students choose what they perceive to be the easy way out--particularly when the choices greatly differ in the time required to complete them or the level or the level of difficulty. The point is for us as teachers to be familiar enough with a wide range of materials (the science of ESL teaching) so that we can select and adapt a few which are similar in enough ways to provide a ahallenging choice for the students (the art).

Question: What do I do with quiet students who have trouble speaking up in class--especially during discussion time?

First of all it is important to realize that this may not be a problem at all for the student because s/he is behaving in a way which is consistent with his/her cultural background. If, however, we believe that discussion and "speaking up" are important skills to be learned, we may have a problem in helping students realize the value of such skills. The problem, therefore, may not be so much the student's quietness as it is the confusion about how to meet our expectations.

There are a number of questions which we should ask ourselves about our teaching before considering whatever problem a student seems to have in overcoming alleged problems of quietness. Among them:

(1) Am I doing all that I can to create an atmosphere in which a student can contribute without feeling threatened by me or by other members of the class?

(2) Am I certain that students understand what I am expecting them to do or are some confused about the directions?

(3) Are my expectations of the class and individual students within the class realistic or am I expecting a level of language performance that is inconsistent with past performance and learning?

(4) Am I forcing students to give opinions or answers to issues about which they lack interest or knowledge?

(5) Am I giving students sufficient time to work out the complexities of <u>what</u> they want to say as well as <u>how</u> they want to say it?

Once the teacher is satisfied with the answers to those questions, the following suggestions might be considered:

(1) Asian students rarely volunteer an answer or opinion. Even when called on, their responses are apt to be perfunctory. A technique which is more appropriate for a Japanese cultural context is a kind of game called "Speak or Pass". After giving students adequate time to think through what their responses are going to be, go around the circle giving each student the opportunity of speaking

or passing until the next time around. This technique may lack the spontaneity we expect in discussions among Americans, but it is the way that is often used among Japanese.

(2) The teacher should also consider the option of speaking privately to the student and as nonthreateningly as possible find out if there is a particular problem which they can work out together. If not, the teacher can explain the importance of contributing to the class discussion not just for its own sake, but for the value in language improvement.

Question: What should be my attitude toward drop-outs and potential drop-outs?

Few students who begin at Level I of the ESL program complete all six levels. There are a number of reasons for this, many of which suggest that the term drop-out with its negative connotations is not the best word to describe all students who leave the program before completing it. There is almost always some disappointment and perhaps even a sense of personal failure for us as teachers when a student leaves, particularly in the middle of a term. Understanding the reason for his/her leaving may help teachers have a more positive attitude about the matter and be supportive of students when they declare their intentions of terminating their ESL studies.

(1) A few realize that their reasons for entering the program were unrealistic and wish to get out rather than continue a program which has little value for them. That realization should be recognized as a positive one, and nothing that is said to a student about his departure should suggest to him/her that s/he has simply failed. After all, not everyone needs to be fluent in English, and realizing that may be an important step in the student's life.

(2) Some students have a limited time in which to learn as much as they can. They may be preparing for a particular job, test, or school and know from the time of their entrance into the program how much time they have to invest in the ESL course.

(3) Some students really do "flunk out" in the sense that their continued poor work in class does not make continued study advisable. We have a great deal to learn about "language learning aptitude", but there is certainly evidence to suggest that people have various capacities for language learning. Helping students become aware of their potential (or lack thereof) should be viewed as a positive process, and we must make every effort to assure a student who is apparently unable to master English that s/he is not a failure in every other aspect of life. Most of us can look back on our own foreign language learning experiences and remember how humiliating failure can be if we (or the teachers) regarded our ability to

learn that language as a reflection of our intelligence or our willingness to tackle a difficult task. "Stick-to-itiveness" may be a worthwhile virtue, but there is also something to be said for realizing that for some students, studying a foreign language is no more appropriate than a nonmusically talented person taking violin lessons.

Question: In courses such as Speaking and Listening/Conversation, how can I arrive at a report card grade that is fair and meaningful?

Traditionally there has been a certain mystique about grades which unfortunately has more often than not been counter-productive in education. A grade is probably the teacher's ultimate symbol of power, and there is often a certain sacredness about grades that prohibits anyone else--student, parent, fellow teacher, principal--from tampering with it except under the most extraordinary conditions. It is not the purpose of this handbook to argue for or against the merits of grades, but there is value in stripping away some of the mystique from grades which turns them into weapons and power symbols.

Arriving at a fair and meaningful grade in any class can be difficult, and in classes like Listening/Conversation and Speaking, it is especially hard to do because the nature of the evaluation is necessarily so subjective. Difficult problems such as this one cannot be resolved with simplistic answers, so we might be better off establishing some guidelines to help define the parameters within which "fair and meaningful" grades can be given.

(1) Avoid giving test and quizzes in any class simply to have a collection of numbers in the gradebook. It is not likely that any teacher would admit to doing such a thing, but it does happen. The issue of testing is dealt with in more detail in a later section (Part III, section 4), but it is relevant to emphasize here that tests and quizzes must have a more deliberate purpose than the mere grades which they generate.

(2) The flipside of the first guideline is that since a grade at the end of the course is required, we must conscientiously keep some kind of progress report throughout the course so that a grade is not based only on our feelings about the student's progress at the very end. A regular progress report may very well take the form of grades in a grade book, or it may be comments regularly written in a notebook. There should certainly be at least one comment or grade for each week of the course.

(3) There is little point in pretending that we can develop absolutely

objective criteria for evaluating listening and conversation skills although that remains an ideal toward which we should certainly strive. It is understood that weekly comments or grades are necessarily subjective. The final grade, based as it is on subjective evaluations thoughout the course, is also subjective. There is a sense, however, in which the final grade should be objectively determined using all the data which has been accumulated throughout the course. This does not necessarily require a mathematical computation of averages, but it certainly does require that we consider all the available data and not base the final grade on too intuitive a criterion. Above all, we must not allow our emotional feelings about a student's behavior, personality, or inter-personal relationships influence a final course evaluation of ESL skills mastery. Those are important issues that should not be ignored, but we must not allow them to have an inappropriately positive or negative effect on a skills evaluation.

(4) One criterion for a fair and meaningful grade is whether or not it comes as a surprise to the student. A course grade should <u>not</u> be a surprise to anyone. A student deserves to have a clear sense of how s/he is doing all the way through the course. It is our responsibility as teachers to make sure students understand in what ways our comments and grades influence the final course grade and be ready to explain in detail with supporting evidence how the final grade is determined.

(5) A final course grade should reflect the student's ability in all the skills areas with which the course is concerned. Further, it should be most influenced by those skill areas which are most important and least influenced by those which are not. That means, then, that a course grade should not unduly reflect those skills which are simply the easiest to test. Although spelling may be a regular, easily tested feature of a writing class, for example, it is actually a relatively minor part of the writing process. The writing course grade must, therefore, be much more than the average of weekly spelling quizzes. A final course grade must not only

be comprehensive but also proportionately reflective of the skills areas of the whole course.

(6) Perhaps the most important consideration in determining a course grade is the actual goals of the course. That is the standard by which student skill should be measured, and that assumes, of course, that course goals have been quite clearly articulated long before it is time to come up with a final grade. There is a degree to which nearly all teachers evaluate a student in terms of how his/her ability compares with other students, but that should be a second-consideration.

Question: I am not very confident in my ability to make tests and quizzes. What should I keep in mind when I have to write them?

Tests and quizzes are important forms of evaluation, and most of the ones we use are teacher-made. Standardized tests are used for placement purposes and sometimes for determining whether students should progress from one level to the next, but teachers are generally responsible for making the tests and quizzes used during the course. Student achievement and proficiency is evaluated primarily on the basis of teacher-made tests, and students spend significant amounts of time studying for (and worrying about) the tests we put together. The issue of evaluation has already been dealt with to some extent in Part III, section 3, but some specific suggestions and ideas about testing are included here.

There are a number of ways to distinguish between different kinds of tests, but one which is particularly useful is to determine to what extent a test is an integrative or a discrete point test. In an integrative test a student must use more than one skill to answer the questions correctly. For example, s/he may have to (1) listen to instructions given orally, (2) read a question, and (3) write an answer requiring knowledge of grammar, syntax, and spelling. Such tests give a good over-all indication of a student's ability in English, and when such information is desired, integrative tests are very valuable. They are much less useful, however, in determining how well a student has mastered a particular (discrete) point. Common types of integrative tests include dictation, Cloze, essay, and short answer tests.

In a discrete point test the teacher attempts to structure the test in such a way that only one skill is required, and that skill is, in fact, the one which the teacher intends to test. A minimal pairs listening test, for example, in which students merely indicate by a raised hand or a mark on a piece of paper whether or not two words have the same phonemes (1. bread / bread; 2. bled / bread) is a true discrete point test. Few tests, however, are able to isolate skills so completely that other peripheral skills are not factors. For example, in the following question the student must produce the correct form of the verb "make":

He's well known for _____ do with what he has.

At the very least the student must be able to read and comprehend the sentence, determine from the context which form of the verb is appropriate, and spell the answer correctly. Furthermore, this sentence uses an idiomatic expression ("to make do") which may not be familiar to the student. While this test item is ostensibly testing a discrete point--a relatively simple form of the verb "make"--there are a great many factors with which a student must deal in order to come up with the correct answer. This is not to say that it is a poor question or even that it is not a relatively discrete point test item (compared, say, with an essay question), but it is important that such a question be used with full awareness of what is being tested. Discrete point test items are successful--that is, they give a true picture of how well the student has mastered a given skill--only to the extent to which peripheral skills unrelated to the main issue of the question do not interfere with the student's ability to get the correct answer. This may not always be easy determine because there are times when there is some question about whether the student has not mastered the "peripheral skill" or the main point of the test item.

A general rule of thumb in the use of discrete point and integrative tests is that the lower the ability level of the student, the more valuable a discrete point test is. The reason, of course, is that a low ability level student has mastered very few skills that can be taken for granted. As the student's ability increases, we can assume that more has been mastered and the mastered skills will not interfere with the student's ability to manipulate the "new skill" which is, in fact, the main point of the test item.

Perhaps even more important than the form we choose for a test is the function we have in mind for it. The function should have a significant influence on the form. The following list of eight possible functions is by no means exclusive (nor are the items in the list mutually exclusive), but it does give some indication of how form and function can and should be related. We stand a better chance of making a good teacher-made test when we are aware of the function(s) of our tests and evaluate our ability to test in light of the stated function(s).

In answer to the question "What do I want this test to do?", we might

answer that we want it to:

(1) determine readiness. We may get a very strong indication of what the "next step" in our teaching should be from the results of a test. This probably should be a consideration when any test is given, but there are times when that could be the main reason for the test.

(2) find out what students don't know. This would be a kind of diagnostic test and must be sufficiently difficult so that some items will be answered incorrectly. Furthermore, the items must be discrete enough so that we are able to determine precisely what the student doesn't know.

(3) find out what students know from what they learned in class as well as from other sources. This function requires a more integrative test.

(4) find out what students have learned specifically in class. Discrete point items would be important for a test with this function. Ideally we would want all students to do well on this test although that may not always happen.

(5) find out how well students can apply what they have learned to new situations. On a continuum showing a discrete point item test at one end and an integrative test at the other, this test might fall somewhere in the middle.

(6) discriminate between students. Either an integrative or discrete point test could be used in a placement test that is meant to discriminate between students based on their ability. It must be difficult enough to indicate differences but not so difficult that everyone does poorly.

(7) motivate students to study. Discrete point tests are much easier to study for, and students should know exactly what and how to study if this function is important.

(8) find out how well I've taught. If one of our assumptions is that teaching is subservient to learning, we must accept at least some of the responsibility when students do poorly on a test. More specifically, when there are certain items which many students

answer incorrectly, we are obliged to determine if it was because we did not teach the necessary skills well enough, we did not structure the test items clearly, or we failed to motivate our students sufficiently to study for the test.

Finally, there are five characteristics of a good test which we would do well to keep in mind as we construct teacher-made tests. Good tests are:

(1) valid. There are three kinds of validity that tests generally have:

(a) face validity. This refers to how well the test appears to be measuring what it purports to measure. A test with high face validity gives the student a sense that his skill has been measured accurately. (The Cloze test, however, is one which correlates highly with listening comprehension tests but does not have a high face value because it does not look like a listening comprehension test.)

(b) concurrent validity. Scores on a test with concurrent validity will correlate well with scores from tests which measure the same skills. It is not usually practical or even possible to give two tests on the same skill simply to determine a test's concurrent validity, but generally, test results should be consistent with our informal assessment of student ability.

(c) construct validity. The form (construction) of a test should be appropriate to what is being tested. In other words, if we are trying to measure a student's ability in oral English, then what we use must be constructed in such a way that students are required to speak.

(2) reliable. Has the test been administered in a way that will result in an accurate assessment of student ability? If there have been disturbing noises and interruptions, if the print on the test paper is too light, if there are confusing typographical errors, if some students have been cheating, the test scores will not give a reliable picture of the students' ability.

(3) discriminatory. Tests which are too difficult or too easy are not useful tools for finding out what students do/do not know. Even on an achievement test where we would like everyone to do well,

test items should discriminate between students who have mastered the skills included and those who have not.

(4) practical. We must be conscious of how much time is required in making, taking, and correcting a test. A general rule of thumb is that the more time we spend in making a test, the easier it is to correct. Multiple choice tests are very time-consuming to make but easy to correct while an essay question takes relatively little time to write but more time to answer and correct.

(5) appropriate. Tests need to be culturally appropriate to the students taking them. We must not take an awareness of American culture for granted in writing test items for ESL students in Japan. Culturally inappropriate questions can seriously affect the reliability of the test results even when culture is not the main issue of the question. Japanese students are not used to expressing original ideas in a format consistent with western logic, and their ability to deal with essay questions is going to reflect this cultural characteristic. And I once learned the hard way that I should not ask students to use "+" and "0" on a true/false quiz. In trying to discover why so many students had done poorly on the quiz, I found out that in Japanese schools "0" is used for a true statement and "X" is used for false ones!

Question: How and when should I correct student errors?

ESL students make errors in all four of the linguistic skill areas (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), but the comments here will be confined to correcting errors in speaking and listening. Both pose special problems for correction and will be dealt with separately.

First, there must be a recognition that students speak in class for a variety of reasons which must be taken into account when deciding how and when to make corrections. A student may be answering a question or making a response that is related to the specific linguistic issue of the lesson. At other times students ask questions or comment in less linguistically structured contexts. They may, for example, be expressing an opinion in a class discussion or simply chatting with friends. Our sensitivity to the context of these various "speech acts" when deciding whether or not and how to correct errors may very well determine how willing our students will be in experimenting with their new language skills.

Another consideration in correcting spoken English is the way in which it is done. That is, we need to develop an awareness of how we point out errors, evaluate the effectiveness of each way, and perhaps experiment with new ways. Listed below are some of the most common techniques teachers use to point out errors and/or make corrections. It may be useful for developing the awareness and new techniques mentioned above:

Student error: "I get up early this morning."

Teacher correction:

(1) Not "get"; it's "got".

(2) I got up early this morning.

(3) This morning I.....

(4) "Get" is present. You need the past tense.

(5) What's the second word?

(6) Students? (Elicit the correct word from the class.)

(7) mmmmmmm (disapproval)

(8) What?

(9) Again. What did you do?

(10) You got up early this morning.

(11) After you got up, did you have time for breakfast?

(12) "Get?"

(13) Try it again. Repeat, please.

(14) Silent gesture indicating there is an error, then pause to give student time to self-correct.

(15) Encourage other students to supply correction.

(16) Point to a grid which indicates the type of error made so student can self-correct.[1]

Still another consideration about correction in spoken English is when it should be done. There are times when immediate correction is best, particularly if the error is related to the linguistic skill of the lesson. There are other times, however, when it may be better to wait. Frequent interruptions for error correction during a class discussion could be deadly, and yet it may be of particular value because it is based on "natural speech" rather than on responses in drills and linguistic exercises. One effective way to handle this situation is take notes—as unobtrusively as possible—listing student errors as they occur. It is important to write the error in the context in which it is made and not the corrected form. At the end of the discussion this list can be quickly edited down to a manageable number of items for class consideration. Three criteria to use in deciding which items to use are:

(1) Which items have the widest applicability?

(2) Which items represent types of errors frequently made?

(3) Which items have been dealt with in class before but apparently need more work?

Another option which is particularly helpful to use with students who are reasonably fluent but make frequent errors (verb forms, inappropriate vocabulary usage, etc.) is to speak with them privately. Ask them to monitor one or two aspects of their speech (be sure it is a reasonable request) and try to determine how much and when they want to be corrected. You might even work out a "secret code" (a raised eyebrow, a tug on the ear) for you to use when the student makes an error of the type s/he has agreed to work on.

Correcting errors in written work is no less complex than working with spoken English. Students write for nearly as many different reasons as they speak, and the way we correct can directly influence the extent to which students are willing to experiment with written English. A further complication is that while pronunciation is not an issue with written English, the mechanics of writing are far more complex than with speaking. In addition to all the problems of sentence formation inherent in oral English, students must also cope with spelling, punctuation, organization, handwriting and legibility, and the peculiar conventions of a writing assignment (the form of a friendly letter, for example). The point is that we must be aware of how complex the act of writing is--particularly in another language--and be sure that our corrections address all the skills involved yet do not overwhelm the student.

Before discussing correction, however, it is important to examine at least briefly the writing assignment students are asked to do. This is not at all unrelated to the issue of correction because the very nature of the assignment will directly influence the frequency and kinds of errors students are likely to make. We must not suppose that assigning writing projects is synonymous with teaching writing nor that students necessarily improve their writing skills in direct proportion to the amount of writing they are asked to do. It is not my purpose to deal with the broad issue of how writing is best taught in this section, but a few questions may be helpful in developing an approach to writing in general and to creating assignments in particular:

(1) Is the assignment appropriate to the ability level of the students? Students who are struggling with simple sentences and have difficulty at the word level of written English should not be asked to write a composition or even a paragraph. There is great power for a student in the knowledge that s/he has done an assignment well--even perfectly or native-like--and providing assignments in which that is an attainable goal is certainly valuable.

(2) What is the focus of the assignment? Or, why have I given the assignment? Would it be useful for me to provide the structure, an outline, the details, a topic sentence or anything else that would free the student to focus on a limited range of writing skills--the main point of the assignment--rather than have to

cope with everything at once?

(3) Are the directions clear? Students can hardly be expected to complete an assignment if they do not know exactly what is expected of them. This is not to say that all assignments need to be highly structured with little opportunity for creativity, but it does mean that the parameters of an assignment need to be clearly delineated.

(4) Have students done writing assignments in the past that were a natural preparation for the assignment that is about to be given? In other words, have many of the skills required for completing the new assignment already been worked with so that students are not overwhelmed with too many new thing at once?

When students are given the opportunity to succeed because the expectations we have for them are appropriate and reasonable, there is a good chance that they will do well. That is the ideal, of course, and we certainly do not need to assume that if a student makes an error that the teacher must bear the full blame because of a poor assignment. (If a number of students either fail to complete the assignment or do it poorly, the teacher may, however, find it expedient to examine the nature of the assignment in light of the considerations listed above.)

So how do we correct errors in written English? There are a number of options, each with its advantages and disadvantages and the best one is that which best suits the assignment, the student, and the teacher. Just as the nature of various assignments varies, so do the learning styles and needs of students and the time limitations and expertise of teachers.

Listed below arefour useful ways to approach error correction in written English:

(1) point out errors: The teacher uses a system of underlining, circling, or abbreviating to mark errors. Notations can be in the body of the writing itself or in the margins. Students then use the notations to re-write their work correctly. The advantages of this system are that it allows students to correct their own errors and it is usually a rather quick way to grade the paper. The disadvantage is that the emphasis is entirely on errors and a paper with basically good content could be covered with red ink.

(2) make corrections: The teacher rewrites sections (sentences or paragraphs) of the assignment with all corrections included. With this sytem students can see the difference between their writing and the corrected form. The problem with this technique is that it takes quite a bit of time, students may not take more than a cursory look at the corrected form, and once again there may be more emphasis on errors than is desired.

(3) write comments: The teacher writes a note at the end of the paper being careful to comment on both the mechanics and the content (ideas) of the paper. This may be done in conjunction with one or both of the techniques described above. Using this form of correction allows the teacher to draw attention to specific qualities and problems in the paper and, of course, it can be quite personal. The technique does take considerable time, however. Unless the teacher can develop a way of writing pointedly focused comments, a too-short note can be so bland and innocuous that the student has no clear idea of what was good or bad about the writing.

(4) use a check list: The teacher uses a check list which can be adapted to each assignment if necessary and includes items having to do with all the skills the teacher wishes to evaluate. This may be the fastest and most comprehensive of all the techniques described and may aid in arriving at the least subjective grade. If used by itself, however, students may regard the checklist as quite impersonal and make no particular effort to go back to their writing and make corrections. Furthermore, making a checklist which covers all the areas needed and which weights each item appropriately is quite difficult.

1 Adapted from notes by Bonnie Mennell of the School for International Training M.A.T. staff, Brattleboro, Vermont, 1982.

Question: I cannot speak any Japanese. How can I communicate with beginning ESL students in a way that is clear and understandable?

A knowledge of Japanese can be useful in gaining insight into student errors and in planning strategies to deal with special language problems which Japanese students of ESL usually have, but it is by no means essential. Even if we have some command of the language, it should rarely be used in class. In fact, it is probably best if students know from the start that their communication with us must be in the target language.

There are, on the other hand, certain suggestions that could be made about how we can communicate in clear, simple English. All too often there is the temptation to speak loudly, use baby talk, or use a more formal level of speech than would ordinarily be used in the false hope that such tactics will aid communication. It is probable that they will not do anything of the kind.

Developing an awareness of our own speech patterns is essential. Most people are not even aware that they use countless idiomatic expressions and long, convoluted sentence structures in their normal, everyday speech. When speaking to another person who knows the same language, we expect the listener to fill in gaps of logic, overlook grammatical oddities, finish incomplete sentences, and sort out the twists and turns of half-formed ideas as we try to complete them orally. Those are all essential skills we develop even as children, but they are not skills that are easily taught to ESL students from a textbook. The students use these skills, of course, when conversing in their own language but they are not easily transferred to a new language. Teachers can and should work with "reduced speech" (example: "I wanna go") activities but that is only part of the problem.

The following list of suggestions may be useful for teachers who find it necessary to communicate with students who have little experience in understanding spoken English:

(1) Be sure you know precisely what it is you want to say before starting to verbalize it. This is particularly true in giving directions. Do not assume that students can figure out exactly

what you want them to do if you are not absolutely sure what you have in mind yourself.

(2) Do not hesitate to use hands, face, and indeed your whole body to enhance your verbal communication. This is not always appropriate and can even be confusing if not used skillfully, but a physical demonstration of what you expect the student to do is almost always helpful for students who are struggling to put language and concepts together. Props are also helpful. James Asher in his work with Total Physical Response has shown how listening comprehension can be dramatically improved through the use of physical activity.

(3) We all use idiomatic expressions far more than we realize. It is not enough to limit the use of "big words"; we must also be careful about using shorter words which have many idiomatic meanings. The word "get", for example, is a short, simple word but when combined with certain other words, the meaning can be obscured. With prepositions we have "get up," "get down," " get on," "get off," "get in," "get out," "get by," "get over," etc. Even those expressions have several meanings. ("I'll get off the bus" and "Get off it!") Add "get" to other kinds of words and we have expressions like "get lost" and "get sick", neither of which are particularly related to the "get" in "Please get the newspaper." It is important for the teacher of beginning students to be aware of these problems and when possible, use alternate--though still natural--expressions. "Did you get sick?" could just as clearly be "Were you sick?" and "You'll get over it" could be expressed "Don't worry" or "You'll forget about it." The guideline here is to "keep it simple", "it" being not just the vocabulary but also the concept.

(4) Clear speech probably communicates better than too-slow speech. It may be necessary at first to avoid contractions and common forms of reduced speech ("You've gotta get it done"), but clear enunciation can help here, too. Too-slow speech or unnatural pauses can inhibit the natural train of thought in a sentence and obstruct communication.

(5) Teachers spend a lot of time asking questions which students are expected to answer. One reason why the results of this technique are not as effective as we might like them to be is that students often have trouble sorting out from a long question exactly what kind of information is being requested. This can be remedied by simplifying the question or changing it into a straight-forward statement followed by a question. Note this example:

What reasons can you think of that might explain why English is recognized as the international language?

Why do think English has become the international language?

English has become the international language. Why?

English is the international language. Why?

(6) Finally, it is generally true that the more abstract the idea, the more difficult it is to understand or express it. There is little value in asking Level I students, for example, to explain the aesthetic values of the Japanese tea ceremony--no matter how interested you and they may be in the topic. It may be appropriate, to ask someone who is familiar with the tea ceremony to describe what s/he is doing during the ceremony. Also, there may be times when a grammatical explanation may seem to be the quickest way to explain why a certain word must be used in a particular context. That may not be the most effective way, however, if you find yourself using abstract grammatical terms which may not be fully understood by the students. Offering examples of the right and wrong use of the word may be the better way.

Question: What should I do when students speak Japanese (or some other language than English) in class?

There are probably as many different opinions on this issue as there are teachers. Generally, teachers who are able to speak or understand the students' first language tend to be more lenient in allowing languages other than English to be spoken in class. Teachers who are mono-lingual or at least do not speak or understand the students' first language tend to be more strict. Some teachers will even do some of their teaching in Japanese while others will charge money from students who use Japanese among one another. Between those two extremes is a wide range of other opinions which are often determined by the type of class, the ability level of the students, the purpose of the course, etc. Students, too, vary on the issue. Some try hard to confine themselves to English and will even encourage others to do the same while others make no apparent effort to use English even when they have the ability to do so.

Rather than insist on hard and fast rules, we might be better off in considering some guidelines that will help us know if and when the use of nonEnglish languages in class should be permitted.

(1) Teachers who do not speak or understand the students' first language will not, of course, even be tempted to use it in teaching. The temptation to use it rises proportionately, it seems, with one's ability. There are times when a brief explanation or just a word in Japanese will clarify something quickly and efficiently. Unless there is particular reason for wanting the students to struggle with a difficult explanation or definition, occasional use of Japanese certainly seems to make sense. Students must understand, of course, that they should not depend on frequent translation. This brief Japanese translation may come from the teacher or it may come from a few students who were able to understand the teacher's explanation, then are asked to explain to others what is going on.

(2) Though most of the ESL students at OCS are fluent in Japanese,

there are often a few who are not (Chinese and Koreans, for example). When non-Japanese speaking students are in the class, it is quite possible that the teacher's use of Japanese may make them feel further isolated and possibly even resentful. Japanese students should understand that, too.

(3) It usually seems best to deal with the problem of students' inappropriate use of Japanese on a class or even individual basis. While it is certainly desirable for students to use English in class, we should appreciate how peculiar it may be for students to communicate with each other in English--particularly about topics not related to school. Furthermore, we must never give the impression that there is something inferior with our students' first language. Punishing the use of Japanese certainly does not do much to foster a positive attitude toward bilingualism. Some classes and individuals-- especially at the lower levels--may need to work with listening comprehension and other skills before being expected to communicate completely in English. We simply have to be sensitive to students' needs and abilities, encourage students to try English as much as possible, but allow for individual and situational differences.

(4) There are times when we must insist that English be used in class and other languages not be used. Students can and must learn that there are times when one language is appropriate, the other is not, and mixing the two is equally inappropriate. Some students in the regular high school classes often switch from one language to the other mid-sentence in a way which may communicate with their friends on campus but with few others. We must devise non-judgmental ways of indicating this to the students without suggesting that a non-English language is in itself inappropriate. There is, understandably a fine line between being firm about which language should be used and implying that any other language is inferior. The latter can manifest itself by being unduly harsh in discipline or it can be as subtle--but equally damaging--as laughing at first language interference problems when a student is making an effort

to use English. Our awareness of this potential problem can help in preventing student misinterpretation of our intentions, but we must also make a conscious effort to reinforce bilingualism and not unconsciously foster monolingualism in a second language.

Question: What kinds of things can I do--short of going to graduate school--to improve my professional skills as a teacher?

Probably the first thought most people have when planning strategies for self-improvement involves the study of some book or article. At OCS there are some excellent books and articles available which can help teachers improve their ESL teaching skills. Practically speaking, however, this is not always possible. Particularly when dealing with a technical subject in which we have little expertise, we are not sure which book is best and often do not even have enough books from which to make a choice. Furthermore, a book may not address the specific questions we have or may be written in a style that is too abstract for our understanding. Finally, even with the perfect book in hand, there is the problem of finding time to read and and study it. This is not to say that books are not useful tools for self-improvement, but they are certainly not a panacea.

Reading may be the least threatening way to explore new and improved teaching ideas because we can invest as little or as much as we want into the process, and no one else needs to know about it. For many teachers, having another teacher or a supervisor observe their teaching is a highly threatening situation because it so often is associated with job security or pay increments. Those, however, are not issues at OCS. Many teachers dislike supervision because they do not know what to expect and do not know what the observer is going to look for. That is an understandable concern but one which the teacher and the supervisor can work toward alleviating.

First of all, it is important for both the teacher and supervisor to be mutually agreed on the purpose of an in-class observation. It should be clear to both that the purpose is to help you improve your skills and anything that detracts from that (criticism without suggestions for improvement or unmerited praise) is inappropriate. Secondly, you can help a supervisor and yourself by clearly indicating before the visit what you would like the supervisor to watch for, comment on, and make suggestions about. This is helpful to you because it requires you to monitor your own teaching, articulate those areas in which you feel weak or feel the need for change and

improvement. It is helpful to the supervisor because it helps him focus on those areas in which you are most ready to work.

Some supervisory observations may be required, but there is certainly nothing other than the peculiarities of individual schedules to prevent you from asking fellow teachers to visit a class or even just a part of a class during which you want to experiment with something new and need outside input on it. Once again, make it clear what you want your colleague to comment on and be sure to schedule time to discuss the observation as soon after class as possible while it is still fresh in your minds.

Another self-evaluation and improvement technique is to take a careful look at what actually happens in any one given class. This is different from evaluating a lesson plan since every teacher knows that what one plans to happen is not always what actually happens. Video-taping a class is a good way to do this, but only if both you and the students feel comfortable with that. If you decide to use the video-tape, it might be wise to tell the students why you are doing this so that they realize that the focus is really on you and not them. Whether you decide to use the video-tape or not, the focus of your self-evaluation should be clear even before you choose which class to use in the process. There are at least two ways to do this. One is make up a list of questions about your own performance in the class. The following are examples:

(1) How much talking am I doing in the class. Am I monopolizing the time? Am I giving sufficient instruction?

(2) What is the nature of my talk in class? How much time do I spend lecturing? Asking questions? Disciplining? Giving instructions?

(3) How has my behavior helped/hindered student learning?

(4) What would I do differently if I could teach the class again?

Another way of using this kind of self-evaluation is to think through the details of what has happened in a class and determine how your assumptions about teaching, learning, and language have or have not been reflected in it. This can be done by simply asking yourself why you did what you did or said what you said. If you find that what actually happens in a class does not reflect your assumptions, something has got to change. Either your stated assumptions do not indicate what you really believe or you have not yet

found ways to "live out" your assumptions in actual teaching. This process of refining your personal assumptions and developing awareness of how assumptions are or are not reflected in techniques can be an invaluable aid in your development of teaching skills.