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Becoming Professional

Shawn Elyn Gutshall
SIT Graduate Institute

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BECOMING PROFESSIONAL

Shawn Elyn Gutshall
B.A., The Evergreen State College 1978

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

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ABSTRACT

This paper is about the issues which I felt were crippling me professionally and the means by which I was able to overcome them. My second internship, done in August directly after completing the MAT Program in June, is the central focus. The entire discussion covers a time period of five months and is divided into three sections: pre-internship preparation, the internship experience, and a post-internship teaching position. Section I discusses the work I did prior to the internship which helped me establish specific objectives and guidelines to follow for obtaining my goal. Section II talks about the specific aspects of the internship which contributed to my success. Section III evaluates my internship accomplishments from the perspective of a teaching position I had immediately following the internship which was a time ripe for assessment and testing of what I had just learned. The conclusion is an overall evaluation of the entire time period with an emphasis on my own criteria for determining my success.

This project by Shawn Gutshall is accepted in its present form.

Date May 21, 1986

Project Adviser Claire M. Stanley

Project Reader Aveen Kerrisk

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INTRODUCTION

The thoughts and situations discussed in this paper span a time period of about five months and are centered around my internship teaching English in the International Students of English Program (ISE) at The Experiment in International Living (EIL) in August 1985. The goal of my internship was to develop a feeling of confidence, competence and professionalism as a teacher. Three ways I chose to meet this goal included: 1) the pre-preparation I did in July; 2) the teaching and the journal I kept of my thoughts and experiences during August; 3) the evaluation I made of what I learned and how I did or didn't reach my goal.

The decision to focus my second internship and thesis topic on this subject matter seemed to be a natural choice for me. It fit in with the steps I had been taking even before embarking upon my year odyssey with the Master of Arts in Teaching Program (MAT) at the School for International Training (SIT). As for most MAT students, the choice to come to SIT marked a significant point of change in my life, one I deemed necessary for my overall development as a person. It was time to become a professional adult in society and graduate school seemed a viable option for meeting this need. I wanted to get training in an area of interest, feel secure about what I learned, and then find a professional job. By June I had successfully completed the course work and winter internship of the MAT Program, and I had culled a lot of theory regarding the teaching of language, but I didn't feel secure about myself as a professional teacher.

Because of this I felt anxious about entering the professional world. I knew I needed to overcome this fear before venturing forth and hoped my required second internship would meet this need. For those who experience that gnawing anxiety due to inexperience or lack of confidence, I hope this synthesis of the work I did before, during, and after my internship will shed some light of encouragement and comfort. Fortunately for me, the theme of professional development for my thesis topic was absolutely appropriate, and working with it has yielded far more than I ever expected.

The writing of this paper has helped in the on-going process of my professional development since completing the MAT Program. This paper serves three purposes: 1) fulfilling the final requirement for my Master's degree; 2) acting as an evaluation of what I learned through the internship and continue to learn now; 3) offering insight and encouragement to others who may have thoughts and experiences similar to mine when I completed the course work for MAT in June.

The format of the paper follows the time sequence of events. Section I covers my pre-internship preparation which included re-reading some of the assigned and suggested books from the fall quarter of the MAT Program, and observing English classes which were similar to the one I would be teaching. It consists of two chapters, Reading and Observation. In Reading I discuss the insights and inspirations the authors gave me with regard to my particular areas of concern. It also includes how this information offered key focal points for observing and subsequently teaching. In Observation I discuss the notes I made while observing in connection with what I was reading and what I was thinking. This effort gave me ideas to think about which later served as guidelines in helping

me achieve my goal.

Section II encompasses the internship in August and consists of three chapters, Working With Bonnie, Lesson Planning and Being Specific. What I learned while teaching is conveyed in these chapters. Working With Bonnie focuses specifically on the relationship I had with my supervising teacher, what I learned while working with her, and how she contributed to my growth as a professional teacher. Lesson Planning discusses the details I learned about effective lesson planning from my supervising teacher. It also mentions how acquiring this information and using it improved my overall confidence and control in the classroom. Being Specific touches upon other challenges I faced and significant skills I learned, or became aware of, while teaching which were related to my main objective. The insights I gained from reading and observing are woven into the underlying theme of this section which focuses on what I learned practically. The overall significance of this section relates the contribution of each lesson/learning experience to the achievement of my teaching goal.

Section III covers a subsequent teaching position I had in the fall with the same program where I did my internship. It includes three chapters, each being a sequel to those in Section II. They examine my teaching and thinking in relation to what I had learned in August. This teaching experience offered an excellent backdrop for testing and assessing what I felt I had accomplished during the internship, and also gave me an opportunity for ongoing learning and growth.

The Conclusion follows this section. It is an overall evaluation of these teaching experiences in relation to my primary goal. It also

includes thoughts as to where I will go from here.

The ISE Program at EIL is offered year round as an intensive four or eight week program depending on the time of year. Instruction is five hours daily from 8:30-11:30 and 1:00-3:00 Monday through Friday. There is no real curriculum format, but there are suggested guidelines to follow. The general areas covered in the classroom include grammar, pronunciation, functions and situations, culture and conversation. All four language skills are incorporated into the daily lessons. Students work in a live lab daily for a minimum of 40 minutes and have lessons with video, TV sitcoms or current news, from three to five times a week for a minimum of 45 minutes.

Field trips, planned and orchestrated by the teacher, are offered at least once a week. They generally follow a theme being studied in the class each week, e.g., health care in the U.S.; nutrition and food from the perspective of restaurants, grocery stores, co-ops, and health food stores; the work place and work values; education; and getting to know your community through a town survey.

Also each week there is a program community meeting at which time all the ISE classes join for 30 minutes for collective announcements and entertainment provided by the students themselves. This time provides an opportunity for a cultural exchange of songs, dance, skits, poetry, and any other forms of artistry students or teachers conjure up.

Each ISE class is made up of approximately 10-12 students who come from all over the world. Their ages range from 18 to 50. They live on campus during the program sharing a room in a dormitory with another

ISE or other college student who is in one of the degree programs on campus. This situation actually provides a live classroom inside and outside of the class all of the time.

I feel incredibly fortunate for the opportunity to intern with the ISE Program because it had many advantages. The staff, some of whom were MAT graduates, share a large office together where an interchange of ideas, resources and helpful hints created a strong bond. They were tremendously supportive and excited about teaching. Staff meetings were held once a week with all teachers and the Director of the program. This time was spent going over announcements and collectively sharing how things were going. It was also a place to ask questions related to teaching and to share resources. It is a ripe environment for any teacher, especially a beginner, to continue learning. There is ample room for creativity and self-expression. The office is filled with an enormous collection of teaching materials and resources. Teachers who were new to the ISE Program all mentioned the high quality of people support and material resources available, and said it was definitely enough to spoil any initiate like myself. I felt my decision to intern there was a wise one and a natural step from the MAT Program--I would be working with teachers familiar with MAT, I would become familiar with the state of the art in materials since the resources were so extensive, and my cooperating teacher was of the MAT faculty.

Through a combination of circumstances Bonnie Mennell and I were matched together--and lucky we were that this happened. I had been able to state only my preference of whom I wanted to work with. I had no control in the final decision. When I learned I would be working with Bonnie,

I initially felt hesitant because our personalities are so different. As a teacher she is very reserved and I am quite the opposite. Because I knew her to be an excellent teacher, I decided it could be a positive experience. She was always organized, helpful, clear and very thorough. Having talked about our differences we agreed they would actually be a bonus because our energies would balance each other.

The course I taught with Bonnie in August was an advanced level. The fall course I taught alone was an intermediate level. Everything I learned during those two teaching experiences would take pages and pages to relate, thus, the following is a discussion only of what I feel specifically relates to my main goal.

SECTION I -- Pre-Internship Preparation

READING

In July I began psychologically and intellectually preparing myself the only way I could virtually see possible, by reading and observing. I couldn't do any planning or preparing because everything was contingent upon the students--who they were and what their level was--and I wouldn't know this information until the beginning of the program in August.

The reading I did included the books recommended to me by Bonnie Mennell and my advisor Claire Stanley. Some had been assigned during the fall Assumptions course while others came from a suggested reading list. They were recommended because in them I could find thoughts and suggestions about the particular focus of my internship. These books include:

The Inner Game of Tennis by W. Timothy Gallwey

When Teachers Face Themselves by Arthur Jersild

The Courage To Be by Paul Tillich

Teaching Languages: A Way and Ways by Earl W. Stevick

Memory, Meaning and Method by Earl W. Stevick

Teaching and Learning Languages by Earl W. Stevick

Common Sense in Teaching Languages by Caleb Gattegno

Fortunately they were all available in the library, either on reference or in the stacks. My hopes were that the authors of these books would give me some ideas to think about and inspire reflection of past experiences which would contribute to the expanding of my self-confidence and the

shifting of my self-awareness from feeling inadequate as a professional to that of a competent and trained teacher.

A conflict I had experienced in the past and one which I wanted to resolve was not being able to separate myself and what I was teaching from the need for student approval. It was obvious to me that this conflict was interfering with the quality of my teaching and hindering the progress of my professional development. I allowed my students to have too much influence of my behavior and my perceptions of what was appropriate in the classroom and I wanted to change this. Significant factors in this conflict were confidence in myself as a teacher and my use of lesson plans and materials.

I found Gallwey's book, although written specifically about tennis and the teaching of tennis, excellent in yielding thoughts about the nature of my conflict and the steps to overcome it. He talks about the fact that the self is divided, which he mentions as stating the obvious, because if not, there would be no inner conversation. He claims these two selves, I and myself, have different functions. "One, the I, gives instructions; the other, myself, seems to perform the action. Then I returns with an evaluation."¹ For practical purposes he calls the I, the teller, Self 1 and myself, the doer, Self 2. The quality of the inner dialog, whether it is harmonious or disharmonious, is based on the relationship between Self 1 and Self 2. The key element, he believes, which determines one's capacity to transfer one's technical knowledge into effective action

¹ W. Timothy Gallwey, The Inner Game of Tennis (New York: Random House Inc., 1974) p. 25.

is the kind of relationship which exists between Self 1 and Self 2. He also calls Self 1 the critical self and Self 2 the unconscious automatic self, the natural doer. If this Self 1, the critical self, interferes with the natural doing process of the unconscious automatic Self 2, there is conflict. The inner relationship sours. The smooth connection between knowledge and the ability to act is disrupted. It is disrupted by the critical self always thinking, always evaluating, always judging and always criticizing. This interference is the basis for one's self-doubts and lack of confidence. It also distorts one's perceptions of his or her abilities and the capacity for improvement. He says the key to improving anything lies in improving the relationship between Self 1 and Self 2. The means for improving this relationship is to stop thinking, to quiet the mind. Gallwey says it's quite simple--you just stop thinking. He clarifies this by saying it isn't so easy, and actually requires several skills.

One skill worth mentioning here is the letting go of judgment and the need for external criteria in self-assessment. Self 1 is not only judging its actions but is also looking for approval and wanting to avoid disapproval from others. It is not aware of the fact that it alone establishes a standard of good and bad from its dependency on external criteria. It is also not aware that a compliment is a potential criticism. If one likes me to wear blue, they might not like me to wear red. The self-inflicted incriminations and the dependency on others' approval interfere with one's natural doing process. For this reason, one needs to learn to let go of judging. One must learn to see things as they are without

putting the label 'good' or 'bad' on everything. "The first step is to see your strokes as they are. They must be perceived clearly. This can be done only when personal judgment is absent. As soon as a stroke is seen clearly and accepted as it is, a natural and speedy process of change begins."²

I saw all of this relating to me in two places--in lesson planning and in my actual teaching. In the past while teaching I was almost always thinking about my class and my lesson plans. And questioning--Did I do what I set out to do? Did I do what I was supposed to do? How did it go? Did the students like it? Was my lesson plan thorough enough? I could have planned it better, I'm sure. It wasn't good enough. No, I'm sure it wasn't good enough, I could have done better. The inner conversation was not harmonious. I was forever passing judgment on my efforts and actions, leaving a feeling of lingering inadequacy. Rarely did I ever look back objectively when assessing my actions. I wasn't able to step back and look because I didn't trust my own judgment.

In the classroom, I was very often consciously aware of myself in relation to the students. I felt a strong need for their approval of me and what I was doing with them. I reflected on Gallwey's ideas with the objective of trying to quiet my critical mind and let go of judgment. One way to help me to do this, would be to try and focus my awareness onto the students rather than on myself. If my attention was on them and how they were doing, less time and energy would be spent focusing on how I

² Gallwey, p. 37.

was doing. I was anxious and excited to get into the classroom to see if I had any control over this, and thus, be able to put into motion a "natural and speedy process of change."³

Another issue I knew I was grappling with in the classroom centered around control. This is something I had been struggling with in every teaching experience I encountered. My challenge in dealing with control was threefold and stemmed from: 1) a lack of confidence in myself and in my activities; 2) an inadequate perception of myself in dealing with control. I saw my behavior as black or white and on either ends of a spectrum, one end being an absolute dictator or the other end being a weak, unstable and out-of-control ninny. I was often paralyzed in taking a stand with regard to control for fear of falling in one or the other of those two roles; 3) a misunderstanding of progressive, humanistic education. I had previously interpreted this type of education as free and loosely structured. I imagined control was a contradiction of this type of education.

Re-reading some of Stevick's ideas shed a different light on this challenge and actually gave me some guidelines to follow. First off, he says some kind of control is necessary for the success of any human undertaking, and as far as he can see control by the teacher is legitimate even in progressive or in humanistic education. According to Stevick's interpretation of Ernest Becker, any individual in the classroom needs two things: first, a view of how everything fits together, and second, possibilities of action within that view. These two needs roughly

³ Gallwey, p. 37.

correspond to what Stevick thinks are the two most significantly important aspects of teaching--control and initiative.⁴

He defines control as having two elements: 1) the structuring of activities; and 2) the correction of errors. By the structuring of activities he refers to the order and structure of classroom activities which includes the activity the students will do, the length of time they will be engaged, and the format in which they will work--individually, in pairs, small groups or as an entire class. By correction of errors, he refers to the obvious--dealing with mistakes. He feels it is important for students to receive feedback as to how they are doing in relation to native speakers. In language learning the students are not readily equipped to determine the information for themselves, therefore it is up to the teacher to make it easy for the student to know how she⁵ is doing.

Initiative, according to Stevick, encompasses the decisions about the classroom dynamic in terms of who says what, when, and to whom. These decisions, chosen from a range of possibilities, are provided by the teacher or whoever is exercising control with the intent of encouraging and engaging student participation.

Both control and initiative are central functions of a teacher's responsibilities and correspond with three roles she⁶ plays in the classroom: 1) the giver of cognitive information--the language; 2) the manager

⁴ Earl W. Stevick, Teaching Languages: A Way and Ways (Rowley, Mass. Newbury House Publishers, 1976). P. 17.

⁵ From this point on I will be talking about the student indiscriminantly as he or she.

⁶ From this point on I will be talking about the teacher indiscriminantly as he or she.

of classroom dynamics; and 3) the designer of learning objectives and goals. By exercising control the teacher gives some sort of order to the learning space and a view of how things fit together. By encouraging initiative she allows the students to work and grow in that space through various possibilities of action. The trick is in providing the right amount of learning space. Too much encourages discipline problems and destabilizes the environment for 'meaningful action.' Too little stifles the learner.

In considering these thoughts I realized I wanted to change my understanding of humanistic education. It made sense that some sort of control is necessary for any endeavor. I also realized I have a choice as to how I want to be in the classroom. I don't have to be paralyzed when confronted with control issues. If I am clear about the structure of the lesson plan and how I want it to be executed, there is no reason why I am not able to go into the classroom with that clarity projected in confidence in myself and my activity and be someone in the middle of that spectrum between dictator and ninny.

In August I planned to incorporate these points into my lesson plans by considering ahead of time what the structure would be, how I wanted the students to participate, for how long and in what way they would be engaged. Hopefully taking these details into account would give me the security and confidence I needed to implement a class where I was focusing on the students' learning processes rather than my own inadequacies.

Jersild's thoughts left me with a broader philosophical outlook with regards to my expectations in teaching and learning. His words were

like seeds planted for beginning the development of my own inner criteria of how I was doing and what I was learning. He says that the crucial test in the search for meaning in education is the personal implication of what we learn and teach. To gain in knowledge of self, one must have the courage to seek it and the humility to accept what one may find.

The wisdom and guidelines I culled from my reading about self confidence, control and initiative, and establishing one's own inner criteria gave me some key points to look for while observing classes. I was interested in noting how the teacher's confidence affected the dynamic of the class, and if it was obvious that the teacher had included the elements of control and initiative into his lesson planning and implementation--if not, what were the results. What I gleaned from my observations with regard to these points would hopefully give me some focus or guidelines to follow while teaching in August. I could learn something which works and try it or discover something I definitely did not want to do.

I certainly felt I had the courage required according to Jersild for gaining knowledge of self, even though I was terribly nervous and scared. How humble I would be in accepting whatever I found was for me to see. At the end of this reading and preparation time, I saw my challenge as twofold: first, to be able to let go of judgment before, during and after the teaching act and second, to thereby dispassionately develop my own inner criteria of what it means to be a competent and professional teacher.

OBSERVATION

While reading in July, I was also able to observe a number of classes in the same program where I would be teaching in August. My overall objective was to get a sense of the program and of a full day of teaching. I also wanted to see how the teachers taught the material and to learn from their ideas. As I mentioned in the last chapter, I had two specific focal points for my observations. I was interested in how the teacher's confidence affected the class dynamic, and how, if at all, the teacher incorporated Stevick's ideas of control and initiative into his lesson planning and implementation. What I gained from observing wasn't limited to my objectives or focal points, but for the purpose of this paper I have chosen to discuss my observations with these themes in mind. The following is a description of the classes I visited and what I learned from each of them.

The first class I observed was an advanced level. There were ten students and they spoke relatively fluent English. I stayed for the entire morning session which was three hours. The teacher started the morning by asking the students for their impressions of and responses to a field trip they had taken the previous day. Their immediate response was silence. The teacher continued to talk while laughing a lot in an attempt to engage their participation. Finally he had to implore them to speak and did so by saying they were capable of sharing something and that he wanted someone to respond. Two students responded with simple statements such as "it was okay; I liked it; it was nice." The teacher wanted more from the students and began talking about his house. Apparently it was one of the places they had visited on their field trip. He was

asking for their reactions to his unusual abode, as he put it. The class was still reluctant to speak and only three students offered any comments. Thus, the group never shared anything about their experiences.

The second activity involved the newspaper. Each student was given a paper and as they were perusing it, the teacher turned the pages quickly, scanned the articles and gave the class questions they were to answer. As this was happening, I noticed some students quickly writing the questions down in their notebooks. Their assignment was to locate the article which related to the question, then read it to find the answer.

While everyone was silently reading, I asked the teacher how long he planned for the activity. He shrugged his shoulders and laughed saying he didn't know, as long as it took, all morning, who knows. He also said he had just thought up the questions while he was going through the paper in front of the class.

After some time, the teacher called the class back together and asked for the questions and their answers. The students were still quite reticent. It was like pulling teeth to get them to respond, and only a few outspoken students took responsibility to answer the questions. Overall, the teacher dominated the activity and the student response was extremely limited. The general energy of the class was lifeless and slow moving.

The last activity was a grammar lesson on prepositions. The teacher handed out a sheet of paper with drawings which depicted various prepositions. He asked the class randomly for the correct prepositions in each picture, then wrote them on the board. When no one responded with an answer, he just wrote it on the board. The activity was done quickly. There was no presentation nor explanation, and no time

was available for practice. The activity ended when all the prepositions were identified. Then the class broke for lunch.

The entire morning was very teacher oriented. He did at least 90% of the talking. When the students did talk, they did so voluntarily when asked at random, which meant the shy and less outspoken students did little or no speaking at all.

In terms of control and initiative, it seemed that the teacher was limited by a very traditional teaching style--the teacher doing all the talking to the students. He may have considered other alternatives in his lesson planning, but he didn't try any. I was curious to know if he had outlined the learning objective of these activities and how much forethought had gone into planning the implementation, i.e., everything he did in the teaching act.

Was he really interested in hearing their responses to the field trip? Was he expecting that everyone would speak up on their own accord? Was the purpose of the activity to give everyone an opportunity to speak? or was he just interested in entertaining them? or, was it to kill time?

What did he want the students to gain from the newspaper activity? Was it an exercise in scanning? Was it to acquire cultural information? The newspaper is an excellent resource for language and cultural content. Had he considered what each article had to offer with this in mind?

It seemed that little forethought had gone into how the activities would be structured and how the students would be engaged. Had the teacher been more specific in terms of what he wanted from the students and had he structured how he wanted them to participate--with whom and when--they may have been more vocal. Chances are the students would have

talked more if they had had the opportunity to speak in smaller groups.

My sense was that student reticence was due in addition to the general attitude projected by the teacher. He seemed to want a lot of attention and was very informal in his behavior and implementation. There was never a feeling that learning is serious work needed to improve language skills. It was more a feeling of time to pass, to kill, to entertain. I wondered how he felt as a teacher and if he was confident in what he was doing, and if he really cared. If I was wondering all this, maybe the students were too.

I left that class knowing I had learned some things I did not want to do, namely, to come into a class without having thought through an activity; to plan an activity without a sense of timing, or to ask questions to the class randomly with no explanation of purpose or objective. I thought the time would have been much more productive and the class would have gone much better if the teacher had focused more of his attention onto the students rather than himself, and if he initiated student participation in a more structured fashion.

The second class I visited was a beginning level with little or no proficiency in the language. There were eleven students. I spent the entire morning with them. The teacher started off the class with the chat, an informal time for small talk. Immediately he grabbed onto a grammatically incorrect sentence made by one of the students and used it as a tool for error correction. I noticed how engaged the students were in the learning process. As the sentence gradually became grammatically correct, from student input only, he had each student say the sentence correctly.

I was impressed by the teacher's sense of control here and with the

learning value of a seemingly quite simple tool--a student-generated sentence. He kept the energy moving by engaging the students to correct the sentence and repeat it themselves. Each student knew he or she would have to say the sentence, correctly. The teacher also seemed quite confident and serious about what he was doing which evoked respect from the students.

For the second activity, the students were asked to share something about their field trip the day before. The teacher explicitly told the class they had one minute to think about what they wanted to say, and then each person in the circle would share something. The instructions were clear, specific and structured. The difference between this activity and the same activity I had observed in the previous class was striking. Every student participated by saying a complete sentence about the field trip. The teacher had to give the directions only once. The students did all the talking. I learned an excellent rule of thumb here--being specific as to who is to answer when and how seems to guarantee student engagement much more than asking a general question to the class as a whole and leaving it up to whoever to answer.

The rest of the morning was spent doing a number of activities: pronunciation practice, a grammar lesson, and homework correction. The pronunciation lesson was done with the Silent Way chart. The teacher dictated sounds and sentences by pointing to the chart and the students responded first in writing and then orally. The teacher did very little speaking during this activity. The grammar lesson focused on sentence structure and vocabulary building with the topic centering on family. The teacher used rods to identify the words in the sentence and the

students formed their own sentence with the rods, or they identified the sentence made by the teacher. The last activity was correcting homework. Students worked in pairs doing self-correction while the teacher roamed the room to help with questions.

The entire morning was filled with several activities which covered a variety of skills and language points. The lesson plan was obviously well organized with forethought as to the order and structure of each activity, and how the students would be engaged. The implementation was done in a no nonsense fashion with confidence and competence. Although the teacher's sense of humor came through in his teaching, he didn't really project his personality onto the class much. Except for his presentations and explanations, he remained in the background encouraging the students to think for themselves. He rarely gave away answers and did so only when their resources were exhausted. Student participation involved the entire class and included 75% of the class time.

The third class I observed gave me an opportunity to see the dynamics of a class when the teacher is dependent upon and in need of student approval. This class of twelve students was at the intermediate level and they had some proficiency in listening and speaking. I observed the class for two hours. The teacher began with a grammar lesson which engaged students to work as a group and in pairs. Her presentation and instructions were quite clear. It was obvious she was well prepared with her lesson plan. She had given forethought to control and initiative by structuring the activity progressively step by step and by involving the students systematically in the activity. Yet, she seemed to forsake this organization for need of student approval. She wasn't able to keep the

students on target with the task. They seemed to take control of the activity and of her. She seemed to welcome this and went along with their behavior.

At certain times the students got so noisy and excited, I thought I was in a junior high classroom. Their boisterous behavior was beyond my limit for an adult level classroom. I also observed that all the students were not engaged in the craziness. The silent and/or shy ones just sat and watched the interaction between the teacher and the others involved. They were not included in the participation. The lesson activity seemed to take second place while the dynamic between the teacher and a few outspoken students took the forefront.

Her need for student approval seemed to interfere with the learning objective. My sense was that this need stemmed from a lack of self confidence in what she was doing. Once the students gained control of the activity, she only had to go along with them to win their approval. This was probably easier than taking back the control and proceeding with the lesson.

I actually saw myself in many past teaching experiences as the teacher in this class. I could see what problems occurred, why the class didn't stay on target, why I didn't meet my objectives, and why I would finish feeling so unsettled. My awareness and this teacher's didn't extend beyond our noses. I had often lost sight of the activity, especially the learning objective of the activity, due to my need to be okay by student standards. I couldn't take control and be an authority figure because my students might not like me then.

Observing this class gave me insight into my own behavior and I left

with the challenge more strongly felt to transcend this need for approval in the classroom. I couldn't deny that I wanted my students to like me, but I didn't want to forsake their learning for my emotional needs anymore. I wanted to operate with the assumption that my job was to teach and serve the students, not to make friends and win student approval.

The last class I visited was an intermediate level with thirteen students. I stayed for only one hour. The lesson was a specific grammar point on phrasal verbs. It was a slow moving class, but the presentation was clear and thorough, and all the students seemed to be engaged in learning and participating.

It was apparent the teacher had given thought to the structure of the activity and how she wanted the students to be engaged. Their involvement varied during the activity as they worked individually, in pairs and as a group. The material to be covered was presented in an interesting fashion with confidence. Even though the class was slow moving, I left with a new thought that every class does not have to be dynamic and fast-paced to be valuable. Learning can take place in an atmosphere with low energy and the teacher can project confidence in her teaching style without being dynamic as well. Simply by being organized, familiar with the material being covered, and in control of the implementation is enough to give the class the feeling that the teacher is confident in what she is doing and that the activity is worth doing.

The key points which impressed me while observing that I wanted to focus on in my teaching are as follows:

- 1) to plan an activity with a sense of the time it will take.
- 2) to come to class with forethought of an activity in terms of

the learning objective and the control and initiative factors.

- 3) to give clear examples with instructions.
- 5) to encourage and engage students to think for themselves.
- 6) to have students use their own resources for correction.
- 7) to stay aware of my need for student approval and how it effects my performance in the classroom.
- 8) to remember teaching and learning don't always have to be dynamic and fast-paced.

From observing these various classes I was able to get a clear sense of some skills that make teaching smoother and more efficient; I also got a sense of some of the things I'd done in the past that I didn't want to do anymore. These experiences gave me insight into ways to change and improve.

SECTION II -- The Internship

WORKING WITH BONNIE

As mentioned in the introduction, I taught the course with Bonnie Mennell, one of the members of the MAT faculty. At the onset of this experience I had no idea what it would be like working with Bonnie. I knew her as a teacher from two classes I had taken during spring quarter. As such, she was excellent--very serious, hard-working, and objective in working with me and my classwork. On a personal level she was very elusive. This, and the fact that our personalities are very different--her being quiet and reserved and my being very expressive and energetic, made me question the dynamics of our relationship. Yet, the students who had Bonnie as a supervisor during the winter internship, had nothing but the highest praise for her help and support. This made me excited. I was eager to see how we would work together and especially how I could learn from her expertise.

We met twice before teaching, once in June to talk about overall expectations of the teaching experience, the needs and expectations of our relationship, some specifics about the month, and the kinds of things I could do to prepare myself for the class. And once in July when we met to touch base again to delve further into our needs and expectations and the dynamics of our teaching together. This was also a time to tie up any loose ends as we got closer to the starting point.

Something which struck me right away with Bonnie was her sincere positive regard for my ideas and input. She was extremely welcoming and supportive of my suggestions, ideas, and wishes. It was quite inspiring and exciting to feel such support and encouragement and to have the opportunity to be creative.

Right from the beginning of our teaching, we set a format that continued until the end of the course. We would always talk through the day's activities and the specifics of our lesson plans before teaching, and then after class we would share feedback. We would interweave our talks about the activities with the subject matter covered during the MAT courses. I felt these discussions were a continuation of the Assumptions and Skills classes I had taken in the fall and spring. My suggestions, ideas and lesson plans never went past Bonnie without critique and questioning done in a very dynamic, provocative and supportive fashion. She had a facility for getting me to think more thoroughly through a lesson idea or lesson plan without flooding me with her own ideas. As a teacher she is a strong advocate of using student-generated material and encouraging students to rely on their own inner resources. This carried through in our relationship. Through her no nonsense, hard-working manner, she encouraged me to think about my lessons from many angles I had not considered previously. In early August I remember saying if I finish this experience being able to ask myself the same rigorous questions Bonnie asks me daily, I will definitely have learned something. Bonnie set a pace for an excellent working/learning relationship which picked up momentum as we progressed and culminated in an overall invaluable teaching experience for the both of us.

Her support and encouragement carried through into the classroom where we began teaching as team teachers. We continued with this format for the entire course. Even though she was the one who had ultimate control, she never interfered with my lesson activities. She always made me feel like an equal and maintained this attitude in front of the students throughout the course. Her teaching style was very professional and she exuded a lot of confidence. I hoped some of it would rub off on me through osmosis. She was also an excellent language teacher, and I learned many things just by watching her such as specific techniques for teaching grammar points, pronunciation, and other language skills. But more importantly, I was learning about a new sort of approach and attitude toward teaching which employed student generated material. I was seeing in action the ideas and theories discussed throughout the year in the MAT Program. This in and of itself was very exciting and educational.

The comments she shared about my teaching right after the first few classes gave me new things to think about and enabled me to understand the source of some awkward feelings I was experiencing and had experienced in previous teaching situations. She pointed out some fine tuning points in teaching I hadn't thought about before, and suggested that working on them might help eliminate some of my awkwardness. Such points she encouraged me to think about and plan for, included how to make smooth transitions from one activity to the next, what to do with the faster students who finish before the others, what should the class be doing while the teacher is rewinding the video, and how to make a smooth closure to an activity. I had never considered these details before and could see how including them in my thoughts while planning, could enhance the

smoothness of my orchestration. Her suggestions enabled me to see there were ways to run activities more efficiently and thus eliminate some of the uncomfortable feelings I was experiencing.

She also helped me work with my overwhelming feelings of nervousness and lack of self confidence. For the first two weeks of the course I was incredibly self-conscious and it was obvious these feelings were inhibiting me from being able to focus on the students. Constantly feeling self-conscious triggered my critical self and perpetrated the inner conflict I had with regard to control in the classroom. In sharing all of this with Bonnie, she comforted me by saying it was natural to be nervous when starting out with something new, and that with time I would relax. She actually applauded my courage for being willing to jump in and try new things and supported my efforts while at the same time suggesting I try to examine the sources of my nervousness.

One area where I jumped in was in taking full responsibility for an ongoing activity we called the Media Hour. Before starting the course I was very interested in working with video news and the newspaper. I mentioned this to Bonnie and she encouraged me to take charge. So we established an hour a day to be devoted to working with either the newspaper or the video news, and I was responsible for designing and implementing the activities.

The first day I started with the video news. The activity involved showing the ten minute broadcast story by story. Each story was played piece by piece and the students were asked to paraphrase what they heard. I thought it was a good plan but unfortunately I was so nervous I couldn't focus on anything I was doing. Not only was I unable to hear what the

students were saying, but I was also incapable of even hearing the broadcast so as to verify the students listening skills. My ability to focus was entirely inhibited by my nervousness.

Afterward Bonnie and I discussed the activity and she asked me what I observed in terms of the students listening skills. I said I thought they had been alright. A few students were able to convey clearly what they heard and therefore I assumed it was an activity appropriate for their level. I interpreted the silence of some students as merely shyness. Bonnie's perception was quite the contrary. She said she picked up right away that the students weren't understanding the material. I was amazed at her assessment. How was she able to see their abilities so clearly? I felt completely blind. And I was. I was blinded by my nervousness. My awareness was totally focused on myself and I couldn't see anything else. This presented a distinct challenge for me. After the first week I wrote in my journal the following:

At this point my main challenge is to stay focused on what causes me to feel nervous and what I can do to feel more confident in the classroom. I think well planned lessons are a key. Part of my confidence may lie on how thoroughly prepared I am in thinking through a lesson step by step.

Bonnie gave me some pointers which she thought would help make the video news more accessible to the students abilities. Putting her ideas into practice made a difference. This is conveyed by another journal entry at the end of the second week:

I am beginning to feel more comfortable with the video news. I prepare ahead of time by listening to the stories for content and vocabulary. In class I list the titles of the stories covered and ask the students to brainstorm the content of each one. Then we listen to the entire broadcast and with the aid of the list on the board, I ask them to briefly tell me the content of each story. Then we listen to only one story. While it is playing, I jot down as much of the content as I can. Then I have the students discuss the story in pairs while I write the sequence of the story on the board. With these cues I ask them to retell the full story. At the same time we look at vocabulary and particular cultural content when appropriate. This whole format feels more STRUCTURED and I feel more in CONTROL. I'm less nervous and much more capable of hearing the students. I'm staying focused. I'm more prepared and the lesson is well thought out. That is the difference!

It is obvious from my journal entries that I made some progress transcending my nervousness and that I attributed this progress to more thorough preparation. There were other things I did as well to help myself work on this distress.

At the end of the first week I thought I would start setting little

tasks for myself which might help me become more focused. The tasks included setting objectives such as making direct eye contact with the students, speaking slowly and enunciating clearly, calming down enough to listen to the students, looking at each and every student, encouraging the silent students to talk. Before beginning an activity I would say the objective over and over in my mind and work on doing it. The effort I put into following through with these tasks and preparing thorough lesson plans, along with Bonnie's suggestions helped me make real progress. By the third week I had relaxed considerably and was rarely nervous. My attention was focused on the students and I was much more able to work with their learning.

Bonnie also helped me develop an awareness in the skill area of student assessment. The first time this skill was called to my attention was after the first video news activity, as I mentioned above. The second time was after a lesson with the newspaper in the following week. This is discussed at length in the chapter Lesson Planning. The third and most significant time was during the third week when I had the class to myself for the whole day. My limited ability in student assessment made for an interesting and challenging lesson with the newspaper. The following is an account of that lesson and my preparation for it.

In the morning the class heard a guest speaker talk about the anti-nuclear movement in the U.S. I had found a current and interesting article about anti-nuclear protestors and what they were doing internationally and felt it was absolutely appropriate for the day's Media Hour activity. Before presenting it, Bonnie and I talked through the activity. My plan was to have the students read the article silently, then paraphrase it in

writing. After this we would go over the article as a group. The first question Bonnie asked me was why I wanted them to write, and what I thought they would learn from it. I thought it would help them with comprehension and with writing skills. She gave me a discouraging look so I assumed it wasn't such a great idea or that my reasons weren't valid enough. I decided not to incorporate the writing activity.

Her second comment referred to the article itself. She thought it was way above their heads and pointed to specific words, phrases and ideas asking me to define them. Then she asked me if I thought the students would be able to understand them. I said maybe not but I really wanted to use it because it fit so perfectly with the morning's presentation. Recognizing my intense desire to use the article, she suggested I present all the new vocabulary, phrases and ideas before the students read it to aid them with overall comprehension. I thought this was an excellent idea and decided to do it.

The activity began with students trying to brainstorm the new information presented to them. They seemed to enjoy this activity and they also seemed to have a basic understanding of the vocabulary, phrases and ideas put forth. This was encouraging, especially in light of Bonnie's concerns. They then read the article silently. Afterwards we went around the room listening to each student share something about the article. What came out of this activity was a shock to me. It was obvious that nobody understood the content of the article. It felt terrible having to recognize this. They even complained about it and the whole paper. They were frustrated, bored and seemed on the verge of misbehaving. They said it was too hard and too depressing, and that we had spent too much of the

day looking at grave problems in the world. I lost my self control and became very self-conscious. It was the last activity of the day and it left a very sour feeling in the air.

Finally though, and actually for the first time, I could see what the students were and weren't capable of. It was a very insightful experience for me even though it was painful. I realized Bonnie knew right away the article was above them, yet I hadn't been able to see it. At the same time, I was intent on using what I wanted to in the lesson. This lesson taught me how crucial it is to know your students' abilities.

Bonnie and I talked about this after class. I credited her for having let me learn the hard but true way--through my own experience. I finally understood what student assessment was all about and attributed it to the fact that I had been alone in the classroom. Bonnie wasn't there. I suddenly realized her presence in the class carried all the responsibility. When she was there I paid more attention to her and her teaching than to the students. Being alone put all the responsibility on me; I was forced to pay attention to and focus on the students. With all of my attention directed to their responses, I could see what they were capable of doing. This was a real turning point for me and I was so appreciative of Bonnie's insight in knowing to stand back and let me learn from my own experience.

Overall, Bonnie was an excellent resource for feedback on how I was doing. She seemed to have unlimited patience and was always willing to listen and discuss any questions or thoughts I had about the lessons. From time to time I asked her to look at something specifically which always helped me assess my own self analysis. She had great insight and helped

me clarify my own questions while making suggestions for ways to progress and improve. She was extremely objective in responding to my self-doubts and actually made me feel silly for feeling so insecure. She made me sense the utter uselessness of harboring the doubts and negative thoughts I had about my abilities. At the same time she encouraged me to see the value of my own contributions by supporting the fact that we are different and that the world needs these differences. With this unconditional regard she had for me, I was able to 'see the strokes as they were'⁷-- Gallwey's first step in letting go of judgment.

We worked so well together, the fit was like hand in glove. We gelled from the beginning and the smoothness we established continued, it seemed, without effort. The amount of space and free rein she offered was one of the key aspects that made the relationship and my teaching experience as tremendous as it was. I never sensed she felt possession of the class in terms of her relationship with the students or of the material to be taught. We were working 50-50 and she made equal room for me in such a way that I felt completely safe to express myself with sincere honesty, and to experiment with new ideas of interest.

Bonnie contributed significantly to my growth as a professional teacher. Her most prominent contribution was the constant, invaluable critique and assessment of what I was doing and how I could improve. Her persistence with my having to qualify my lesson ideas forced me to think through my lesson plans with detail which in turn helped to enhance this skill. Her dedication to teaching with student-generated material

⁷ Gallwey, p. 37.

and her keen intelligence facilitated profound learning for me in the skill area of student assessment. Ultimately, her unconditional support and acceptance established a real sense of harmony between us and around me. This outer harmony helped quite the judgmental, critical self inside of me which, according to Gallwey, was a beginning step towards the 'natural and speedy process of change.'⁸ In some metaphorical sense, Bonnie was an angelic hearth whose warmth drew me near and whose protective strength secured me.

⁸ Gallwey, p. 37.

LESSON PLANNING, PART I

Bonnie was a master at lesson planning and working with her taught me a number of things in this area. Having no specific curriculum to follow offered unlimited space for creativity, yet it presented the challenge of knowing what was most appropriate to teach and when. Bonnie's organizational skills and years of teaching experience along with my ideas and suggestions made the long range planning an easy task. Other teachers in the office were in awe of the fact that on Fridays we had the following week's schedule already laid out. This type of planning ahead was useful because it helped keep the overall course objectives in sight and maintain a sense of sequencing in the daily lesson. Planning for activities on a daily basis presented different challenges, and it is here I learned the most.

I rarely went into the classroom with an activity that had not been through the scrutiny of Bonnie's detailed questions. Her interrogations such as--

Why this particular activity?

What will the students be learning?

What will they be able to do as a result of this lesson?

How will they know they learned?

How long will the activity last?

How will the students be engaged--in groups, in pairs, individually, why?

What is the format and sequence of events? Why?

Can the students handle the language required of the lesson?

Is the activity suitable to their level of English?

forced me to think precisely and conscientiously about a lesson and helped immensely to broaden my scope of the things necessary to consider in planning. From the constant barrage of questions that were directly related to what I was doing in the classroom, I gradually came to understand their practical significance, and as a result, improved my overall lessons from the planning stage to the presentation stage.

In past teaching experiences I hadn't been quite as detailed in planning as I was asked to be here. Generally I did most of my planning spontaneously in the classroom. I went in with an activity in mind, yet how it was implemented was decided as I was doing it. I admit I felt a bit awkward more often than not, yet it hadn't occurred to me that I could alleviate these uneasy moments by thinking through specific details ahead of time. I valued an activity more for the creativity it could offer the students than for the learning it provided. My lesson planning strategy involved two steps: first, thinking about what activity I wanted to do to fill up a particular time slot, and second, deciding what learning material I should use for the lesson. That was it.

Designing an effective lesson plan was covered extensively in the Skills class of the fall quarter of the MAT Program. We read about, discussed at length, and hypothetically designed lesson plans according to various experts, all of which emphasized the importance of learning objectives in planning. They also focused on the same sort of questions as those Bonnie asked me. Most everything we covered made sense to me while in the course, yet eight months later while teaching, it was a distant

memory. The immediate teaching experience and Bonnie's supervision helped me to recall and internalize the course material. It was the practical application in a real situation that made everything click for me, which is in essence the claim of experiential learning.

With Bonnie's help I was able to pinpoint the elements of my lesson planning strategy which affected the quality of my presentations. I came to realize that I often didn't consider what I wanted the students to learn and go away with as a result of the lesson. Instead I was considering how to fill up the time. Also I recognized that I was designing lessons around my interest and entertainment instead of around student needs. I became aware of the fact that I didn't think about the students' abilities with the language when planning an activity, and not being cognizant of this as well as the other elements mentioned limited my scope in planning and implementing. The following description of a lesson I taught during the Media Hour using the newspaper graphically conveys some of my limitations.

This lesson, which was the second time I was using the newspaper, was designed around the idea that the newspaper is a viable resource for getting cultural information about a country. After this activity I wanted the students to know a little bit more about the U.S. I selected four articles which I thought would offer a wide range of cultural information. They included such topics as the ERA, the EPA, a business in rural Vermont, and an international affair involving the U.S. In the classroom I divided the students into four groups and gave each group a different article. They were to read their article, discuss it, then select a spokesperson to summarize it for the class.

I thought it was a great plan and my expectation was that some sort of discussion would evolve out of the information they read and related. I was quite surprised to discover that students were having great difficulty just getting through their article. The difficulty was not only in the language but also in the cultural information. They didn't know what the acronyms ERA or EPA meant and the articles did not refer to their meaning. I became very nervous when I noticed their struggles in understanding the articles and felt I had made a big mistake in presenting this lesson. I was terribly lucky that Bonnie was there to help with half the class while I helped with the other to understand the reading material.

The entire exercise was completed as planned. Each group reported on their article but no discussion evolved. More than anything I think the students felt flustered. The main problem was that the articles assumed familiarity with cultural content. My students didn't have the necessary information and therefore had difficulty in understanding meaning, which was exacerbated by the complexity of the language. I assumed too much about their language proficiency and didn't consider the cultural implications within the content of the articles. With discomfort I learned what can happen if one assumes too much about what the students know and are able to understand. Instead of assuming what students know, the focus should be on what they are capable of doing.

Another thing I learned about lesson planning was the importance of thinking through an activity step by step and being familiar with the materials to be used before going into the classroom. I mentioned something about this in the last chapter when I was talking about doing the video news. Here I have another example which illustrates a surefire

way to learn the importance of this.

On a Monday eight minutes before the afternoon class, Bonnie showed me what she had planned for the lessons. For a number of reasons, we hadn't had the time to discuss this at any other moment. She had assumed responsibility for that afternoon and I was just waiting to know what she would do. At that time she asked me if I wanted to do one of the activities she planned. She said they were already prepared, and that it would just be a matter of presenting them. I said sure, enthusiastically, thinking the more I do, the more I learn. I picked the one with the written material, which looked the most organized, thinking I would feel more secure with this choice.

I didn't have time to go over the material because it was nearly time to start; and I barely had an idea of the format before going into class. After beginning I realized I didn't even know what I was presenting. I became very nervous and failed to see the instructions I was to give the students. The instructions were directly in front of me on my sheet of paper, but I hadn't read them and therefore didn't know they were there. I became so nervous I wanted to disappear. Bonnie managed discreetly to indicate to me where the directions were, and I somehow proceeded.

Added to this was the fact that I noticed I didn't like the material as we began using it. I would have never selected it myself. This increased my uneasiness and I wanted to distance myself from what I was doing. I became extremely sensitive to the students' approval of the activity and me.

Fortunately the activity finished without any problems, but I felt terrible. Afterwards Bonnie and I had a good laugh. And, she was

wonderfully supportive saying I could hardly be critical of myself or the activity since I had only heard about doing it five minutes before class started.

This experience taught me that I didn't want to jump into anything again unless I had the time to look over the format and material. I also learned I had to feel good about the lesson and the material used in order to project confidence while teaching. It took one more time in a similar situation for me to realize the importance of what I learned here. The discomfort of that second time was enough for me to say no to future suggestions from Bonnie.

In contrast to the examples given, which portray stumbling as a part of the learning process, I'm including an account of a successful activity I did in the third week which emphasizes the progress I made in lesson planning. The activity was a lesson on the functions of agreeing, disagreeing, and opinion giving.

It began with a role play Bonnie and I did with situations requiring the functions above. After the role plays I asked the class to tell me what they saw happening. I asked baited questions hoping they would see the direction in which I wanted them to go. I emphasized the focus of the lesson was on these particular functions, then asked them to brainstorm all the ways they knew how to agree, disagree and give opinions in English. Everything they offered was listed on the board, then the language listed was categorized on a scale from most formal to most informal. I gave them a handout with a complete list of these functions, some of which they knew and named. They used the handout as a guide to practice the language in pairs. Making eye contact at all times, they were to say the

expressions with feeling. I roamed the room and forced them to convince me when they spoke without feeling. After this I made a statement to one student at a time with the whole class listening. The student spoken to was to respond to my statement with the language the class was learning. Finally I broke the class into small groups and gave them each several situations to act out using the functions. When time ended for this activity, each group presented one situation in front of the whole class. We followed this with an engaged discussion about the similarities and differences between the ways in which the cultures represented in the class agreed, disagreed and gave opinions. The activity ended with a mock meeting involving the entire class. The setting was very formal. There was a facilitator keeping the discussion on target and appointing each speaker. After the time allotted for that portion of the lesson, we finished.

It was a really successful lesson. I marked the success not only from the fact that the students enjoyed it and were able to use the language, but more importantly from the fact that I felt so good doing it. My whole attention was on the students and their engagement in the activity. I felt no nervousness; on the contrary, I was completely relaxed and the most myself I had been, while teaching thus far. One of the main factors for this success was the quality of that lesson plan. It was perfectly organized right down to the last detail. I knew exactly what I was going to do from one activity to the next. I had thought the entire thing through ahead of time and was excited about the content. I think the preparation and enthusiasm came through in my orchestration which thoroughly engaged the students. Lastly, a large portion of the success came from the fact

that I went into the classroom with something specific to teach my students and I was completely invested in them learning the material. My awareness was on the topic, its implementation and how the students were working with it, not on myself.

Through trial and error I came to value detail and thoroughness in lesson planning. I learned I had to plan lessons around the students' needs not mine, and that it was imperative to take into consideration their abilities when designing any activity. I also learned I had to be familiar with the material and format I was using and that I feel good about them. Being expected to answer to Bonnie's questions forced me to think through my ideas in a step by step fashion and examine their overall value for any particular lesson. The difference this made in the smoothness of a presentation was all I needed to be convinced of the effort it took. I also learned the awkwardness I felt and the fog I sometimes was in while teaching stemmed from the fact that I hadn't considered these details previously. I recognized my confidence and my sense of control in the classroom were directly related to the amount of forethought and preparation I put into an activity. I felt more sure of myself and confident in what I was doing when I was well-prepared for a lesson. This internship had given me the awareness and the skills needed to work effectively with lesson planning and hence, strengthen my self image as a confident, professional teacher.

BEING SPECIFIC, PART I

Other challenges I faced while teaching touched upon a number of skill areas, some of which will be discussed in this chapter. I have labeled these areas Calling on Students, Giving Explanations and Directions, Error Correction, and Teaching Specific Grammar Points. I have decided to group these together under the title of Being Specific because in each of the issues there is an element of specificity. I think the meaning will make itself clear as each area is discussed.

Calling on Students:

In the chapter on Observation, I spoke about the differences I observed in the ways teachers called on students for their participation--either in a random manner or specifically. I also observed how the students responded to the teachers and how their response reflected the way in which they were asked to participate. How a teacher chooses to call on students seems to be directly related to Stevick's ideas about control and initiative. As I mentioned in the chapter on Reading, control included the structuring of the classroom activities and initiative included the decision of who says what to whom, when. Recognizing this along with my observations gave me some things to think about and consider for myself.

From the beginning of my teaching in August, I noticed it was easier to call on students specifically if the lesson was quite structured and planned out in my mind. If an activity was less structured, my tendency was to call for their involvement randomly or wait for volunteers to comment. In the latter situations Bonnie pointed out to me that I was relying

on the outspoken students to participate. She observed that when I would ask a question to the class in general, my eyes went to certain students--the ones who did the most talking. I had no idea I was doing this, and her feedback encouraged me to focus more on all the students in the class. I attempted to be more structured in engaging student participation, but this consistently presented a challenge for me for two reasons. 1) As I mentioned above, the more structured the activity, the easier it was for me to be specific. I sense this was so because I let the format and mood of an activity dictate how I would respond. In a less structured, more free activity I felt uncomfortable being orderly and methodical. Maybe I thought it didn't fit the context. The students were free to respond and I didn't want to interrupt the process of their spontaneity. In a more structured activity it felt more natural to be directive and orderly, and thus I could be more structured when calling for student participation. 2) I was nervous for the more quiet students. I didn't want them to feel uncomfortable by calling on them for answers or discussion material. I didn't want to feel responsible for their mistakes either. Therefore, I didn't put them in jeopardy. I waited for them to speak up and take risks when they felt appropriate to do so. It took Bonnie's feedback to make me aware of the fact that I was encouraging certain students to dominate discussions and that it would be up to me to engage the more reticent and shy students. I couldn't depend on the silent students to build up the courage to speak; I was responsible to engage them.

I noticed consistently throughout the course that an activity went more smoothly when I asked specific students to respond. And, by the end of the course I discovered it was okay to call on the more silent students.

Yet, in looking back I realize I hadn't thought about these elements before an activity. I hadn't considered how I would involve students or elicit their participation. I let the structure of the activity itself, whether loose or tight, determine how I would direct student involvement. In some ways I feel this was an attempt to avoid taking responsibility for reasons I mentioned in #2--feeling uncomfortable for the quiet students. I also think it had to do with my own insecurities about being in charge. At times I felt uncomfortable being the one to direct the activity and letting it sort of happen with no specific structure eased the tension I felt.

From this experience I learned that the teacher has remarkable influence on the students and that how she chooses to engage their participation has a direct impact on the class dynamic. In a sense it was an empirical test of the significance of Stevick's control and initiative. My challenge for the future would be to remember this, and to work towards being consistent with how I direct activities or, at least to be aware ahead of time how I want to engage students.

Giving Directions and Explanations:

Sometimes it is difficult to know how clear one is when giving directions and this was a concern of mine. Was I clear? Did my students understand me? During the course I discovered ways in which I made it more difficult for them to understand me, ways that could be changed.

I learned one mistake I made was in assuming the students understood more than they did. In giving directions or explanations, I felt I would bore them with details and specifics, assuming they already knew what I was talking about. I didn't want to appear too simple for fear of insulting them. I also assumed they understood instructions clearly

after hearing them once. I would discover they didn't when I saw them fumbling with their papers not knowing what to do, or when they would be whispering amongst themselves to see if someone else understood. I realized I needed to give examples with my directions and that I needed to repeat them a couple of times in different ways. I also had to slow down my speech and speak more clearly with less colloquial English. I worked on this consciously throughout the course and felt it was an on-going challenge to stop assuming too much. I knew in the future I would have to continue with these concerns by consciously staying aware of whether or not I was assuming too much and by developing skills in clarity with directions.

Error Correction:

This was a major concern and a definite challenge for me during this course. The class was an advanced level and most of the students were able to express themselves quite effectively. They did make grammatical errors, but their communicative competence was so high, it was very easy to understand them. This made it difficult for me to pay attention to their errors; I constantly overlooked them because I was more focused on and interested in what they were saying. Bonnie continuously emphasized that the students were at the level where they needed to work on the fine tuning points of the language, and that we as teachers needed to be specific and consistent with error correction. In other words, we shouldn't accept their habitual errors.

Bonnie seemed very adept and confident in correcting, but it was difficult for me. When I was nervous, I was absolutely ineffective; I would just listen, feeling grateful someone else was talking instead of

me. Sometimes I would even nod my head indicating by my gesture that I had understood when I hadn't. Most of the time I was too afraid to interrupt for corrections for two reasons. The first was because I didn't want to expose my nervousness. This came from my doubts about the linguistic aspects of the language. I didn't want to point out anyone's mistakes for fear of not having the correct answer myself. The second reason was because I didn't want to offend the students. This was the same feeling I had about calling on the students--I didn't want to make them feel uncomfortable and put them on the spot in front of their peers. I was probably also afraid they would think less of me or not like me if I made them face their mistakes. In order to be more effective with error correction, I needed to put my awareness on the students, not myself, and I needed to trust my knowledge of the language. I especially needed to assume my responsibility of being a language teacher. Stevick mentions error correction is a vital responsibility of any language teacher since students are not adept at assessing their own skills. The teacher needs to give feedback on their performance, especially in relation to native speakers. At the same time students want to know how they are doing and progressing. I knew this was a major skill I would need to develop in the future. I learned from this experience that I had to take charge with error correction.

Teaching Grammar Points:

The language area I felt weakest in teaching was grammar. I wasn't familiar with specific rules and teaching techniques, even though I was a native speaker. I was completely dependent on grammar books for information, and most of the time I avoided an opportunity to teach grammar.

It took major effort on my part to look at this internship as a learning experience and take the opportunity to learn how to teach grammar.

As it turned out, I only taught a few grammar lessons. One day after a lesson on phrasal verbs, Bonnie quite diplomatically pointed out to me that I allowed and confirmed some grammatical errors, at the expense of real confusion for one student. This student had asked me if a few sentences were incorrect because she had learned differently and I said they were correct because a native speaker would understand what they meant. Bonnie made me realize that precision was essential at this level. It didn't matter if a native speaker would understand it; it was incorrect. I thought I was using the language correctly, but I wasn't. Another point was that I hadn't checked my lesson thoroughly with grammar reference books. I had taken an English linguistics course in the spring which covered a number of specific grammar points and various teaching techniques, but it wasn't enough to assume I knew what I was doing without referring to reference books. For this lesson I wasn't prepared enough in depth with the subject matter. Bonnie strongly emphasized how important it is to know the subject matter thoroughly before presenting a grammar lesson, especially at an advanced level. I learned the hard way. In the future I would have to do my homework more efficiently and increase my knowledge in this skill area.

I have grouped the areas discussed here because I feel they all have something in common--precision and detail. Honing in on the specific way to engage participation, to explain an assignment, to make a correction, or to teach a grammar point makes it much easier for the student to understand the situation or see a problem and focus on it, and thereby

assess the most effective way to proceed in working with it. It also gives the teacher a format, or sense of structure to follow which helps her to remain clear about and focused on what she is doing. Her clarity in presentation or correction and the smoothness with which she proceeds from activity to activity help create a positive dynamic in the class and an overall effective learning experience for the students.

SECTION III -- Post-Internship Teaching Position

WORKING WITHOUT BONNIE

The most striking difference in teaching without Bonnie was feeling that the class was my own class. The students were my students and I was their teacher. I liked it. But before I was able to appreciate and know the quality of that feeling, I spent many days asking myself a number of questions and wondering how it would be teaching alone. How would I do without the warm support and encouragement Bonnie gave; without her questioning guidance and critique of my lesson plans and their execution in the classroom; without her to brainstorm with for ideas in designing the weekly schedule? Had I learned to critique my own lessons effectively? Would I be able to assess the students? Would I still be nervous in the classroom or had I overcome that? Would I maintain a professional stance? I was excited and nervous with all these thoughts, wondering who my students would be and what I would learn from the experience.

Fortunately I had a daily journal from the August course with details of everything we did, and a wonderful teaching staff with whom to work. Their support and willingness to share ideas gave me a sense of security so that I didn't feel so alone.

Before the first class I was anxious but determined to maintain a sense of calm. I wanted to be focused the entire time in order to pay attention to the students. I wanted to get a sense of who they were and what their abilities were. I didn't begin that type of assessment for

weeks while teaching in August because of nervousness and I didn't want that to happen this time.

Fortunately for me that first class did go smoothly. Because I stayed calm, I was able to focus on the students and follow my activity plan effectively. I was surprised that I didn't get nervous. It was a wonderful feeling remaining calm. I probably did so because I was the one in control with full responsibility for the class. After this initial class meeting, I never felt nervous before walking into a class again. I think the nervousness and self-consciousness I felt in August existed for two reasons: 1) from my lack of experience and the insecurities I felt about what I was doing; and 2) from Bonnie's presence in the classroom at all times. As an intern I never felt the full responsibility the teacher has, and working in the fall gave me that right away. Being alone, with some experience behind me, gave me a feeling of control I never experienced in August. Having that feeling of control and responsibility eliminated the nervousness I felt previously. Without Bonnie there, I also felt freer to do what I wanted to do, knowing I wouldn't be critiqued or judged. I wasn't quite aware of how Bonnie's presence had affected me until I was observed by some of the ELO staff in the fall.

It was interesting to note how I felt while being observed by the director, my supervisor, and a private individual interested in the program for a prospective student. With each of these visitors, I hardly felt their presence. It wasn't until I was doing a grammar presentation working with student-generated material that I was fully aware of an observer (my supervisor) and my nervousness. I was working with sentences the students had written, asking them to correct the errors they found. Everything

went quite smoothly except for two sentences they had difficulty with due to the complexity of the grammar. I did the best I could at the time to explain the confusion, but while doing so I noticed I lost clarity. I was nervous because I was being observed by my supervisor. I was afraid I might make a big mistake when talking about the grammar and this fear inhibited my clear thinking. Ordinarily when I was working with the students in a similar fashion I would go into a lot of detail with diagrams on the board when they were confused. I was generally able to resolve their confusion. This time I didn't go into any detail nor draw diagrams on the board. I tried to get through each sentence as fast as possible. I found one of my supervisor's comments quite interesting. She said it always helps students when they can see the sentences they are trying to understand, and suggested I write the sentence on the board. Because I had felt so self conscious I wasn't able to apply such a simple solution. It would have been better for the students, my observer's assessment and myself if I had let go of the insecurity I was feeling. I didn't lose clarity from nervousness at any other time during this course. This experience made me realize that when I am being observed by an expert, I have a tendency to feel quite self-conscious and it could be one reason why I was so nervous when teaching with Bonnie.

While sharing all these thoughts with Bonnie one day over lunch three weeks into the fall course, she exclaimed, "Of course you don't feel nervous now Shawn, you can't afford to. You are the teacher! You are alone in the classroom." Maybe she was right; maybe all I needed to get over my self-consciousness was to be the sole teacher responsible for conducting the class.

I found the daily journal I kept during August useful from time to time as a resource for activities and techniques. I tried things Bonnie had done to see how I would feel doing them. These experiences often offered further insight into lesson planning. I was capable of going through the motions of an activity I had seen Bonnie do, yet I wasn't absolutely certain of the strategies and expectations she had of the activity. I didn't know what her specific learning objectives were. Being uncertain of the purpose of an activity I hadn't designed and planned, made me feel a little awkward in its implementation. From that feeling I again acknowledged the need to be clear with learning objectives in any lesson plan.

In terms of how I did with student assessment, I have a good example which portrays improvement. It was the third week of the course and we were working with student-generated material. A friend of mine from the MAT Program was observing the class. I had taken one sentence from each student's journal and put them on a ditto. Students were working in pairs with the copy and correcting each sentence. I was roaming the room to help. My friend also assisted with students' questions. About ten minutes into the exercise I noticed the students were having difficulty correcting some of the questions, and almost everyone was having difficulty with the same questions. Suddenly and spontaneously I was clear it was too difficult for them and changed the format instantly. I had everyone make a small circle and we proceeded by going over each sentence as a group. I explained with diagrams on the board when we came to a structure or grammar point which was causing them difficulty. It turned out to be a very productive and successful activity. It taught me that I am capable

of quick assessment and that I am flexible. I didn't get nervous when things weren't going as planned. Instead I was quick to think on my feet and do what I felt was most appropriate for the situation. My friend said she was actually impressed with how I handled the situation. She noticed that I was completely calm and very clear about what I was doing, especially with regard to the grammar explanations I gave.

The fine tuning skills Bonnie made me aware of during August became a part of my conscious thought in planning and implementing activities. There was a major jump from the first time Bonnie pointed out to me the need for smooth transitions between activities and clear and definitive closure to my teaching alone in the fall. The first activity I taught with Bonnie finished gracefully only because she was able to quietly whisper in my ear, "Shawn, think of a statement you can say to close this activity and move onto the next." As soon as she said that I felt overwhelmingly grateful she was in the room. I would have never thought to say anything similar, and would probably have stumbled into the next activity quite bluntly and abruptly. I had a real sense of the importance of this one day when I did the last morning activity. We finished with the material at the appropriate time and I said, "Okay guys, time for lunch. See you later," expecting the class to disperse. Instead, everyone just stayed there. Nobody moved. And, they had expressionless faces. I thought I did something terribly wrong and mentioned this to Bonnie. She laughed and only said that it was my closure. I ended too abruptly and it probably surprised everyone. They were probably sitting still a moment to sort through and compile the information they got. In the fall the lack of graceful transitions was never a problem. I always had an idea ahead

of time of how I wanted to end an activity and move onto the next. And, if things didn't go as planned, (as they often don't), I was able to stay focused on the students to clearly intuit a good point for change or transition.

Teaching alone in the fall was quite a positive experience. All in all I managed very well without Bonnie. Even though I was anxious in the beginning, I had the courage to approach it with an optimistic attitude and the receptivity to learn whatever my students and colleagues had to teach me. The director and teaching staff were always available with support and assistance whenever I needed it. I received positive feedback from both my students and those who supervised me. I was able to focus on the things I had learned in August which I wanted to improve, and I learned an incredible amount of new things. Most importantly, I finished this course feeling like a professional teacher with some background experience, no longer terrified of going into the classroom or professional world alone.

LESSON PLANNING, PART II

With Bonnie's aid in August, I had learned how to develop effective lesson plans and implement them successfully in the classroom. Going into the Fall I Program, I felt optimistic that I would be able to continue with what I had learned.

For the first week I was overwhelmed the most by the weekly schedule. Five hours a day, twenty five hours a week was a lot of classtime to fill, especially without a set curriculum. A couple of times during that week I recall asking myself why I chose to get involved, and wondered what I would do with all those class hours. Designing that first weekly schedule wasn't as easy as it was with Bonnie; nevertheless, the week passed by and was filled with many learning activities. And, surprisingly enough, after that week there were never enough hours to do all the things I wanted to do. Planning the week in advance wasn't difficult once I had a sense of the students' abilities and needs, and the directions I should take in the course.

The quality of my lesson plans for the first week didn't match what I had learned to do with Bonnie. I was too overwhelmed with the beginning of the course, and spent most of my time outside the classroom going through materials to familiarize myself with ideas and resources. I was teaching a low intermediate level which was quite different from an advanced level, and it meant different materials and lessons. I didn't feel discouraged though, and knew after I had a firm sense of the students' needs, I would become more focused in my planning.

Having time to think and reflect over the first weekend made all the difference. On Sunday after I laid out my second weekly plan, I started working on details for Monday's lessons. One was a grammar lesson on the distinction between the simple past and the present perfect. A number of students were having difficulty with this due to their L_1 interference, so I wanted to present a lesson which would help them grasp the differences and enable them to use the distinctions correctly. Before beginning the lesson plan, I was very clear on the learning objective and what I wanted the students to be able to do as a result of the lesson. I went through three reference books for ideas on how to present the grammar point, and while doing so, I was suddenly inspired with some ideas of my own which I could incorporate into the material I was going to use from the grammar books. I became quite absorbed in creating this lesson, and actually went through the entire format step by step with the materials to see how it would be. It was a very fruitful process which helped me internalize the lesson. The steps I took in designing this lesson were as follows:

1. perusing resources
2. going with an idea which emerged
3. working with the plan from beginning to end
4. making the necessary visual aids and other material
5. writing the plan down step by step
6. thinking through the entire process one more time.

By the time I had completed step five, I felt so prepared with the activity and so sure it would be successful, I could hardly wait to try it in the classroom.

I presented the lesson with complete confidence, clarity and detail. I felt good about it, and to my surprise, three students told me afterwards that it was an excellent lesson. They said now they could finally see the difference between the two tenses. It was great to know that they felt they had really learned something. The following is a quote from my journal about that activity:

Had a really good day. I went into the class so prepared. I had really thought out my grammar lesson and I think it went well. First time I feel I've been so thorough with lesson planning this program--thinking about the objective, what I want the students to walk away with, how to go about doing it, and then practicing it before going into the classroom. Students said they really got something from it.

The step by step process I went through in developing this lesson was the most thorough and concrete I had experienced. It impressed upon me with utter clarity the importance and significance of what I had learned about lesson planning. There was no question about the fact that a well thought out activity made for an effective lesson, and that an original idea added enthusiasm to the design and implementation. The only factor limiting me from developing similar lesson plans was lack of time. It was difficult during the week to spend the time necessary in being so thorough. Weekends provided more time, and generally Monday's lessons were the most organized.

I would like to contrast this experience with the last two lessons of the course which are examples of my attempt to "wing it." They were the only lessons during the course that I chose to do this. At all other times I refrained basically because I felt too responsible and too fearful to go into the class unprepared. I never wanted to take the chance that I would appear unprofessional, unclear or terribly nervous. I had established a good working relationship with my students and didn't want to jeopardize that nor disrupt the rhythm.

For the last two lessons I somehow felt different. They were only an hour each and mainly held for closure. The previous Friday had been the last academic day of class as far as the students were concerned, and I even felt a sense of relief that it was over. I relaxed over the weekend and this mood carried through so that I wasn't too involved in planning for those last two classes. I figured I could "wing it" because it was the end and I wouldn't jeopardize the positive relationship I had already established with the class.

Just before the first class on Monday, I started thinking about what I would do and regretted not having thought about it earlier. I grabbed the materials I thought I would need and went into the classroom unprepared. The energy was quite unusual because the students were sad and nervous. It was difficult for me to engage them, and having no planned guideline to rely on made it very challenging. I was hoping the students would make something happen; that they would instigate an interesting discussion. But they didn't. It was obvious they needed structure. I managed to involve the students in an activity, but realized I made a mistake coming unprepared.

The second class on Tuesday, which was the last, turned out about the same as the one on Monday. I managed, but nothing significant or meaningful transpired. Both time slots provided an opportunity for conscientious reflection, evaluation and closure but I ended up wasting the valuable potential they offered. Five minutes after the last class I regretted terribly not having done something more concrete to signify closure. The end of this course was so different from the end of the course in August. Bonnie and I had put a lot of thought into the closing activities, and because of this, the students shared a lot of thought and feeling about their experiences. I missed out on the opportunity to do the same with my own class and I am not exactly sure why. I sense one reason was because I too was sad the course was ending and therefore didn't want to deal with closure. Other than that I haven't a clue why I was so unprepared at the end.

These last two classes did teach me something though--students need guidelines to follow, and coming into the classroom without thinking through an activity can make it difficult for the teacher to establish and implement those guidelines. The absence of this structure in an activity offers the potential for accomplishing nothing. And, with little or no guidelines, the students turn to each other for a sense of what to do. At this point, they generally end up only having private conversations among themselves. For an activity to be productive and meaningful, the students first have to know what the plan is. They have to be able to see how it fits together and makes sense. Then they need to know what their possibilities for action are. This requires forethought on the part of the teacher. For students to stay focused, there has to be structure;

and for there to be structure, the teacher has to think ahead of time about what she will do. Otherwise, a lesson may only be a waste of time and accomplish nothing.

Over the length of this course, the elements of effective lesson planning I had learned while working with Bonnie became essential ingredients in the lessons I designed. These elements included such points as not assuming too much about what the students already know, designing the lesson around the students' needs and not mine, thinking through the lesson ahead of time, familiarizing myself with the material, defining the learning objective, and planning how the students would be engaged. I was asking myself the same sort of questions Bonnie asked me about my lesson plans, and I kept tabs on how an activity went in relation to the organization I put into its planning. As such, I felt I had successfully learned to incorporate important factors into my thinking while planning, and therefore made strides in the overall improvement of my teaching.

BEING SPECIFIC, PART II

After my internship I was aware of a number of skills I wanted to develop further in my teaching. I referred to and discussed some of these skills in chapter 5, Being Specific, Part I. They were foremost in my mind when going into the Fall I Program. I paid close attention to their importance throughout the course. This chapter discusses those same skill areas mentioned in chapter 5 from the perspective of the insight I gained and the progress I made while teaching in the fall.

Calling on Students:

I continually tested my hypothesis that an activity involving student input would go smoother if I was directive and methodical in indicating who was to speak when and what they were to say. The dynamic of the class almost consistently lost integrity during a lesson when I was not structured with initiative. The only time my lack of structure with initiative had no impact on student participation was during a very heated discussion on abortion. Other than that, I had to structure their involvement if I wanted full and active participation. While teaching this course I realized I had made progress with this skill because I was planning it into my lesson activities. Also, I was much more comfortable with and consistent in maintaining control. I was less afraid of offending students or making them uncomfortable by calling on them to speak. In general, I was able to direct the participation in the class according to how I wanted them to be involved, and felt comfortable in doing so. This was a major improvement.

Giving Direction and Explanations:

During the first week of the course, I made an effort to speak slowly and enunciate clearly. I was specific with examples and I tried not to assume the students understood everything. They seemed to follow my directions without much difficulty since the activities were completed without significant confusion.

After the second week and several thereafter, I became aware of certain behavioral characteristics and facial expressions which indicated that students were in fact not understanding my instructions and/or explanations. This happened sometimes with only one student or with a few, or with the entire class. Once or twice I wasn't aware the class didn't understand the directions of an activity until they were well into doing something. I would discover this while roaming the room observing their work and see they weren't doing what they were supposed to do. Some students would be busy doing something entirely different than what I had explained and some were just plain confused. At this point I would stop the class and go over the directions again with specific examples helping them do a few to make sure they knew how to do the complete exercise. This marked a clear shift in awareness for me. In general my attention was much more focused on the students than on myself.

After the initial weeks of the course as I became more familiar with the students and relaxed with myself, and they became more relaxed and familiar with me, I began to observe their non-verbal cues more readily when they didn't understand. I sensed that even though during the first weeks they had seemed to understand me, they probably hadn't. They were probably too inhibited and nervous to show confusion because they were

sensitive to what I and others thought of them. I knew I was quite conscious of speaking clearly and slowly in the beginning, but as I relaxed I probably began speaking quicker and using more colloquial English. This change along with the fact that they were probably more relaxed explained why they seemed to be understanding less of my directions and explanations. At this time, I became quite conscious of what I was saying and how I was saying it.

I was supervised by the director one day and I asked her specifically to pay attention to my directions since I was concerned about my clarity. Her main comment to me afterwards was that I was more repetitious than necessary. She emphasized that my directions were quite clear and understandable, but I said them too many times. Her suggestion was that I trust my explanations and directions were clear, and that I ask a student to repeat them for the class.

I tried her suggestion and discovered it was quite helpful. It was also very useful for assessing comprehension and providing an opportunity for more speaking. Sometimes if a student volunteered to repeat my instructions and inadvertently misunderstood them or was unable to articulate them clearly, I would ask for another volunteer to correct the information. Or, I would use the incorrect statement to work on a grammar point briefly, especially if it related to a recent lesson.

I adopted this technique throughout the remainder of the course and it was effective in enabling me to determine if my directions were clear, and in assessing what the students were capable of understanding.

Error Correction:

This became less of a challenge for me during the fall. I think

during August I was nervous about being incorrect because of my own uncertainties and lack of experience. I was also inhibited by Bonnie's presence. I didn't want to appear stupid if I corrected an error wrong.

As the teacher in the fall, I was the authority on any particular question or error. The students turned to me for answers and clarification. As I was their source for feedback on how they were doing, I had to believe in myself and in what I knew. If I was uncertain about something, I would take the responsibility of finding the answer. Recognizing my position of responsibility made it easier for me to deal effectively with error correction. Stevick mentioned that error correction was an important responsibility of any language teacher since students are not adept at assessing their skills, especially in relation to native speakers. I agreed with Stevick and therefore knew I would have to give feedback on how the students were doing and correct their errors. The students as well wanted to know how they were progressing. At times though I still felt hesitant to confront students with their errors. Some advice Bonnie shared during August was helpful. Her suggestion was to correct a student by saying a native speaker would say it differently, then proceed to say it as it should be said. This didn't stress that the student was wrong; instead, it pointed to the fact that there was a more appropriate way to say what they were saying. Since this took the edge off being wrong, it was less threatening to me and to them. It actually felt very natural to deal with errors this way and the students responded favorably.

I also learned that establishing a pattern for error correction and being consistent with this pattern made it easier for me. The students became familiar with the pattern and expected it. What I established from

the beginning was a signal indicating an error needed to be corrected. Then I called upon the students themselves to correct it. Very rarely did I need to give a correction completely. I found this to be a very effective means of error correction. I also used a large amount of their own language for specific lessons. I would give them grammatically incorrect sentences they had said or written with the assignment to correct them. Again and again this was one of their favorite activities. I felt comfortable with error correction by the end of the course and knew I had made enormous progress with this skill.

Teaching Grammar points:

I felt very sensitive to the need to be sure about the grammar I was teaching during this course. I generally relied on a minimum of three grammar reference books and always found that collaborating points from the three made the best presentation. Naturally I felt more comfortable and confident teaching the grammar points with which I was most familiar. When I was uncertain about the nuances of a particular point, I asked for help from other teachers, and I tried to anticipate questions the students might ask and the answers I would give.

In teaching a grammar point, I learned it was important to be quite specific, and to give contrasting structures which helped the students grasp the meaning more easily. The appropriate usage of a particular grammar point and its nuances were more identifiable when the structure was contrasted. I made sure I had thorough knowledge of the rules for a particular structure and additional examples in mind before teaching the lesson. If I were uncertain or unable to answer a question, I told the class I would look it up and tell them later. I felt more comfortable

teaching grammar this course, probably because I had no choice--I had to do it; there was no one else to rely on. But I also looked at it as a wonderful learning opportunity.

Overall, I feel I made progress in each of the areas discussed in this chapter. My internship in August taught me what I did and did not know, what I could and could not do, and what I needed to practice in order to improve. It also gave me some experience to fall back on. Teaching in the Fall I Program gave me the immediate possibility of further developing my skills and a realistic sense of what I had learned during August. As for now, I feel I have a concrete basis of experience from which to work and progress. With time I will continue to refine these budding skills.

CONCLUSION

Eight months have passed since I completed my internship. The writing of this paper and the teaching I have done since have kept my thoughts about what I learned in August, and subsequently in the fall, fresh in my mind. As I continue to teach, and with each draft of this paper, my understanding of what I learned becomes more comprehensive. I see situations in the classroom or aspects of my lesson planning from different angles. These varying perspectives shed light on new areas for development and growth. I am endlessly faced with new challenges and new questions. Teaching has become an on-going learning process. The internship I did with the expert supervision I had from Bonnie gave me a foundation from which to work and a framework on which to build my teaching skills.

By the end of the August course, it was clear to me that I had definitely gained a permanent foothold in feeling confident, competent and professional. I was satisfied with what I learned about my teaching both in terms of preparation and performance. It was a successful experience, and just from knowing this, I knew I could teach again. I also thought that the next time would be easier. I wouldn't be facing the complete unknown and therefore wouldn't have the insecurity and fear I felt prior to teaching in August. I had some positive experience behind me.

While teaching in the fall I was constantly testing what I learned in August. From my assessment of how I was doing, it was obvious to me that I was making progress in building self-confidence and a sense of

competence and professionalism. Student feedback throughout the course was indicative of the fact that they were satisfied with my teaching and the class overall, and, that they were learning. By the way I felt at the end of the course, it was unequivocally evident to me that I had attained the level of confidence, competence and professionalism I had aspired to when setting out at the beginning of my internship.

The reading and observing I did in July gave me the tools I needed for focusing on my objectives while teaching. Those activities kindled the momentous process of change which transpired throughout my internship and the fall. They helped me pinpoint the specific skills I wanted to look for and work on in my teaching. The information I gathered helped me make guidelines to follow. The guidelines I established were useful, in turn, for Bonnie in her observation of and participation with my teaching. They didn't exclude her agenda for observation of my work; they just included mine. The preparation I did for the internship gave me clarity. I felt clear about what I wanted to accomplish and thought I had some specific steps outlined which would guide me towards my goal. I am grateful to the MAT teachers who suggested these activities as preparatory work for the internship.

The internship itself was the vehicle for accomplishing my objectives. It wouldn't have been the success it was without Bonnie's contributions or the students participation. From all their acceptance, understanding and patience with everything I did and their eagerness to be involved, I felt safe to try new things, take risks and thereby learn from my mistakes. The classroom was an on-going monitor of how I was doing and I was open and receptive to the feedback I received. This along with my

self-reflection were the means of evaluating whether or not I succeeded with my objectives.

But where I made the real shift from feeling insecure and incompetent to that of feeling utterly confident and capable was during the fall. Going directly into another teaching situation right after the internship enabled me to crystalize and solidify the key skills I had learned in August. At the same time it gave me the opportunity to work immediately with the budding skills I had begun to develop in August. I was able to test myself constantly. It was an excellent way of checking and verifying if I had really learned or accomplished what I thought I had or if I was making progress with a skill I had become aware of during the internship.

The most salient change I noticed overall was the transition from needing so much external approval to that of establishing my own inner criteria as to how I was doing, what I was doing and why I was doing it. I began to accept my lesson plans and their implementations, and felt I was establishing a framework for my own teaching style. Basically I was satisfied with the way I was doing things.

This shift in my perception and confidence didn't exclude the fact that there is always room for improvement. My ears were always open to the feedback of my students and colleagues and my thoughts were always receptive to reflection, analysis and constructive criticism. I was establishing the groundwork for what was appropriate, useful and successful in my teaching and what was necessary to change or improve. At the same time I was clarifying my beliefs and assumptions about teaching and if my approaches matched my assumptions. I felt confident about what I

was doing and saw myself as a professional.

The icing on the cake in terms of the overall evaluation of my accomplishments was the relationship I had with my students in the fall. They were a wonderful group. They gave me so much with their presence, participation and honest feedback. In turn, they said I gave them a lot, especially with all the energy and enthusiasm I had for teaching them ESL. They saw me as well-prepared, organized and efficient with time and class management. During this course I overcame the inner conflict I had with the issue of control. Somehow I found a balance in myself with this group. I was able to keep them on target and in order without sacrificing the warm and open qualities I like to express and share with my students. I don't know how I found this balance and sometimes wonder if it was just the special dynamic that existed with the group. At any rate, it was there and I cherished the experience. It was a personal testimony and something I could refer back to with future teaching experiences.

One last treat in working with these students came from the last class activity we did. For a remembrance of our class I had everybody write a letter to the class saying anything they wanted to say. I dittoed the letters and gave complete copies to everyone. One student instead of writing a letter identified all the class members according to what they contributed to the class. He matched people with their characteristics such as the joker, the most outspoken, the thinker, the actor. My name was included and beside it was the word professional. When I read that I felt such an indescribable sense of satisfaction. At the onset of my internship I wanted to finish feeling professional. I worked on presenting myself as such and came out of that experience with the feeling in

hand. Going into the fall course I perceived myself and presented myself as a professional. By the end of that course I felt inside that I was a professional and I was seen as a professional as well. I had done it! I was elated!

Since the fall I have had the opportunity to continue teaching ESL at The Experiment--different levels, different courses. I have also been fortunate to have had a teaching position at Keene State College nearby in New Hampshire where I taught beginning Spanish to American college students. These two contrasting experiences have stimulated and challenged my thinking further in terms of my assumptions about teaching and how I choose to approach my students. I continue to polish the skills I developed last summer and expand with others as I face the challenge each new teaching experience has to offer. It is evident to me from my experience so far that I will continue to learn while teaching and that I will always seek clarification when faced with conflicts or discrepancies in what I am doing. I love teaching because the on-going interaction with students is an ever-present mirror which acts as a constant self test in challenging my values, my knowledge, my understanding, my compassion, my behavior and my skills. Every student contributes something in the process. Every class is just the beginning of something new to learn.

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