

# **MEXTESOL JOURNAL**

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# MEXTESOL JOURNAL

Editor/Director  
*JoAnn Miller*

Associate Editor/Editor Asociado  
*Elinore Duque*

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## From the Editor

The XXIII MEXTESOL National Convention held in Zacatecas from October 16 to 20, 1996 was dedicated to Bertha Gómez Maqueo. In the Convention Program, MEXTESOL President Miguel Iván Abreu Filigrana thanked Mtra. Gómez Maqueo, “who has always been a principal part of MEXTESOL and to who we dedicate this convention” (p. 8). Mtra. Gómez Maqueo was also honored and given a long standing ovation at the opening ceremony. We, too, dedicate this issue of the *MEXTESOL Journal* to Bertha Gómez Maqueo for all she has done, not only in her unending support of MEXTESOL, but for all the teachers she has guided, influenced and inspired during her career. This issue includes an interview with Mtra. Gómez Maqueo in which she recounts how MEXTESOL came into existence and even gives us some interesting gossip about the people who helped found our organization.

Our second article (*Should Higher Education be Open or Closed?*) is a critique of the Mexican educational system. This controversial article, by Peter Hubbard, Universidad de Guadalajara, not only satirizes the bureaucracy we all live with but also offers an original solution to some problems we face in higher education. It would be interesting to hear opinions from our readers about the problems discussed in this article.

In our third article (*The Use of Portfolios for Teacher Evaluation*), M. Martha Lengeling from the Universidad de Guanajuato writes a follow-up of an article she published in our Spring Issue. This time she begins with a general discussion of what portfolio evaluation is, where it came from and how it can offer an alternative form of evaluation for teachers. She follows up with some ideas on how to institute a portfolio evaluation program for teachers and what should be included in a portfolio.

Thomas Ihde, Bergen Community College, in his article *Feedback in L2 Writing* presents a review of research that has been carried out in the field of writing and then gives the results of a survey of fifty foreign language instructors on how they handle feedback in their classrooms. He also includes a very complete bibliography.

Our *Book Review* section is a little different this issue. First there is an article that appeared in the AZ-TESOL (Arizona TESOL) newsletter. This short article very clearly explains how to write a book review. This ar-

title is reprinted in hopes that someone out there will become interested in reviewing books and contribute these reviews to the *Journal*. Immediately afterward a book review is reprinted from the Massachusetts TESOL affiliate newsletter which exemplifies the ideas presented in the AZ-TESOL article.

This is our first issue that has refereed articles. Both the article by Peter Hubbard and the one by M. Martha Lengeling were read anonymously by two members of the Editorial Board (not themselves, of course) and were judged to be of sufficient quality and general interest to be published by the *Journal*. Future issues will include more refereed articles, as well as unrefereed articles as has been the norm in the past.

The Editor

## Editorial Policy

The MEXTESOL Journal is dedicated to the classroom teacher in Mexico. Articles and book reviews related to EFL teaching in Mexico and in other similar situations throughout the world are accepted for publication. Articles can be either practical or theoretical and written in English or Spanish.

**Refereed Articles:** Articles are refereed by members of the Editorial Board and by other experts in a field related to that of the article. The refereeing process is not blind and, if necessary, a referee will be assigned as a mentor to guide the author through the publication process. Refereed article will have a footnote referring to the fact that the article was refereed. The MEXTESOL Journal retains the right to edit all manuscripts that are accepted for publication.

**Unreferred Articles:** In order to open the publication process to more authors, unreferred articles will also be accepted. These articles will be read and judged by the Editorial Committee and edited by our Style Editor.

**Book Reviews:** The Journal welcomes previously unpublished reviews of professional books, classroom texts, video- or audiotaped material, computer software and other instructional resources. Reviews are not refereed.

**Submission Guidelines:** Three copies of the manuscript, including all appendices, tables, graphs, references, your professional affiliation and an address and telephone/fax number where you can be reached should be faxed or sent to the address below. Submissions are also accepted by e-mail. If you fax your manuscript, be sure also to mail three copies to the Journal since fax service in Mexico is not always reliable. Whenever possible include the article on either 5.25" or 3.5" diskettes, prepared to be read with IBM or Apple compatible program. **Please specify if you want the article to be refereed or not.**

**MEXTESOL JOURNAL**  
**San Borja 726-2, Colonia del Valle**  
**03100 Mexico, D. F.**  
**Telephone: 575-5473, Fax: 550-9622**  
**E-mail: mextslj@servidor.unam.mx**

*and* [mextesol@servidor.unam.mx](mailto:mextesol@servidor.unam.mx)

## Manuscript Guidelines

1) Articles should be typed, double spaced and preferably no more than twenty pages long. References should be cited in parenthesis in the text by author's name, year of publication and page numbers. (For example: "The findings were reported (Jones 1979: 23-24) although they cause no change in policy.")

2) The list of references in an article must appear at the end of the text on a separate page titled "References". Data must be complete and accurate. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of their references. This format should be followed:

For books: Jones, D. J. 1984. How to spell. New York. ABC Press.

For articles: Moore, Jane. 1991. "Why I like to Teach." *Teacher's Quarterly*. June, 6-8.

*Note:* A copy of these guidelines in Spanish is available on request from *The Editor*.

Si usted quiere obtener la versión de este texto en español, favor de solicitarla a *The Editor*.

**Journal Correspondence:** All other correspondence to the MEXTESOL Journal should be sent to Editor at the above address.

**Membership:** For information on membership in MEXTESOL, contact the *MEXTESOL Membership Service* at the above address.

**Advertising:** Information on advertising is available from MEXTESOL at the above address.

## Interview with Bertha Gómez Maqueo <sup>1</sup>

NEVIN SIDERS, MEXTESOL

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*Gómez Maqueo:* MEXTESOL began with confusion. The confusion started after a group of teachers went to a TESOL conference in Puerto Rico and decided they could form an affiliate here, in Mexico City. Half of the teachers were from the Instituto Mexicano Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales, A. C. (IMNRC) and others were from the Anglo Mexicano de Cultura (AMC), although there were some teachers from public schools in Mexico, like, for example, Ruth Flores. This group of teachers had the help of Fred Bechetti, who was an assistant cultural attaché in the American embassy, and he was very interested in the teaching of English. There were no English Language Officers in Mexico, either in the British Council or in the American embassy at that time; I think he had been a teacher and he was very interested in the teaching of English. So we had his help and the IMNRC was also very interested in forming this affiliate, so they helped out very much at the beginning, even the MEXTESOL office was in the IMNRC.

It was not a very big group, I remember that the charter is signed by Tony Cabrera, Josephine Claudio, and Harley Stevenson. Harley Stevenson was working at what was later CEMAC, that is now the cultural institute and national center, I don't remember the name of it now, because it has changed names.

*Journal:* CEMARC?

*Gómez Maqueo:* Yeah. He was working there, and he was the first president of MEXTESOL.

The very first convention we had was in Tampico. I remember three things about that convention. First, that Grace Scott got elected as next president. I was sitting next to Ruth Flores, and she won a television because we had a raffle; somebody had given this television, and many other things to be raffled. And that Marilyn Chasen broke her foot and couldn't stay for the convention.

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<sup>1</sup> Bertha Gómez Maqueo was interviewed on December 28, 1995 in Mexico City..

The **next** convention was in Cocoyoc, and Enrique Gutiérrez was elected president there. And in 1976, the first *Journal* was edited. It was in April 1976. I was looking back at that issue to remember the date, because I thought that was something important. Because we only had a *Newsletter* before that, and it was not a very big *Newsletter*, but anyway that had already started. But the *Journal* began in 1976.

*Journal:* Did it have the same distinction as today: the *Newsletter* contains activities and the *Journal* is academic?

*Gómez Maqueo:* More or less, yes. That was more or less the way it worked, although there were advertisements in the *Journal* from the beginning. I don't know if there still are. If it's purely academic, I don't remember if it still has advertisements or not.

*Journal:* In the interview with Vincent Carrubba the other day he said there was a previous association.

*Gómez Maqueo:* Oh yes! There was MATE. Mate was the Mexican Association of Teachers of English. That was also started out of IMNRC. But it died out, it couldn't continue.

At the beginning [of MEXTESOL] there was only the Mexico City chapter. But it grew very much because, you know, there are many teachers in Mexico City. And a few months later we founded the Tampico chapter -- that's where the convention was -- and at that time there were **many** members and **many** chapters, but they weren't organized the way they should be, and many of them died out.

But since we wanted to be a national association, that's why we founded the different chapters. For example, when the convention was in Guanajuato--there was a chapter in Guanajuato--because what we did at the beginning was that when we wanted to have the convention somewhere outside of the City, we always tried to found a chapter there. That was at the beginning. Mexico City chapter turned out to be very, very powerful because it had most of the members, and there were quite a few disagreements between the national and the Mexico City chapter. But things turned out for the better, and the Mexico City chapter backed up the national very much.

At the time there were about twenty chapters: one in Tijuana, there was one in Ciudad Obregón, all these chapters died out.

*Journal:* When were there twenty chapters?

*Gómez Maqueo:* I would say about five years after the association was founded, say about ten years ago. We had a chapter in, for example, Guanajuato --- twice. Once it was in the city of Guanajuato when we had the convention there, and that chapter died out, and there was another one in León, and that chapter died out too. I think that's the reason that we're being very careful now with opening up chapters. MEXTESOL has gone through very difficult situations. We often didn't have a **penny**. It is only lately that I see it is trying to grow but not with so many financial problems as it had before. I think it is on a sounder base now than it used to be way back at the beginning, because we had lots of members and they didn't continue being members.

*Journal:* What can we learn from that?

*Gómez Maqueo:* Why did that happen? I don't really know what happened. Well, I suppose that chapters were not attended to the way they should have been because they depended on who was president and who the members on the committee were. Sometimes the members didn't work at all, and you know how **hard** one has to work when one is member of the executive committee.

One of the reasons I think the chapters died out was because we didn't have this council that we have now, where the chapter presidents come to Mexico City to try to solve their problems.

*Journal:* What we call the *Think Tanks*?

*Gómez Maqueo:* Yes, the *Think Tank*. The very first time that we really met with the chapter presidents was in Guanajuato, but we really only met socially.

*Journal:* What year was this?

*Gómez Maqueo:* That year was 1978. And it wasn't until 1979, when John "Nick" Shepherd was president, that the *Think Tank* was founded. He was director of the Anglo-Mexican Institute. It was only under him that *the Think Tank* was founded. Although we had the *Think Tank*, the chapter presidents were not considered as important as they are now! That was one of the reasons I think the chapters died out. They always wanted to have

something to say, and they felt that they never had a chance to say what they wanted. That was why they died out.

Well, I remember most of the names of the presidents, but I think you have that, don't you?

*Journal:* Recently Iván Abreu made a nice list that is going to be mounted on the wall of the National office.

*Gómez Maqueo:* Two of our ex-presidents have died already. Because one, the youngest one, was killed in an accident. And many of them don't live in Mexico. Harley Stevenson, I think we lost contact with him completely, Grace Scott, some of us have certain contacts with her, John Shepherd doesn't live in Mexico, either, Jim Taylor comes to Mexico but he doesn't live here anymore. ... I don't remember anyone else, who has gone to the States, I mean any presidents. Well, just lately, Susan Zimmerman has gone to live in the States, maybe she won't come back, we don't know.

*Journal:* The thing you like about MEXTESOL?

*Gómez Maqueo:* The thing I like best about MEXTESOL is that **any** teacher of English can become a member because we do have other associations in Mexico, but they're very exclusive, for instance, they just want teachers from the universities, from **certain** universities, etc. But MEXTESOL caters to all kinds of teachers and I think this relationship is good for all teachers.

This relationship is good for all teachers because one learns from each other, one finds out about different situations in which English is taught, and perhaps one can help others. That's why I like the MEXTESOL association best, because I have belonged to other associations, but as I told you, they're mostly exclusive, only for one certain group of persons, and don't cater to every teacher who wants to become a better teacher. I think that we have tried to follow in MEXTESOL the ideas that TESOL has of helping other people become better teachers.

*Journal:* Well, that's certainly one point that, as we discuss in our conventions, that there are thousands if not tens of thousands of teachers, especially in the public schools, who have little or no training. But, on the other hand, to receive some kind of accreditation--recognition for the workshops

we give, for the teachers to “collect points”--we would need to require that the members have a certain training, to have bachelor’s degrees.

*Gómez Maqueo:* What we would have to require most of all, what we would have to do, is to try to get **government** recognition for these things. Of course, in order to get this recognition, perhaps it would be a requirement that the teachers have certain training so these certificates that they get would be worthwhile for them, so they would get the “points” they need in order to increase their salary.

We would have to have some sort of agreement with the government so that they would back these certificates that we give teachers, and that would help MEXTESOL become more important than it is now. I mean from the point of view of the public school teachers, and perhaps we would get more teachers to come in our society. Because there aren’t that many teachers from public schools, and I think perhaps these are teachers who need help most of all. Because you know it’s very expensive for them to go to courses in the different institutes. And if we could help them out, that would be very good. That’s one of the things I have always wanted to see. But it has been very difficult to get these agreements with [state and federal] governments. Some of the states in Mexico, like for instance I remember Jalisco--in Guadalajara--we have been able to get the government to back these certificates, and it’s supposed to be very helpful.

*Journal:* That chapter’s very large.

*Gómez Maqueo:* That chapter also died out, but now it’s one of the largest chapters. It **was** also a very important chapter at the beginning, but it died out. There was a chapter in Monterrey too, and we don’t have a chapter in Monterrey anymore. And these were the largest ones at one time. Guadalajara, fortunately, has become a very active chapter again. But in Monterrey, it died out twice!

*Journal:* There’s one other president who you **do** know, who you sort of skipped over in your list ...

*Gómez Maqueo:* Yes?!

*Journal:* When were you president?

*Gómez Maqueo:* I was president in 1978, when we had the TESOL convention in Mexico. It was a wonderful experience, especially for all of those who were on the executive committee or who in some way helped out for the TESOL convention in 1978. I should say that at the beginning the presidency was from the day after the convention to the next convention: it was from one convention to another. It wasn't like it is now, that we start at the beginning of the year and end at the end of the year. The committee changed immediately at the convention; it was difficult because we could not hand in all the reports of what happened at the convention, or the money. You see all the money was coming in at that time, and it was very difficult to **change** the committee at that time. But that's the way it was at the beginning.

And the convention was always during the first days of November: we had lots of problems on account of that because that was a time when the air companies renewed their [labor] contracts and sometimes there were strikes. We had a terrible time when we went to Oaxaca because there was a strike, there was an airline strike and people had to go by car or by bus in order to get to the convention on time. And also on the way back it was very difficult. And it was also very difficult because the people who were at the hotel hadn't left -- the rooms weren't vacated on time -- and we had lots of problems on account of that, and that was on account of the air strikes. So when we had these problems about twice, we decided to change the date of the convention so we wouldn't have these problems with the airlines or with the hotels. Because naturally the people couldn't get out, they didn't want to get out of the hotel.

It's much better now the way it is that it's in October. It's much better now, and it's much better not to change the committee until the beginning of the year because then you have the full year and I think that has helped to make the organization better.

Another thing we tried to be careful about is about sending representatives to the TESOL conferences. When MEXTESOL didn't have any money we always asked, "Who is going to the TESOL convention?" Because either you were sent by your school or as a private individual who wanted to go. Then these persons were named the representatives, so would always have a representative and would always know what was going on in TESOL. At the beginning many of us used to go to the TESOL conventions, but later on because of the cost, not so many have been able to go as used to.

I was telling you about the experience that we had here in Mexico when the TESOL convention was here. We had the people who were in charge of the convention, the second vice president, and also in charge was Marianne Celce-Murcia. I met her in 1978 precisely because she worked with Charley Blachforth who was the second vice president and in charge of the convention. They came to Mexico several times and we formed a committee here in Mexico and worked with them, especially at the end of the period, that would be **right** before the convention. They came down before the convention began.

Many of the people in MEXTESOL worked with them, and we had one of our nicest experiences taking people to schools, showing them our city. One of the persons who helped to make a small bulletin telling them about the restaurants near the convention site, which was in the Sheraton Hotel María Isabel. It think it's not a Sheraton any longer, but you know that's the Zona Rosa, the Pink Zone. There are many beautiful restaurants around there. And there's all kinds of prices, and so we made a bulletin about the important points in our city. One of the people who worked on this was María de los Angeles Moreno, who was at that time the head of the *secundarias técnicas*, and she worked with Barbara Weller who was the assistant head of these *secundarias*.

It turned out very nice, I think I still have some of the literature from that time around, but I don't know where I have it. If I find it I'll let you have it, because I think you should have that in the MEXTESOL office.

The very, very first Newsletter that I remember came out after the first convention. I even remember that I wrote something for the Newsletter, and that Vince Carrubba wrote something for it too. At the beginning we used to have meetings here in the Mexico City chapter every month, but it turned out to be too much. We were very enthusiastic, you see, at the beginning and we thought we could do a lot. And besides the city has changed, every day it gets harder to get around as you must know. This is one of the reasons we decided there shouldn't be that many meetings. The convention, well only one a year. But each chapter has the meetings it considers necessary. We used to even have two meetings a month, because we had one in the evening for those teachers who couldn't come on Saturday mornings.. It turned out to be too much, as I said.

*Journal:* Well, so far the discussion's been about the social relationships; What about the academic side?

*Gómez Maqueo:* We have always tried to have as many good speakers as we can. It has always been the custom to have people from out of town as the plenary speakers, but many of the people here in Mexico have been able to give very good workshops, as they know the situation better than the people from out of town. For instance, the academic program for last year's [1994] convention I liked better than the one we had this year [1995], but I think it was a very, very good academic program, and sometimes we have had *very* good programs. Not always. Because I believe that one of the things that is difficult to choose, from so many papers we receive, to choose those that really should be on the program. Sometimes on paper it's not the same as the reality, because you can give a very good abstract and not a very good workshop or not a very good paper. I think MEXTESOL has always tried to have good academic programs.

Also, in the *Journal* there's always something that you can learn, something that is important for teachers to know. And that's another part of the academic program that MEXTESOL should have. When we had a hard time with the *Journals*, and there were some years when we had only two *Journals* instead of four--or when we had one!--still we always tried to have good papers in it so that the teachers would have somewhere to look for ideas in teaching. And I think that's one of the most important things the *Journal* has to do.

I think the teachers were very enthusiastic from the very first convention. We don't have more teachers from the public schools I believe **now** because they aren't able to pay. That's why I'm very interested in having good programs in the regional conventions because most of the teachers can go to the regional conventions since they don't have to spend very much.

*Journal:* How do we choose our leadership?

*Gómez Maqueo:* Now you have to give at least a brief idea of what the person does and how the person is. But many times, as you say, there were just names and people look at the persons and vote for them, but many times they don't *know* the candidates. At the beginning we tried to put out a slate before the convention. But that turns out to be very difficult because no-

body wants to have to do so much work. People like to have things done for them, but not to have to do them. Lately it has been very difficult to choose the leaders because the people have to work harder in order to make enough money because things have become more expensive, no? So, that's one of the reasons that it's very difficult to get persons.

It's very nice to say that you're president or vice president or secretary of an association. But when you have to do lots of work and give up a lot of your free time, many people don't accept, and this is a problem. It's one of the problems that we have **always** had in this association. We tried to have some sort of executive secretary, but that didn't turn out so very well. Now what we have is the office administrator, and it's much better because we tried to have a person in charge of the office, and it turned out that this person was the most important person in MEXTESOL because many times the people on the committee didn't go to the office at all, and it doesn't work out very well that way. This has **always** been one of our difficulties, from the very beginning.

It's really very important to see your name there, "*presidente*," but to do the work that you have to -- that's not the same. It's very difficult. It's very difficult because you have to give up **a lot** of time to the association. If not, there's a lot of problems. You must have seen that, and that's always been the same. But now, I think lately we have had people who are **willing** to give up their time. But at first people didn't understand that they had to give up so much time to the association.

I think that MEXTESOL has grown on a much stronger basis lately than it has ever been. That is very good, because now the association has reached an age where it really has become an important association.

*Journal:* Thank you.



## Should Higher Education be Open or Closed? <sup>1</sup>

PETER HUBBARD, UNIVERSIDAD DE GUADALAJARA <sup>2</sup>

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Since beginning work on a project in the field of open education (which includes “distance” and “continuous” education), I have become increasingly aware of the absurdities that confront people in Mexico who aspire to gain a professional degree and the grotesque enormity of the bureaucratic obstacles that are placed in their path. One gains the impression that the Mexican educational system is designed to *prevent* citizens from having access to a professional degree, if it possibly can, rather than helping them to reach the level required. Moreover, the criteria used to select or reject people at each stage of the process have little to do with academic quality. This is worrying, because it casts doubt on the very essence of an educational system: its guarantee of quality. At the same time, now that open systems of education are taking root in Mexico, comparisons are inevitable between open and traditional education. It is hard not to draw the conclusion that open systems are not only more human and caring in their approach, but also designed to produce better results in terms of quality. Such a situation can only lead to rivalry of competing claims. It is hoped that such competition will result in an overall improved model of higher education. Open education has already taken its lead from traditional education. Now perhaps it is the time for traditional education to learn from open education. Although the power of decision lies with the SEP<sup>3</sup>, an overreliance on this position of power could cause upheavals and an eventual downthrow of the traditional system. Already open educationalists are looking for ways of bypassing official channels so as to find the freedom that is the basis of their educational philosophy.

### What do we need to do to get a degree?

Perhaps we could start by looking at the traditional process of education up to first degree level (or, some would say, “professional” level). What do you need to do to get a *licenciatura*? The following is a descrip-

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<sup>1</sup> Based on a plenary address given at the PROULEX Second National Encounter, “Breaking Barriers”, held in Guadalajara, Jalisco, on July 20, 1996. **This is a refereed article.**

<sup>2</sup> The author can be reached at e-mail: peter@fuentes.csh.udg.mx, FAX: (3) 647-7258 or (3) 854-1594.

<sup>3</sup> Secretaria de Educación Pública: Ministry of Education.

tion of what you have to do in the public education system in the State of Jalisco.

Well, first it is essential for your parents to register your birth and thus possess a birth certificate, because without that you can't get *anything* done in Mexico. Take the birth certificate and apply for entry to a Primary school. This is not too difficult a process. You will almost certainly need photos--four at least, "*tamaño infantil*". Next you have to go to school for the next six years and hopefully you will learn to read and write; basic mathematics, and a great deal about Mexican history. So you sit in a classroom for about four and a half thousand hours; and with luck you will eventually get your primary school certificate. When last I heard, the statistics were telling us that less than half the children complete primary school. (This is in a country where both primary and secondary schooling are now compulsory: part of Salinas' reforms to make Mexico a first world country.)

So far, so good. Now, you need to go with your birth certificate and your primary certificate (and four photos, of course) and make an application to enter secondary school. This is a bit more formidable, but it can be done. Next you need to sit through secondary school for the next three years, another two thousand, two hundred and fifty hours (more or less). And, if you are extremely dedicated or just extremely lucky, you will receive your secondary certificate.

Now, the hard part begins. You take your birth certificate, your primary certificate and your secondary certificate (plus four more photos) and you run along to make an application to get into prepa. But, by now, there are more people than places available. So they make it into a competition. You need to undergo a medical exam to see if you are a drug addict or are capable of withstanding the extreme boredom of the next two thousand, two hundred and fifty hours in a classroom. They also make you take an aptitude test, designed by somebody in the United States, to see if they can fail you on that. They also need to see how rich or poor your parents are, because if they are very rich, they can send you to a private university. All these complicated facts are fed into a very wise computer and it digests them and spits out the results. Accept or reject. If you are one of the 40% who are lucky, you will have the pleasure of sitting in a classroom for another two thousand, two hundred and fifty hours (more or less). After which time, you may or may not graduate from Prepa.

Let's assume you are successful. You grab your birth certificate, your primary certificate, your secondary certificate and your prepa certificate. Only originals will do, I'm afraid. You need another medical exam and yet another aptitude test (College Board, nothing less), for which incidentally there are special preparation courses available. I'm afraid we also need socio-economic information for the points lottery and a letter to guarantee that you haven't committed any crimes and have behaved well while you were in *Prepa*. And you put all this together into a huge folder together with four more photos, and wheel it along to the *Departamento Escolar*, together with your application form and you hand it all in. Then you wait, usually until after the term has started for the results to come through. Let's assume that you are exceptionally lucky or very bright and you get in. Then be prepared to sit in a classroom for anywhere between three thousand or three thousand, seven hundred and fifty hours (more or less) so that you *might* emerge as a "*pasante*". But wait! That isn't enough. You also need to do 900 hours of social service somewhere in there, virtually unpaid and probably nothing whatever to do with your studies.

But you still haven't got there. Now there is the thesis looming over you like a malignant mountain to be climbed. You suddenly have to become an author and a researcher, and write a book. This will take you anywhere between six months and three years, depending on your ability or on what other distractions or pressures you have. Fortunately, there are professional thesis writers available for rich and dishonest students. And for as little as \$4,000 pesos you can have your thesis done for you. (You will have to read it, of course, before you do your thesis exam.) Now, we seem to be getting somewhere. But no. We still have to present the thesis exam and the professional exam. And then congratulations are in line.

But wait ! What about the process of "*titulación*"? Get out your birth certificate, your primary certificate, your secondary certificate, your prepa certificate (only originals will do, I'm afraid), your "*carta de pasante*", your certificate of social service, your thesis exam certificate and your professional exam certificate. Buy the "*pergamino*" that your degree certificate is to be printed on. Six photos, this time, of two different sizes. You need a letter guaranteeing that you don't owe any money to the university department or campus where you did your studies. You need to hand in two copies of your "*Certificados de Estudios Profesionales*", together with the "*acta*" of your thesis. Oh, and you also need to hand in an *oficio* saying that you have completed your social service. Hand all this in and wait a good,

long time, because this is going to need the signatures of some very important people and they don't have much time to sign papers. So we're talking about a minimum of three months and most probably six months, unless you just happen to be related to some important university official. And maybe you will get your degree certificate.

Now, I'd like to be able to say that this nightmare ended there, but the truth is, if you want to practice your profession, the law of the state says that it is a crime to do so without your "*cédula profesional*". So, I'm afraid there are more processes to be done. This naturally needs all of the documents mentioned above, plus photos, fees paid, etc., etc.

So, you can now legally practice in the State of Jalisco, but if you want to practice your profession elsewhere, you need to do a trip to Mexico City and register your "*título*" with the SEP. This, needless to say, is a very long process and requires an enormous number of documents, quite a lot of money and infinite patience.

### **An alternative process**

This is a bit idealistic, but by no means impossible.

In order to enter a university degree program (*licenciatura*, if you wish), you don't need to produce any documents at all. You just need to attend an interview, and the function of this is not to pass or fail you, but to provide a two-way exchange of information that can result in giving orientation to both parties involved, the student and the university. As a result of this interview, you may decide to continue, but with a clearer idea of what is involved. Additional entry conditions may be required: for some courses of study, you need a good knowledge of mathematics; others need a foreign language; in the case of fine arts, some evidence of talent would be desirable. But there are many courses of study that do not require specialized abilities.

Once you start to study, you receive a detailed description of the program and the requirements to get a degree. You receive your first package of materials and are assigned a tutor. You don't need to sit in a classroom, although you can have face-to-face contact with your tutor, if you wish. You can also meet other students doing your program, if desired, during a short summer program.

There is no timetable to follow. You can do the work when you want and do the modules in any sequence, although you will receive advice that may recommend doing some of them in a certain sequence according to your own circumstances.

You can have access to a library either by visiting it physically, or by taking out articles via computer access from your home. You can also communicate with your tutor by electronic mail or computer conferencing. You can also “hand in” your written work electronically by computer networking. Your tutor can send you feedback by the same medium. You can go on working at your tasks or projects until you have reached a standard that satisfies you personally. When you have completed all the modules in the program, you receive your degree.

And that's it !

### **What are the advantages of the latter system I have just described?**

First, it is accessible: anyone (people working full-time, housewives, retired people, and even disabled people) can receive a higher education. Second, it is flexible: it can take your personal circumstances into consideration. Third, it is human: it recognizes that we are all different individuals, with different needs and conditions. Fourth, it is positive in orientation: it is designed to help you pass, not to try to fail you if it possibly can. Fifth, it is economical: we don't need hundreds of secretaries, cleaners and gardeners. Nor do we need building, furniture and equipment maintenance. Finally, it is genuinely educational: it is concerned with academic value and quality, not bureaucratic requirements.

### **Are there any limitations that we should note?**

Certainly ! First, not everyone has the capacity to do a course of higher education. “Capacity” could be defined as a mixture of natural intelligence and personal motivation. In the traditional system, what counts is persistence. This is one of the ingredients of success in higher education, but it is not by any means the only one. Secondly, there has to be vocational orientation: there cannot be an unlimited supply of jobs available for qualified doctors, dentists, lawyers, accountants and administrators. There are always limitations in the job market. Any system of public education should take these into consideration (though it seldom does so in fact) lest the policies espoused could be criticised as misuse of public funds.

### **What are the advantages of the first system I described?**

Really, there is only one I can think of: it keeps the unemployment figures down. In the tradition of third world countries, government or public service sectors act as a sponge for a large sector of unemployed (and perhaps in some cases unemployable) members of society. It also absorbs a huge population of school leavers and gives them an occupation: being a student. (We should note, however, that in Mexico most students do a job on the side, if they can find one.)

### **What are the disadvantages of the traditional system?**

It is highly inefficient educationally (there is a vast amount of waste and too often the standards are low). It is also wasteful of money: large numbers of full-time staff are required just to maintain the buildings, grounds and equipment, not to mention the armies of bureaucrats recruited into administrative areas. There is also insufficient control of quotas for the traditionally “popular” areas of study: medicine, law, accountancy and administration. The system does not serve to validate the academic quality of the studies. Instead, there is a bureaucratic and impersonal system of “requirements” that have to be met for a degree to be awarded. Finally, it has to be said that the system described encourages dishonesty and corruption. Poorly paid bureaucratic officials can make a little extra money by “selling” documents. There is also a brisk trade in forged documents. This happens because, in the final analysis, the documents are what count, not what students learned in the classroom.

### **Open or “flexible” learning: the Australian experience**

In the next section, I wish to present some visions of open or “flexible” learning, as people are now beginning to call it, taken from an address by Richard Johnson (Johnson 1995) of the Centre for Continuing Education at the Australian National University.

#### ***First there is the idea of open access:***

Flexible learning means open access to educational opportunities, opportunities for learning... It means recognition of prior learning; it means you get credit for what you know, however you acquired the knowledge, whether out of textbooks, or from bringing up children, or from any other activity. The knowledge, the learning is important: not when and where and how it was gained... Many people, for all sorts of reasons, did not have the opportunity to finish high

school and qualify for normal admission to further study. Open access gives these people a chance to commence such study, to give it a go. If they then don't succeed, OK; but they're not cut off from the start.

***Education can be adjusted to our individual needs:***

It is part of democratic society to be able to enjoy life just the way we want it, within the limits of our budget and of orderly behaviour. To be able to learn what we want, when and where and how we want to learn, is simply an extension of that democratic idea.

***Open education costs less:***

Open learning can also be very cost effective. If people can study wherever they wish, there is less need for large campuses, elaborate buildings, furniture, heating, lighting, cleaning, maintenance. A set of learning materials developed at high cost can be used by thousands of students instead of the hundreds that can be accommodated in a traditional unit of study. For the student, there is less time committed to travel.

***Changes in attitude are necessary:***

People in education need to be brought to the point of view that the most important thing is to encourage learning and the learner. Whatever contributes to that is good. The emphasis then moves off "teaching" and onto "learning". For a lot of teachers, at all levels, that is a Copernican shift; they are not the centre of the universe: their students are...

The next attitude to encourage is that there is a wide range of technologies available to assist learning; that it is the teacher's responsibility to know what they are and how they can be applied, and where they should be applied, and when not... We need to beware on the one hand of the Luddites, who do not want to know about technology and its powers, and on the other hand the technofreaks who think that if it's not delivered electronically it can't be any good. These are the attitudes which need to be fostered in teachers: that the learner, not the teacher, is the centre of the enterprise; and that technology is a wonderful servant, but not the master of the enterprise...

There is also an attitude to be fostered among administrators and executives: that educational institutions and organizational structures exist for the sake of the students: the students are not there to meet the convenience of the institution.

*Can education in Mexico become open and flexible?*

The answer to this question is that it is already happening, whether the authorities like it or not. Official attitudes are, however, very slow to change. Open education is seen as a threat to traditional methods of administrative control. How, for example, can you budget for and control an academic's time when she or he is no longer working fixed hours in the university office or classroom, but is doing the work from the home computer terminal? How can we measure academic quality, when quantitative measures of the hours of face-to-face instruction can no longer be used as an index?

Nevertheless, the authorities are gradually coming round to the position that if they don't accept open learning, with all its revolutionary implications, they will lose control of the situation altogether. Open university systems are already forming consortia with foreign open systems to validate their degrees. The SEP will have to choose between grudging recognition or outright warfare. And the sheer scale of the open education movement internationally is overwhelming. Open educators are joining forces to mount a relentless campaign for what they see as denial of access to education - a civil right.

We already have in Mexico examples of good and bad open education. The best versions are those that genuinely embrace the philosophy of open education: the worst are those that think it is possible to do the job cheaply and on an industrial scale, so as to meet popular demand. There is little point in having open education in the fields of medicine, accountancy, law and administration, until the universities reduce their intake in these fields drastically and offer effective educational orientation to all prospective candidates. For example, the University of Guadalajara should cut its intake of law students by half in the metropolitan area; and increase its intake in rural areas. (I say that with great confidence, but if I were to propose such a reform, there would be a general shrugging of shoulders, meaning that "we cannot argue with politics".) Distance systems can help in the question of rural education away from the concentrations of human and library resources. Also prospective students should be headed off from these saturated areas if it becomes clear that they have no real vocational drive other than a vague desire to be "successful in life". Most important of all, open education is concerned with *quality* rather than *quantity*: it is important to make sure that this quality is achieved.

Only time will tell whether open education will prosper in Mexico, but the indications are that it will not only flourish, but begin to exercise an influence on traditional approaches to education--to the benefit of the latter.

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## The Use of Portfolios for Teacher Evaluation

M. MARTHA LENGELING, UNIVERSIDAD DE GUANAJUATO<sup>1</sup>

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“The Complexities of Teacher Education” found in the Spring issue of the *MEXTESOL Journal* of this year (1996) discussed some of the problems of traditional techniques used for teacher evaluation. M. Martha Lengeling suggested the use of portfolios as an alternative means of assessing teachers. The following article continues to explore the uses of portfolios, gives a history of their use, and the necessary procedures for their implementation.

What is a portfolio? A portfolio is an accumulation of documents that best describe a teacher’s strengths and philosophies. Seldin defines portfolios as, “a factual description of a professor’s major strengths and teaching achievements. It describes documents and materials which collectively suggest the scope and quality of a professor’s teaching performance. It is to teaching what lists of publications, grants, and honors are to research and scholarship.” (Seldin 1991: 3) The documents or components for a portfolio can include recommendations from faculty, students or administration, student evaluation results, videos of classes taught, publications, works of students, philosophy statement of the teacher, syllabi, conference presentations, or documentation of involvement in professional groups. The components can be any document that illustrates the strengths of the teacher.

Originally portfolios were and still are used in the area of fine arts. Students created portfolios which contained a variety of art work in hopes of entering an art institution or giving a prospective employer a realistic idea of their capabilities and skills. Even after graduating and securing a job, people such as commercial artists, photographers, architects, or theatrical artists use portfolios to get better jobs or an advancement in the job market. Some universities or fine art schools use portfolios as one of the necessary requirements for entrance into their institution to give the institution an idea of the quality of art work the prospective student is capable of doing and also serves as a basis of evaluation.

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<sup>1</sup> The author can be reached at the Centro de Idiomas, Universidad de Guanajuato, Lascrain de Retana 5, Guanajuato, Guanajuato. Tel. (473) 2-26-62, Ext. 8000/8001. Fax: (473) 2-72-53. E-mail: lengelin@quijote.ugto.mx. **This is a refereed article.**

More and more educational institutions are incorporating portfolios in all levels of education. Portfolios have been used successfully in reading, writing, science, art, social studies, history and teacher education. They have been incorporated at all levels of education from elementary to higher education. This same ideas is practiced in Canada but is known as a “teaching dossier”. Moore comments that portfolios “allow for self-directed work, self-correction, greater autonomy and greater time frames” (Moore 1994: 176). The teacher or student is able to select what is of most interest to the individual, creating more motivation in the learning process. The reason for this increased use of portfolios is because of the success people have found. Opinions also indicate that teachers are happy with portfolios because of the personal growth and professional development acquired. They record growth and development of teachers or students over periods of time.

Universities use portfolios as a means of assessment at the end of a master’s program instead of the traditional comprehension exams. Their use helps students better prepare themselves in the quest of a job in the real world, promotes reflection on their beliefs of teaching, and fosters the professional growth of students. Success has been evident using portfolios instead of the traditional final comprehensive exams that often require memorization of facts.

Portfolios are used in an assessment plan for foreign language majors. This assessment plan takes a good look at standards, goals, and expectations of the student. Standards are set for students entering and leaving this foreign language program. Elements of these student portfolios might include: entry-level examination, examples of papers written in the target language, oral-production on tape, journal writing in the target language, samples of creative writing, videotaped activities of the student using the target language, and any other related documentation. Goals and expectations are clearly outlined for the incoming students, and students are held responsible for themselves and their learning. Lewis comments on the expected realizations of students: “The assessment process brings about a shift in focus from what teachers ‘want’ of students to what students want for themselves, encouraging a sense of empowerment of students” (Lewis 1990: 38). The philosophy of this assessment plan is seen in the following quote:

The focus on the process of assessment rather than on the products implies that any group embarking on a comparable project has to define its own objec-

tives, chart its own course, and measure its own progress according to local circumstances. (Lewis 1990: 38)

Portfolios have been used as an alternative to the traditional supervision of teachers. Some administrators and teachers have not been satisfied with the use of clinical supervision as a means of evaluation and have adopted the use of portfolios in hopes of finding an alternative that would benefit the teachers and administrators in the area of professional development. The use of portfolios fosters communication between administrators and teachers and is based upon the trust of both groups. Graham comments, "The portfolios policy affirms that teachers are active learners engaged in the process of perfecting their craft through reflection and action based on the results of that reflection" (Graham 1991:8). Because each teacher is an individual, professional growth is the responsibility of each teacher. The following excerpts are opinions from the teachers in Winnipeg, Canada concerning the use of portfolios:

The focus now is on teacher responsibility and serves as an invitation for growth...Since all teachers and administrators are expected to keep a portfolio and write an annual statement of growth, all of us are implicated in the policy...It's better than an arbitrary check list of teaching skills and it promotes meaningful dialogue about real issues...My greatest concern is that the "process" will get lost in the "product". I have faith that the Portfolio Team will continue their efforts to help or facilitate educators grapple with the process of portfolio versus the "portfolio" itself...(Graham 1991: 10-13).

From these comments one can see the accomplishments of the program along with the progression of reflective thinking that has been documented. The use of portfolios is a process and product together which enables the teacher to document personal development in the area of teaching. Both administrators and teachers work together rather than against each other with the use of portfolios.

Portfolios create an "ambiance" that promotes self-reflection by the teacher. Teachers begin to examine their attitudes about teaching and in this course they begin to evaluate themselves. Questions are asked by the teacher about him or herself, promoting self-reflection. Along with reflective thinking comes the growth of critical thinking. Portfolios let teachers reflect on their profession and monitor their progress. The use of writing journals can be incorporated by the teacher as a way to document ideas, beliefs, and attitudes. This documentation also fosters reflective thinking. These thoughts later cause the teacher to come to self-realizations about

what was written. Writing is also a way for the teacher to discover aspects of teaching that he or she may not have thought about if these aspects had not been documented.

Because the use of portfolios is new, teachers and administrators are often pessimistic of its value. With experience, this opinion usually changes. Considerable time needs to be taken into account for the creation of portfolios along with the evaluation of them. Time is needed for the teacher to think about philosophies and attitudes concerning teaching. Teachers find it difficult to put in words how they feel or the reflections they have. However, documentation is helpful because ideas and thoughts are written down and can be reviewed at a later date. This writing lets the teacher contemplate with time.

The use of mentors is strongly suggested to guide teachers in the construction of portfolios. Collaborative relationships between the teacher and mentor help answer doubts and questions about the use of portfolios. The mentor can be from outside the institution or from within depending upon the needs of the teacher. A fellow teacher, specialist in this area, department chair, or an older experienced member of the faculty can act as a mentor if they are knowledgeable in the area of portfolios. "The consultations that go into selecting material for the portfolio are perhaps the most valuable part of the process" according to Seldin and associates (Seldin 1993: 45). The role of the mentor is important for the success of this process; mentors must be trained and be familiar with the use of portfolios. Sufficient and suitable coordination is necessary for teachers and administrators.

It has been suggested that administration support is necessary in order to succeed with the use of portfolios. Both administrators and teachers must be able to work together. This technique is often criticized because it requires more work and time on the part of the teacher. However, portfolios liberate teachers, promote professional growth, and let teachers decide about their own evaluation. In a sense teachers have more control over the evaluation of themselves and they are then thereby empowered.

Portfolios can be tested by a few good experienced teachers over a period of time. Collaboration of fellow teachers and those who have experience in this area should be recommended. Workshops that educate teachers and inform them of this use are needed. As always communication

is a prime element which will make or break the success of portfolios. Examples of different types of portfolios should be studied and made available for administration and teachers. Implementation should be done carefully and without pressure.

Guidelines concerning portfolio formation and evaluation need to be defined clearly in order to create a basis for their use. Problems of size or length of components are troublesome but should be considered by administrators and teachers when defining the guidelines of portfolios. Once there is a clear understanding of the goals of the institution, department, community, and teachers, the use of portfolios can be implemented. The experience gained by using portfolios will answer questions and resolve problems concerning their use.

Moore suggests four steps for the creation of portfolios which are; selecting, planning, organizing, and producing. She continues to describe the creation as a type of formative evaluation and “the portfolio is also a type of summative evaluation because it enables the teachers and students to see the final products of the learning experiences” (Moore 1994: 178). Seldin gives six steps concerning the creation of portfolios which include:

1. Definition and clarification of teaching responsibilities
2. Selection of components of the portfolio.
3. Preparation of statements for each component.
4. Arrangement of components in order.
5. Collection Support Data
6. Integration of Portfolio into Curriculum Vitae. (Seldin 1991: 7-8)

First, teachers begin by defining what their responsibilities are in class and in related activities. Information about classes that are being and have been taught by the teacher is organized. Then components that show these responsibilities are selected, and prepared. Statements concerning each component are written. Next the teacher logically arranges these components and also compiles any other materials which would serve as extra components available upon request. Along with these steps, collaboration with a mentor is advised to help the teacher in the refining and creating of portfolios. It has been suggested that a few experienced teachers test the

creation of portfolios with caution and gradually include more teachers in the process.

The use of portfolios is not the perfect answer to the assessment of teachers, but in this age of accountability this technique is more complete and gives a more complex view of what a teacher is like. Lewis defines assessment as “to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of a broadly defined object or target group” (Lewis 1990: 35). A portfolio is a way to evaluate teachers effectively and fairly. Graham summarizes the philosophy with, “by changing the focus of evaluation from documentation and recording of performance to a process in which performance documents become a means to improve practice, the new policy [portfolios] places power in the hands of teachers” (Graham 1991: 28). Portfolios foster professional growth of individual teachers which in turn fosters growth of the institution. Lastly it will hopefully foster growth in the area of education.

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# Feedback in L2 Writing <sup>1</sup>

THOMAS W. IHDE, BERGEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE <sup>2</sup>

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Research in feedback has not found any one approach most affective for providing feedback on second language (L2) writing. In this article I will review some of the research on feedback that spans the past thirty-five years. Though much of the research has found that no approach seems to make a statistically significant difference in the student's acquisition process, some textbooks for the training of foreign language teachers continue to advocate for one method over another.

I began carrying out a long term project at Montclair State University in the spring of 1994 where different forms of feedback were applied to higher-intermediate level ESL students of varying ability levels. Since 1995, I have also initiated similar research with students at Bergen Community College. To gain a better understanding of the forms of feedback in use at other institutions, I decided to survey fifty instructors of English to speakers of other languages. In the second part of this article I will discuss their responses to questions concerning feedback preferences.

## Terms: Errors and Feedback

Before reviewing the research in this area, it is necessary to define two terms: errors and feedback. Our understanding of the word error itself can explain much of the disagreement that is to be found regarding its treatment. From a behaviorist viewpoint, errors were seen as "bad habits" which needed to be overcome through learning. For contrastive analysis, the counter part of bad habits was negative transfer. When elements from the student's L1 differed greatly with structures in the L2, the possibility of interference was seen as great (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991, 52-53).

With the Chomskyan inspired view of acquisition as rule driven, errors came to be seen as indicators of elements not yet fully acquired. Put

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<sup>2</sup> The author can be reached at the English Department, Bergen Community College, 400 Paramus Road, Paramus, New Jersey 07652-1595, United States of America. E-mail: ihde@email.njin.net

simply, “errors” presented a failure in linguistic competence while “mistakes” were viewed as lapses in performance (Corder 1984, 24-25).

For the L2 student, “errors” most often represented an inadequate knowledge of rules. With the study of interlanguage, errors came to be interpreted as dialectal. In this continuum moving from the L1 to the target language, a student’s evolving interlanguage seemed to follow a “built-in syllabus” that, in the absence of fossilization, would lead to something resembling the L2 (Corder 1978, 74-77, 83).

In the seventies, Burt & Kiparsky (1974) distinguished global errors from local errors. Global errors referred to confusion in the sentence’s meaning caused by errors involving the major constituents of the sentence. One example of a global error in a complex sentence might be the incorrect use of a conjunction between clauses. In a simple sentence, a global error might refer to word order for example. Local errors on the other hand were errors found within a constituent, be it a clause in a complex sentence or a noun phrase, for example, in a simple sentence. It was suggested that perhaps students should first learn to correct global errors while instructors tolerate local errors.

With more communicative views of language acquisition, errors were recognized as listener defined. With this in mind, some may claim that only those elements that cause confusion on the part of the listener warrant correction.

The treatment of errors or the teacher response to errors is more commonly referred to now as feedback. Kulhavy in 1977 defined feedback as “any of the numerous procedures that are used to tell a learner if an instructional response is right or wrong” (Kulhavy 1977, 211).

The term has come to include all reactions that an instructor or anyone else (including the student him- or herself) might offer with reference to student production (or instructor performance) (Rinvoluceri 1994, 287-288). Levels of intensity of feedback forms vary from meticulous corrections and suggestions to no feedback at all. In between these two extremes one finds feedback sensitive to particular pedagogical criteria and feedback with successful communication in mind.

## Research Experiments

With such a wide spectrum of feedback forms, how does the instructor decide which to use? Certainly one approach must be more affective than another. A number of quantitative experiments have been carried out on L1, L2, and foreign language students. Some of the earliest experiments on feedback were carried out on L1 students.

Page in 1958 interpreting data from 2,139 secondary students claimed that those who received comments on their papers along with their score improved at a greater rate than those with just a grade and no comment. However it should be noted that Page purposely did not attempt to control many of the variables with one clear exception, treatment types (Page 1958, 174).

Another experiment involving L1 students was published in 1967 by Stiff. Treatments included marginal comments, summary comments and a mixture of both. A statistically significant difference was not discovered.

Several experiments have been carried out with the help of ESL or EFL students. Hendrickson (1981) carried out research to determine if local errors should be ignored by instructors. Correcting all local and global errors in one group and global only in the other, Hendrickson did not find a statistically significant difference in between the two parties. Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986) compared four types of feedback. They claimed that more direct forms of corrective treatment do not improve student writing at a rate greater than that of other methods. Several other experiments have upheld this claim. In carrying out a short-term experiment on 72 students at Montclair State University, I also found no statistically significant difference between those who received teacher editing, circling of errors, and no comment feedback (Ihde 1993).

Two foreign language researchers, however, have found statistically significant results regarding differences between treatment groups. Lalande (1982) found that there was a statistically significant difference between post-test data of students receiving symbol and editing feedback. Those who received the symbol treatment had less grammatical and orthographic errors than their counterparts.

Students were required to rewrite their essays making use of the teachers' feedback; however, students receiving symbol feedback were re-

quired to keep track of their errors from essay to essay. In 1984, Semke using four treatment groups reported that there was no statistically significant difference in the post-test results concerning writing accuracy; however, the test of writing fluency and the test of language proficiency both showed that comments on their own were superior to editing, comments with editing, and symbols. Semke also reported that approaches that force students to identify errors and correct them independently may have a negative effect on student progress. Students receiving symbol feedback and being required to revise their work performed significantly lower on the test of writing fluency.

More recent research projects including Kepner 1991, Carroll, Swain, and Roberge 1992, and DeKeyser 1993 have continued the search for data indicating efficacy of one approach over another.

## Survey

With such differing results from the above cited research projects, it is not surprising to find similar diversity among practitioners. In the summer of 1993, I had the opportunity to elicit data from about forty French EFL teachers who were attending a summer course at Trinity College Dublin. I decided to ask them which feedback approach they used most often and why? Twenty-eight of these teachers responded. I later put the same questionnaire on the TESL-L list. I received twenty-two responses of which twenty-one were from Americans.

Before comparing responses received from French and American English teachers, let us become clear on what the different approaches entail. Perhaps the most meticulous of approaches is what Robb, Ross, and Shortreed called "correction" (1986, 86) and Stiff termed "marginal feedback" (1967, 67-68). With this approach the instructor is actually editing lexical, syntactic, and stylistic errors and for this reason I have chosen to call it editing in this article. Rewrites for this method are, at best, exercises in copying. Advocates for this approach such as Lalande (1982, 140) and others (see Omaggio 1986, 50) see it as the only way for obtaining near-native fluency.

The use of corrective symbols is perhaps one of the more popular approaches. Labeled "symbolic code" by Semke (1984, 196), "coded" feedback by Robb, Ross, & Shortreed (1986, 86), and "direct correction treat-

ment” by Hendrickson (1980, 218), this method identifies the place and type of error while not actually providing the correct usage.

“Terminal” feedback as used by Stiff (1967, 69-71) refers to an approach in which both symbols and comments at the end of the essay are used.

On the other hand, marking the place of the error without identifying the type has been termed “uncoded” feedback by Robb, Ross, & Shortreed and “indirect error treatment” by Hendrickson. The assumption here is that students will be able to figure the type of error committed. This approach will be referred to as circling here.

More communicative approaches in responding to written errors stress understanding. If the error causes confusion (see Burt 1975 and Semke 1984) or intolerance of any kind (see Ensz 1982 and Guntermann 1978) on the part of the reader, then its occurrence must be addressed. This is often done by writing the student a note at the end of the essay. This note could be in response to the subject of discussion as well as noting some errors. I will term this as summary.

## **Results**

When comparing use of feedback types between my French and American informants, clear differences could be seen. No one approach was shared by a majority of Americans. Thirty-eight percent of the American sample claimed to make use of circling, thirty-three percent maintained that they used symbols, and twenty-four and five percent claimed to use editing and summary techniques respectively. In contrast to this, nearly three-quarters of the French sample made use of one method alone, symbols. Circling and editing accounted for only eighteen and eleven percent of the respondents. No French participant claimed to employ summary methods. The French EFL teachers supported their choice of symbols as the preferred approach by claiming that it caused students to become more aware of the different types of errors being committed. Many also claimed that symbols made students think for themselves and aid in developing self correction skills.

A less direct approach than this, circling, was used by five out of twenty-eight of the French instructors and eight out of twenty-one of the American instructors. American teachers in defending their approach main-

tained that responsibility needs to be placed on the student for identifying the errors. Some instructors stated that it is often unclear what the cause of the error is. This approach permits the student to improve on what they originally wanted to say and not what the instructor perceived them as wanting to say. Lastly one professor claimed that if the element is really a mistake and not an error, the student is well capable of correcting it without teacher intervention.

The French instructors who made use of circling wanted their students to discover what was wrong with their errors. This, one of the teachers maintained, is the job of a student and not the instructor. Another respondent claimed that classifying each type of error with symbols would be too time consuming, especially seeing that the most common errors are regularly reviewed in class.

None of the participants in the survey, American or French, claimed not to make any corrections on students' essays. In that aspect all agreed that some form of teacher feedback was necessary. As concerned the use of instructors editing students' papers, nearly a quarter of the Americans used this approach whereas only about eleven percent of the French sample used such practices. One French EFL teacher stated that this method provided personalized help for students and it allowed them to reflect on their errors outside of the classroom as well.

As stated above a larger percentage of American ESL instructors used full editing. Though most did this by writing on the students' papers, one respondent made use of a tape recorder to inform students of their errors. The reasons for using editing were varied. One instructor claimed his students deserved such correction after all the hard work they put in on writing their essays. Another stated that students were sometimes confused by symbols and unable to correct the errors when they did understand the symbol.

Participants were also asked about their use of rewrites and the frequency of them. Results showed that whereas all American informants claimed to ask their students to rewrite their work, twenty-two percent of the French sample did not. The frequency at which instructors did request rewrites varied. Fifty-seven percent of the American ESL teachers maintained that they always had students work on essays in several drafts. Twenty-nine and fourteen percent of the same sample claimed "most of the

time” and “sometimes” respectively. Though three of the French respondents did not mark frequency, the only category to register over eleven percent was “sometimes” which reached forty-six percent.

One reason for the large number of “always” responses in the American sample may be due to the effects of process writing (see White & Arndt 1990). Part of this approach is based on the concept of several drafts. One American respondent made an interesting comment which may shed light on this discussion. She claimed that “always” was a viable option because her students did their work on word-processors.

Due to the small sample sizes and the lack of random selection of participants, one cannot generalize these findings. However as a preliminary study, one can conclude that three points stand out. First, the instructors in the sample agreed that some form of correction is necessary. Secondly, the use of summary methods, which were identified above as possibly being communicative in nature, were not used by most teachers in the sample. Lastly, whereas most instructors disagreed on the frequency of rewrites, a small number of instructors (all of whom were French) did not use rewrites at all.

These data validated the use of certain feedback treatment forms for the long term project which I spoke of at the beginning of this article. Symbols have been applied in correcting essays of one of the treatment groups. This seems to be one of the commonly used methods of correction as can be seen in the above data. The other treatment group in the long term experiment received summaries at the end of their essays. This was used as the opposing treatment due to the above data which clearly shows the infrequency with which teachers use this approach.

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## Writing a Book Review for Publication: A concise format to follow in writing a book review of an ESL textbook <sup>1</sup>

PENELOPE WONG, AZ-TESOL <sup>2</sup>

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Begin with this information:

*Title and subtitle*

*Author*

*Publisher*

*Year of publication*

*Number of pages*

*Reviewed by (= your name, your professional affiliation)*

**Paragraph 1:** Summarize the level, purpose, and audience for the book. For example, “This intermediate level reading textbook is intended for a high school audience.” State the ways in which the author or authors believe it is unique, e. g. “The text uses a storyline with themes common to the experience of today’s secondary school students to connect the lessons and keep the students interested...” Add commentary about the elements that make the book special for the audience. For example, “The many clear and focused reading exercises not only lead the students to better understanding of the storyline, but the variety of exercises also help the students develop...”

**Paragraph 2:** State what you see as particular strengths in the textbook. For instance, “(*Title*) fills a need for a developmental reading skills text in the multicultural classroom for the following reasons:...” Add any weaknesses or problems that you see (if any) and how the weaknesses might be dealt with, e. g. “The high school audience, of course, is likely to want to read the whole story without doing the exercises because of the high interest level of the story, However,...”

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<sup>1</sup> This article was adapted for our purposes from one originally published in the AZ-TESOL Newsletter, Vol. 17, No. 2. Summer, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> The author can be reached at 2438 N. Whispering Pines, Flagstaff, AZ 86004. TEL: (520) 526-8320.

**Paragraph 3:** Apply the text to your own experience with books, comparing it to other texts or expectations for kinds of textbooks, e. g. “Unlike the traditional intermediate textbook, ...”

**Paragraph 4:** Give your own opinion of the book, whether you think you would enjoy using it in your classroom; whether you think the students would find it useful, engaging, motivating, etc.; and whether you recommend the textbook to other teachers. Add any other commentary that seems appropriate to you at this point. You don’t always have to give a positive review. State your honest, personal opinions.

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### ***BOOK REVIEW: SOME IDEAS FOR CONVERSATION***

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*New Ways in Teaching Speaking.* Kathleen M. Bailey and Lance Savage, Editors. TESOL, 1994. 307 pp.<sup>3</sup>

*Reviewed by David J. Kramer, Institute for English Language Programs, Harvard and Center for English Language and Orientation Programs (CELOP), Boston University.*

*New Ways in Teaching Speaking* is much more than a conversation topic resource book. It’s a compilation of activities submitted by ESL professionals from all over the world. Most of its entries incorporate a variety of language skills with detailed instructions for their use. The book is divided into four major parts: “Fluency”, “Accuracy”, “Pronunciation”, and “Speaking in Specific Contexts”. Each part consists of several sub-sections: For example, Part II, “Accuracy”, is divided into “Functions”, “Grammar”, and “Vocabulary”. In their introduction the editors state that the primary reason for the book’s organization is ease of access for the user. The book does not adhere to any particular ESL teaching approach.

Ease of access is definitely one of the books’ stronger points. The titles of many articles automatically give the gist of the exercise: In the Accuracy/Grammar section, for example, self-explanatory titles such as “Get It Done”, “Why Questions”, and “The command Game” are found. On the

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<sup>3</sup> This review was originally published in MATSOL *Currents*, Summer 1996. Vol. 22, No. 3. p. 16.

other hand, “Travel Talk Round Table” leaves one somewhat in the dark; but a simple turn to the indicated page quickly clarifies the nature and purpose of the activity.

Each activity is covered on two or three pages. In the left margin of the entry’s first page the proficiency level(s) appropriate to, and the goals and mechanics of, the activity are outlined. For example, for “Grammar/Travel Talk Round Table”: Levels: Intermediate+; Aims: Review present perfect and time expressions *ever/never*. Contrast present perfect with simple past and *ago*. Practice distinction between /b/ and /v/; Class Time 30-70 minutes; Preparation Time: None; Resources: Chalkboard, chalk, paper, and pencils” (p. 163)

The presentation of activities is orderly and comprehensive. Each exercise begins with a short, introductory paragraph followed by step-by-step instructions, listed under “Procedure”. Extra ideas and comments appear under the heading “Caveats and Options”. Many entries are more extensively outlined, often including diagrams, charts, and sample lists of sentences and vocabulary, a definite plus. Several entries include references to related academic readings. All conclude with a blurb about the contributor.

I was eager to browse through the chapters and discover new ideas. As an experienced teacher, I was already familiar with a number of the activities (or some variation thereof), but also I was reminded often of activities which I had used in the past and had let slide into disuse. All too often we rely on our own never-fail bag of tricks. Even if one is already familiar with an exercise, something new can be learned from the many variations and follow-up suggestions.

The book’s final section “Speaking for Specific Contexts”, is of special interest to teachers of upper-intermediate and advanced students who still lack the fluency and the know-how for giving effective class presentations. We all have struggled through students’ oral presentations--some good, others less so and requiring patience from the entire class. The activities in this section require a lot of thought and preparation by the student; they stress that much more than speaking goes into an oral presentation. For such presentations, outlines and visuals are strongly encouraged, as well as feedback forms filled out by the entire class. I have successfully implemented Linda Abe’s contribution, “Speakers and Listeners as Part-

ners”, in which students talked about some aspect of another classmate’s culture or country. This is a project which involves preliminary research and verification through conversation. Interest was high, and in many instances it was not the teacher who took responsibility for re-stating and clarifying, but rather the student-observer who wanted to ensure the accuracy of information about his or her country. This activity is characteristic of the many student-centered ideas in the book.

Both ESL novices and experienced professionals will benefit from reading *New Ways in Teaching Speaking*. Although the “ways” might not always be so new, they will most certainly help us reflect upon and add to our ever-evolving teaching repertoires.