


1983

Teacher-Training Across Cultures: A Workshop Given in the People's Republic of China

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Teacher-Training Across Cultures:
A Workshop Given in the People's Republic of China

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B.A. Brooklyn College 1974

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

This project by Victoria Badalamenti is accepted
in its present form.

Date May 3/83 Principal Advisor Ann Farris

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Title: Teacher-Training Across Cultures:
A Workshop Given in the People's Republic of
China

Degree Awarded: Master of Arts in Teaching

Institution: School for International Training

Year Degree Was Granted: 1983

Thesis Adviser: Alvino Fantini

Program: Master of Arts in Teaching

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Abstract:

This paper deals with a specific teacher-training workshop which was given in an English for Special Purposes (ESP) Program to Chinese ESL teachers for a period of six weeks in the People's Republic of China. Both the Chinese teachers and foreign teachers worked together in language teams and provided English training to Chinese professionals who were going to go on training programs in English speaking countries. Although well-versed in ESL theory and teaching styles, the teachers lacked the ability to connect their passive knowledge of teaching with the reality of teaching in the classroom. This workshop aimed to have teachers gain an in-depth look at their own teaching, what they wanted to accomplish, and how they might attempt to do it. The first part of the paper will primarily present the background, rationale, and objectives of the workshop. The second part will give an actual account of the workshop along with reactions to each particular day of the workshop. Finally, a summary of the workshop experience in addition to applications to other teacher-training situations will be presented.

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"After the 10 lost years of the Cultural Revolution they had to take some chances to catch up with the Western world ... China decided to send some of its best scholars to live abroad, to soak up the latest in science and bring it home ... Most of the 4000 Chinese, fanned out to 170 U.S. institutions, are studying the hard sciences such as physics, mathematics, chemistry or engineering."

(The Chicago Tribune, Jan. 10, 1981)

I. INTRODUCTION

It is because of this contemporary reality in the People's Republic of China that the American Language Institute of Georgetown University (ALI/GU) got involved in the English for Special Purposes (ESP) program at the Beijing Second Foreign Language Institute (BSFLI) in January 1980. Ever since the first program which trained 30 computer specialists to the fifth program of 70 scientists from all fields, various teams of teachers of English as a second or foreign language have been involved in the teaching of English. All have emphasized oral-aural language skills specifically geared to scientific English.

In addition to the instruction of English to Chinese professionals, the foreign teachers were equally concerned with upgrading the level of teaching of the Chinese teachers for when they would be solely responsible for administering the ESP program without the aid of the foreign teachers.

I will present the background of the foreign teachers' involvement in the ESP program, the rationale for the implementation of a teacher-training workshop, and the objectives and design of the workshop. A detailed account of the workshop along with reactions to each day will follow. Finally, conclusions made from the workshop will attempt to provide insight for teachers working in teacher-training settings in other cultures.

II. BACKGROUND

Before explaining the nature of the workshop, I will give some of the background to the emergence of the ESP program. As was mentioned earlier, the first program was involved in training 30 computer specialists in an intensive five-month training course to upgrade their English level and orient them to Western culture.

What distinguished the second ESP program which began in the Fall of 1980 from the first was an addition of 20 more participants and the involvement of BSFLI in the teaching and administration of the program in order to prepare the institute for the eventual independent management of the program. BSFLI teachers worked with the team from ALI and weekly methodology seminars were held for those Chinese teachers who were going to become future teachers in the ESP language program. In keeping with this original intention of preparing BSFLI to become autonomous, the third ESP program went even further and efforts were increased to train seven young Chinese trainees from the nearby English department and four Chinese BSFLI teachers. The Chinese were responsible for involvement in all aspects of the program: classroom teaching, testing, materials development, scheduling, and curriculum design. Thus, the Chinese faculty no longer operated as observers, but as participating faculty.

Specifically, the trainees worked as members of core class teaching teams and shared all responsibilities of

the class with one foreign teacher. They attended the classes in English for Science, Orientations and the Century 3 films (science related films) and were responsible for the work assigned in these classes. They attended special afternoon seminars in advanced listening and advanced reading. Finally, in an applied linguistics class, the theoretical basis for the core class teaching was addressed and discussed.

My personal involvement in this program started in the Fall of 1981 when I was hired to work in the fourth and fifth ESP program at BSFLI. At this point, the ESP program was no longer attached to ALI/GU; rather, the program was now under the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) funding with a project consultant based in Washington, D.C. seeing the program through its changes. I was hired along with four other members of our team to teach Chinese scientists in all skill areas of English and to work simultaneously with and train Chinese English teachers in English and English as a second language methodology. During this stage of the project, more and more emphasis was being placed on the foreign teachers taking a more advisory position since the fourth and fifth programs were the mid-points of the original four year period of the UNDP involvement which was to end in 1984.

III. RATIONALE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A TEACHER-TRAINING WORKSHOP

Although the Chinese teachers had had excellent exposure to the theories behind ESL methodology and practical teaching from their observation of the previous foreign teachers, I found through my observations and subsequent feedback sessions that they were insecure and unsure of what they were doing and how they should do it. It was clear that teaching English in the ways which were presented by the foreign teachers was overwhelming for both our young trainees who were new to the field to begin with and also to the more experienced teachers who had been teaching in a set way since they started.

The Chinese education system seems to be quite static and traditional compared to what is happening now in the education field. In fact, the Chinese educational system stems from a Confucian set of beliefs which involves students mastering what the masters had handed down to them by means of imitation, repetition, and memorization. After memorizing and reciting isolated passages without any real understanding of the passages, it was felt that understanding would eventually come in time and a creative production would one day just happen. Thus, our Chinese teachers were coming from a deep-rooted tradition which surrounded them on all sides: from the students tied to their rigid study habits and demands for similar teaching, from the administration who regulated materials and curriculum, and from themselves for they were also deeply tied to the ways they had learned and were expected to teach.

The gap of 11 years that the Cultural Revolution made certainly did not add to any advancements or new realizations. In general, Chinese students tended to rely heavily on textbooks which contained passages which sounded both unnatural and artificial. They then devoured these pieces by rote memorization, after of course the teacher supplied a word-by-word explanation of the text. Bearing in mind this instructional norm, it is no small wonder that the young teachers perpetuated this system and applied it to their own teaching. In addition and also important to the understanding of this educational milieu, is the cultural tradition which placed hindrances and shackles on our teachers who seemed to lack initiative and timidly await being criticized. The teachers came from a reality where a few years before, they had been harassed, criticized and persecuted for being teachers and having knowledge. It is understandable that our teachers seemed somewhat aimless and non-assertive as well as terribly defensive in relation to the students.

In reference to their teaching, I found the Chinese teachers unable to give a logical lesson, especially information that students had never come into contact with before. They lacked an awareness to effect an understandable presentation and follow that up with subsequent structured practice and free practice. They were quite enthusiastic to initiate lessons they had observed from the foreign teachers and more often than not their lessons failed. They seemed to have little or no idea as to whether or not the students understood

the information, nor were they aware of how to check students' comprehension. They used "communication games" as time fillers and had no closure or follow-up to their lessons. Although they were exposed to the various skills involved in listening, reading, and speaking through their own English courses, they did not apply this knowledge readily to their own teaching. And so reading as well as listening was treated similarly in that word for word explanations were presented with the teacher doing most of the talking. This method consequently got them deeper and deeper into linguistic "hot water" since they had to be ever prepared for students' questions and risked the possibility of being looked down upon or losing face if they could not answer questions. More seriously, it seemed as if teaching was a chore, a battlefield, a place where they had to assume full control so as not to lose face.

In addition to these perceptions I found prevalent, the Chinese teachers were resistant to new, more progressive texts which were presented to them. There was an attitude of disassociation between texts and teaching. If a new text was to be used, one would have to learn how to "teach" that text, as if teaching itself was something separate and unlinked to that text. Therefore, they wanted to know how to teach Reader's Choice¹ rather than have more awareness of the different skills which should be taught in teaching reading. A text was considered something one initiated and plodded through chapter by chapter regardless of its pertinence to the students. Obviously, being non-native English speakers, the teachers felt more inse-

cure about their speaking ability and teaching. However, what was overwhelmingly felt from the foreign teachers was the lack of a basis, a foundation of the whole concept of teaching. Thus, it was from this point that we wanted to begin a teacher-training workshop.

IV. WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES, DESIGN & REQUIREMENTS

The workshop started in the twelfth week of our first 18-week English program with our Chinese scientists. The reason for such a delay in implementing a workshop was due to the trainees' involvement in a writing workshop where they were in the process of writing their final theses for graduation from the English department. Although our 18-week teaching term was coming to an end, desire for such a course was expressed, as was the need to have teachers look more closely at what they had been doing in classes. The workshop met twice a week for one and a half hours each time for a period of six weeks. There were 13 Chinese participants, including 4 trainees from the Australian ESP team who worked in the same center. Among the foreign teachers who were participating, two were from the Australian ESP team and two were from the UNDP team. After examining the needs expressed by the Chinese teachers themselves and our own thoughts on weak areas in their teaching, we came up with a number of objectives for the course:

1) To develop an awareness of the elements of teaching.

We wanted to have the teachers become more aware of the various elements of teaching such as the relationship between teacher and student, clarity of directions and of a lesson plan, ability to assess students' needs, ability of challenging students, teacher talking less and encouraging student participation, relating material to the students, the role of correction etc. In stressing the fact that every teacher has his/her own teaching style, we wanted to encourage the Chinese to look at what was important to them in teaching and how they could imple-

ment it in their own teaching. We wanted to break them away from distinct techniques or methods which they imitated from observing foreign teachers' lessons and encourage them to know why and how they were executing a particular lesson. By talking about and examining these elements, we hoped to have the teachers link their own teaching to individual classroom goals. In essence, we wanted the Chinese teachers to start developing inner criteria for being able to evaluate and to better their own teaching.

2) To understand the elements of a lesson plan and to implement an effective lesson plan.

According to the process approach² which helps teachers "concentrate on the developmental process leading to competence", we sought to orient teachers to certain stages in executing a lesson plan. The specific stages we were concerned about initiated with 1) presentation which provided exposure to the language, 2) controlled practice of the material within limited contexts, and 3) transposition of the material into freer contexts initiated by students and relevant to them.

More importantly, we wanted to have the participants focus on specific goals of a lesson. By this, I mean that previously, teachers would say that their goal was simply to teach the present tense. In going one step further, we wanted teachers to identify what they specifically wanted to happen in their lesson - i.e. students should be able to ask yes/no questions, talk in length about "x", or be able to ask freely and apply the information to their own lives. By doing this we hoped to have teachers learn to connect their goals with the method they were

using and to be able to examine what went wrong or right. In addition and in response to observations of the foreign teachers to their Chinese teachers' classes, we wanted to bring out additional important aspects of a lesson such as how to check whether students understood you or not, how to see if all the students have mastered a particular point, how to know when to go on, how to deal with mistakes

- 3) To gain further understanding of common linguistic problems and to be able to answer students' questions concerning them.

Since our Chinese teachers' English proficiency level was not extremely high, they often made grammar mistakes and were quite intimidated by questions students had in class. They overreacted at times and had a very stern and severe manner with students. In order to better their own understanding of the English language and to simultaneously prepare them to be able to deal with linguistic problems they might encounter on the "battlefield", a program of linguistic questions was compiled which was given out weekly and discussed at the following session. Each week dealt with a different linguistic point (modals, WH questions, tense system etc.) and actual mistakes made by students were discussed. In addition, we wanted to focus their attention on creating a more student-centered class thereby lessening the pressure on them as teachers and making students more responsible for their own learning.

- 4) To learn various techniques in each of the four skill areas of English: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

We did not want to place too much emphasis on this objective; however, we did want to examine the different skill areas in terms of what teaching each skill actually entailed. We

hoped that the teachers would apply the insights they gained from the workshop to actual lessons in the various skill areas. Often the teachers would teach a lesson and not have any awareness as to why they were teaching that particular point. Our Chinese teachers, for example, were often cemented to rigid traditional methods which they learned by and thus sought to propagate. One clear example is the teaching of a reading course which was called "intensive reading". This involved the arduous task of presenting a reading with a line by line grammatical analysis by the teacher. As was stated before, communication games were introduced to classes as speaking exercises and there would be no closure or follow up to see if students actually gained something and the lesson was understood. They were taken out of a grab bag of tricks to be used in class without having any real purpose in mind. Furthermore, since the Chinese teachers were coming out of such a long, rigid tradition of education which was limited in the varieties of methods and techniques, we wanted to expose the participants to other ways of dealing with information and to try and set the spark for them to tap their own unused creativity and resources.

Pivotal throughout the entire period the workshop was given were observations of the teachers and trainees in their daily regular core classes by the foreign teachers involved in the workshop. They were followed up by lengthy individual feedback sessions examining and discussing the lessons. It was necessary to make the information they were getting at the workshop all the more real and purposeful to them. Participants were asked to fill out a pre-observation worksheet which

the observers would preview before the lesson and which would be referred to during the feedback sessions. In addition, the Chinese teachers were asked before observations were started what they were particularly looking at in their own teaching, or specifically, what problem areas they had questions about. Some of the responses we received to this were how to make the class more lively, how to teach different levels in one class, and how to make students ask questions and be more active. These points were looked at and discussed in the post-observation talk. In this way we were able to have a better idea as to whether we were meeting their needs or not. We also were able to pinpoint areas to work on and actually have the teachers see a direct relation to their problems.

Certain requirements were asked of the trainees at the outset of the workshop. Attendance was required as well as active participation. In addition, there were linguistic assignments which would be given weekly. The participants also had to prepare peer-teaching lessons as well as a final written lesson plan to be handed in. Lastly, a two-page final paper examining some aspects in teaching that they had been looking at throughout the workshop was required. Here they would discuss the awarenesses they had gained and how it applied to their own teaching.

V. DESCRIPTION OF WORKSHOP

I will present a detailed account of the teacher-training workshop noting what was implemented, reasons behind it and my personal reaction to each session.

Day 1

We started our first session with some quick introductions of the various participants and an ESL joke which I thought would set a humorous, relaxing tone. The objectives of the course were presented as well as the requirements. In order to set an established way of working whereby the participants would be expected to share their ideas and attitudes on various subjects, we divided the group into three and started a discussion about teaching. The following focus questions were addressed and discussed:

1. What are the necessary elements for being a good teacher? What does being a teacher mean to you?
2. What are some aspects/elements necessary for teaching?

Since the participants had already been involved in a classroom situation, we felt that their ideas would be more personal to them and not only things they would spout from texts they had read about teaching. We wanted to isolate these aspects and discuss them for what they meant to the individuals themselves. The large group subsequently got together to list these items after more intense discussion in the smaller groups. The secondfold purpose of generating these necessary elements of teaching was to have them posted permanently in the meeting room for reference in subsequent discussions about teaching.

During peer teaching lessons, we would be able to ascertain whether these aspects were evident or not. Next, we asked the participants to pinpoint two areas which they were personally concerned about in their teaching allowing us to address these specific areas during the observations of the classes. Closure to the lesson consisted of more discussion about having an awareness of teaching, having a foundation of basic elements with which to apply to any aspect of teaching.

Reactions

The first session was amazingly smooth and positive. The participants seemed enthusiastic to discuss teaching, especially in reference to how they themselves perceived it. It seemed as if they had a chance to tie in what they had been learning from textbooks and what their actual experiences had been in the classroom. Dividing the class into groups opened up some of the more quiet people as well as created a more intimate atmosphere for each person to express himself. The participants also said during the feedback session that it was really helpful to them to be able to talk about the very issues they are concerned about but never expressed.

I felt that it was a positive beginning to have the teachers share ideas and learn from each other. The elements that were elicited were as follows:

- using a variety of methods/techniques
- having an active and lively class
- being able to bring out students
- being able to understand students' needs
- being able to assess students' levels

- setting up objectives
- keeping students thinking
- making lessons challenging
- having teachers talk less
- encouraging student participation
- teachers being able to learn from their mistakes
- being patient
- being gentle
- being responsible
- being able to put ourselves in the position of the students
- enjoying teaching
- being able to give clear directions
- being able to give clear definitions
- encouraging students to depend on themselves and each other
- mobilizing students
- students being able to correct each other

Day 2

Having examined the participants' ideas of teaching and the role of the teacher in Day 1, we now wanted to refer specifically to the stages of the lesson plan with emphasis on the presentation and having students understand and practice the desired material. We wanted to also make a connection with the elements in teaching they elicited on Day 1 and actually see these elements being employed in a lesson. Therefore, I gave a shock language lesson in Italian to six volunteers who had no prior knowledge of Italian. I wanted

to present completely new information to them and to have them understand and then subsequently use that material freely and confidently. The observers' task was to write down exactly what happened in order for it to be talked about later.

After the lesson (20 minutes) a set of focus questions was presented to the group:

1. What did the teacher do, in order? (The steps were then written on the blackboard.)
2. What assumptions did the teacher make about the students' knowledge of Italian?
3. What was the purpose of each step?
4. What were students able to do at the end? What did the teacher want students to be able to do at the end?
5. Go back to Day 1's original list of elements of teaching and see which elements you witnessed in the shock lesson.
6. What do you see as the next step in the lesson? What are some possibilities?

By going over these questions, we wanted the teachers to see that it was possible to work fully in the target language and teach completely new material. Furthermore, by using a developmental process, i.e. from language structure to language use, students would be able to master the material presented to them and use it in a confident way. We also wanted to show the connection between having specific goals (having students

learn vocabulary items, use them in simple WH questions and being able to respond) and how to achieve them. Furthermore, we wanted the participants to connect various elements that they generated in Day 1's discussion to the elements they witnessed in the shock language lesson (active and lively class, students correct each other, clarity of directions, encouraging student participation and freedom etc.) A large group discussion followed the lesson. Finally, tasks for the next week's session were given out. This time the Chinese were asked to work in four groups of about three participants each. The first two groups had to present and teach a lesson in Chinese to the foreign teachers with the assumption that the participants knew very little Chinese. The other two groups were to teach an English lesson at the following session and could decide to teach any aspect of English, but would first have to establish the level of their students and the assumptions of what the students already knew.

Reactions

The Italian shock lesson went well. Both observers and students were able to find connections with the elements that were generated on the first day. It seemed as if this was a revelation to some of them - as if they had spouted those ideas before, having heard them from books, but had not actually seen them in action so to speak. I felt it was a good initial look into gaining more awareness of the lesson plan. The teachers also seemed eager to tackle the next week's assignment. I did sense though an initial feeling

that the teachers thought since the Italian lesson was a "beginning" one, it was therefore an easy one to teach. Since their students were more advanced, they could not really apply the skills from that lesson to any lesson they might encounter. Thus, I realized that it would be difficult to help the teachers understand that there were essentials to teaching which could be applied to any book, grammar point, or lesson they might have to tackle.

Day 3

The objective for Day 3 of our workshop was to have the participants work in groups on developing a lesson plan. They were expected to concentrate on the presentation of material and how they would do controlled practice. The group also had to make sure along the way that the students were following and comprehending what was going on. Since most students our trainees have come across do know some English because they have studied grammar at some point in their lives, we felt we wanted to have the trainees really concentrate on presenting something unknown to their students. Therefore, we decided that Chinese would be the target language and the students would be the foreign teachers who had minimal knowledge of the language. We had two peer teaching lessons this day; the first dealt with teaching numbers and telling time; the second dealt with parts of the body and the question, "What's this?". The task for the observers was to write down everything that happened in sequential order.

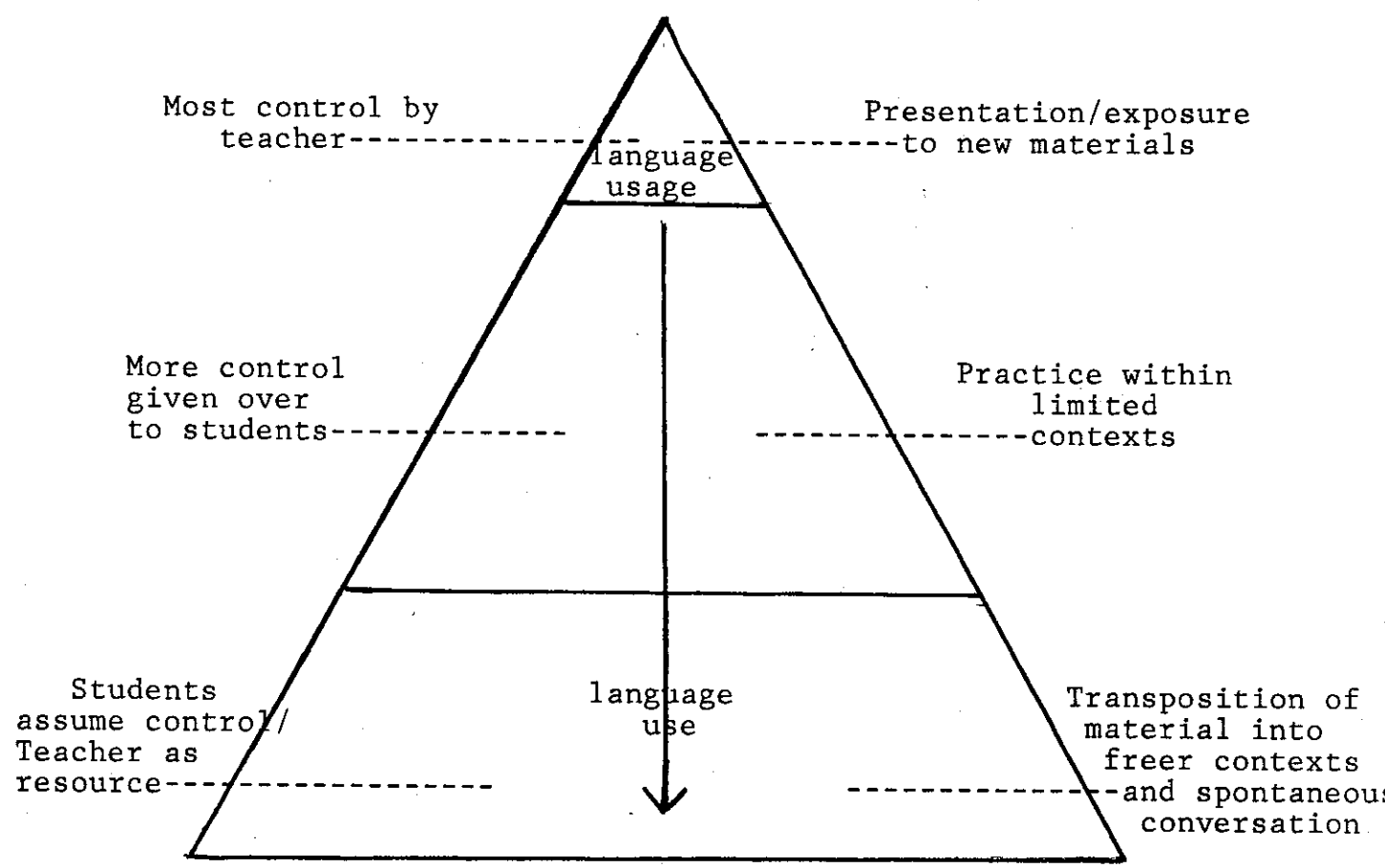
A series of discussion questions were addressed after the initial presentation was made:

1. What happened, in order?
2. What assumptions did the teacher make about the students' knowledge of the language before she started? How did this affect what and how she presented the material?
3. Did you (students) understand the presentation? What helped you? What didn't help? Give examples and your comments to what you experienced during the lesson.
4. (All) What was included in the lesson to make sure the students understood and what was done if they didn't understand?
5. What did the teacher want students to be able to do at the end of the lesson? Was that accomplished?

At the end of the discussion, we asked the participants to summarize what happened that day. We also presented a triangular representation of a lesson plan³(See page 21) which outlines the different parts of the lesson plan and the teacher/student role for each part. In the traditional role of the teacher held by the Chinese before, the teacher maintained a strong control over everything in the class from the beginning to the end of the lesson. Here, we wanted to emphasize that the presentation of the lesson is primarily controlled by the teacher when the information is being introduced. During a more controlled practice, the students are working in a number

TEACHER CONTROL
& TALK TIME

PART OF LESSON
PLAN



of ways: large group, small groups, pairs ... and the teacher is checking to see whether they have absorbed the material or not. Lastly, there is a free practice stage when students begin handling the information and apply it to their own reality through role-plays, invention exercises etc. The material originally introduced is then used freely.

Reactions

The two peer teaching lessons went well and follow-up discussion was lively and interesting. The lessons primarily were based on my original Italian shock lesson which showed again how much the Chinese were dependent on models to imitate. Some very important points, however, were brought up in the discussion:

- a. The importance of the physical positioning of the teacher in the classroom. Can all the students see well and are all students included?
- b. The use of gestures to indicate need for correction in pronunciation and grammar instead of an automatic correction by the teacher.
- c. The use of contrasts to help students with pronunciation. Ways of simplifying pronunciation problems by grouping sounds making it clearer for students.
- d. Enthusiasm for the language you are teaching - how students feel encouraged by that.
- e. Different learning styles, weak students and how to include weaker students and give them support.
- f. Student correction.

Again, in trying to stress the underlying principles in teaching, namely clear presentation and guided student-centered practice, I felt that the participants failed to really understand. During the feedback session, some people claimed that although the assignment was interesting, the lessons presented were really beginning lessons and since they were teaching intermediates they still did not know how to teach certain "grammatical points". Being able to apply techniques, principles and underlying assumptions to their teaching in general seems to be a difficult task, as I stated before. However, the fact that the teachers were able to respond and evaluate the peer lessons with some rather insightful awareness reaffirmed to me that the process of examining and reflecting on teaching had started and teachers could pinpoint areas in their own teaching they felt needed work.

Day 4

The focus for Day 4 was similar to Day 3 in that two additional groups would be presenting a lesson after having worked on a common lesson plan in their group beforehand. Concentration was also placed on making a presentation, making sure the students understood the material and doing a controlled practice. This time the target language was English. The groups were able to choose any point in English to teach as long as they established the level of the 'class' at the beginning. The first group taught adjectives and simple comparatives; the second group taught the present unreal conditional.

The discussion questions after each lesson were as follows:

1. (To the teachers) What were your objectives? What did you want students to be able to do?
2. (To the students) How was the new material presented? Was it clear? effective? Why or why not?
3. How could the lesson have been presented in another way to make it even clearer?

Reactions

Many points came out of the discussions which followed. The participants had an opportunity during this micro-teaching to have their questions surface and to discuss them with both the foreign teachers and Chinese teachers.

- a. How much time should be spent on review?
- b. Does the teacher need to give all the information to the students or can the students provide what they know and help each other?
- c. Does the teacher need to explain a lesson or can the students be helped to find the information out themselves? Can discovery be more effective?
- d. Is it necessary to introduce your lesson by giving the students the English grammar term for what you are going to teach?
- e. How can you cut down on the amount of time a teacher talks?
- f. In introducing a new concept, structure, or grammar point, how can you ask the students to supply you with the answer when they have not been exposed to the structure yet?

Although several significant points came up during our discussion, it was quite obvious that our teachers were still uncertain as to how to effectively introduce new material and to have students practice the material until they could then utilize it on their own. Consequently, we presented a task to the participants for the next class. They had to choose one of four aspects of English and devise a way in which to present it. They first had to decide exactly what they were going to teach, what they wanted students to be able to do and then how they were going to present it. The four aspects/ points were:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| a. Present perfect: | Assume students already know: present, present continuous, past, verb "to have". |
| b. Past continuous: | Students know: verb "to be", present, present continuous, simple past. |
| c. Giving advice with Modals: | Students know: can, could, will, would must. |
| d. Gerunds used as subjects: | Students know: basic tenses, gerunds after certain verbs, infinitives after certain verbs. |

Day 5

The objective of this day's lesson focused on the variety of ways of presenting a specific grammar point and to make the presentation as clear and as understandable as possible. Instead of dealing with four grammar points in English, we limited it to three so that each group had about four people to work with. The grammar points to be dealt with were: present perfect tense, past continuous, and gerund phrases as subjects. The groups were presented with the following focus questions to facilitate their discussion:

1. What important things do you have to consider before you present the grammar point? (What is the prior knowledge of the students and what parts of the language do you specifically want to present?)
2. What are the objectives of this lesson? Be specific.
3. How would you introduce the grammar point?
4. What would you do to accomplish your objectives?

After the groups met and discussed their particular grammar point, the whole group listened to each presentation and commented on it. At the same time, we wrote up the different ways of presenting material on the blackboard; for example: contrasting the grammar point with a known grammar point, giving concrete examples, having students deduce the information themselves from a series of examples, giving explanations etc. In addition, the variety of materials to use in order to make a presentation was discussed: using pictures, dialogues, cue cards, tape recorders etc.

Reactions

This session went very well and it gave the participants a more involved role in expressing and sharing things they have done in the classroom, as well as getting new ideas from others. A connection seemed to have finally been made with teachers having to examine more closely what their objectives were and how they were going to accomplish them. Additional time to raise more questions and prolong further discussion could have been helpful too. At this point, I think it is also necessary to add that the teachers were starting to bring themselves

out of the textbook and examine the language more closely in order to present the language in ways which would be motivating as well as clear to the students along with promoting a more active, student-centered class. Perhaps it was also revolutionary to have teachers even talking to each other, exchanging ideas and knowledge. By this I mean that in any educational institution that I have come across in China, there was almost no interaction between teachers and very little communication of ideas and problems. So in this respect, perhaps a major accomplishment was made.

Day 6

Having examined the ways and means of presenting information and having students use that information in a situation which has been controlled by the teacher, we now felt it necessary to address the idea of free practice, i.e. practice in which the students can freely use the information presented to them and apply it to their own experience. In observing the teachers in their core classes, we found that teachers would often have the students do free dialogues, role plays or free "communication games". Not only did their lessons lack teacher direction, they also lacked closure for the students. Students did not have a sense of whether or not they were handling the information correctly and appropriately. Therefore, we wanted now to examine free practice and discuss how to achieve it. Special attention was on different ways of establishing closure in a lesson.

In order to achieve this, I set about giving a lesson to

our participants on the functions of giving advice. I started out by giving them a dialogue to listen to on tape about giving advice. After eliciting information from them about what they understood from the tape, I gave out a cloze exercise on the dialogue. They then practiced the dialogue in pairs working on the different ways advice was being given and the intonation used. I then gave out role plays to groups of people and had them make up their own dialogue using the particular expressions given to them earlier. After some practice time, the groups presented their dialogues. I handled this part in a variety of ways. For the first role play, I asked the observers to write down the various ways they heard advice being given and to make comments on the effectiveness of the advice. With another role play, I taped the group and had the class relisten for specific mistakes also making comments on the appropriateness of the language used. For the remaining role plays, I took notes and had the students take notes of the different expressions used and mistakes the groups made. Stressing the need for tie-up, I presented a number of activities one could do with this information: write the mistakes on a transparency or a stencil and have the students correct it, or perhaps simply summarizing the ways in which people gave advice and accepted or rejected the advice.

As a final task for the day, we had the participants work in groups on another task. They were told that they had just taught the present unreal conditional tense and they were to come up with ways of doing free practice and giving closure to the lesson.

Reactions

This session went rather well. It exposed the participants to another technique and at the same time generated additional ideas for dealing with closure to a lesson. One problem with the element of free practice is that it is a rather threatening part of a lesson. The teacher has to deal with information which is spontaneously coming from the students. S/he does not have any control over what is generated. Being able to pick up on mistakes is not a very easy task for Chinese teachers to do and often puts them in an embarrassing and stressful situation. Therefore, we stressed the fact that they could focus on certain things in class, like the giving of advice and subsequently give more detailed scrutiny in another future class. Thus, the teachers would have a chance to listen to tapes the students made or collect their dialogues, work etc. and then have time in which to give feedback at a later date. We also stressed the fact that the teachers could have the students rely on each other more and more as the judges of the material presented thereby developing a more evaluative sense in the students themselves of what was linguistically and/or culturally right and wrong. In this respect, I found this session to be quite productive.

Day 7

Throughout the workshop we were aware that we had a monumental task to undertake. That task was trying to instill awarenesses in teachers about teaching and to look at each part of their teaching and re-evaluate it. Besides the areas

of planning, objectives, presentation and controlled and free practice, we also felt the need to look at the role of correction in the classroom. Also closely related to this element was the importance of atmosphere in a class in trying to bring about more effective learning and teaching. Our teachers were also eager to learn something about this since in their observations of foreign teachers they noticed obvious differences in the attitudes of the foreign teachers towards the students.

Focusing on the area of correction, our objectives for this day were as follows: 1) to look at three teaching situations which involved dealing with correction in three distinct ways, 2) to examine the relationship between students and teachers in the classroom, and 3) to look at how a non-threatening atmosphere affects the students.

In order to do this, we invited volunteers to participate in a mini-lesson using simple magazine pictures. The lesson was divided into three parts where the teacher used three specific modes of correction. The observers were asked to take notes on what they witnessed happening, what the teacher did and the response and reactions of the participants.

The three modes of correction were:

- a. Teacher takes a very aggressive and interruptive role giving most answers, usurping much of class time, demanding perfection and is very insistent and clearly the center of attention.
- b. Teacher indicates that mistakes are being made by using gestures or making verbal suggestions and has students re-phrase and self correct or has other

class members help to figure out the right answer. Encourages a variety of responses and is more supportive and understanding.

- c. Teacher gives no correction at all and allows students to say anything and have no indication of correctness. Does not respond to ideas generated by the students either.

A discussion period followed where the participants were asked how they felt in each of the three situations. The observers were asked to comment on what they saw in each situation and how they thought the participants felt. We asked them all to then go back to the elements they saw on the first day of the workshop, to point out the elements generated then, and apply them to the three situations they saw and participated in that day.

It was clear to both the participants and the observers that each mode was different. Interestingly enough, they felt the second one was more relaxing and conducive to learning. The discussion brought out further what teachers had been observing in the foreign teachers' classes but had not been able to verbalize.

The second part of the day consisted of having a teacher conduct a lesson in which students would be making mistakes and in which s/he would have to deal with the mistakes. This was done in the form of an interview with one of the teachers being the "teacher" and another taking the part of the interviewee, a famous Chinese movie actress. The others were given slips of

papers with various questions which contained grammatical mistakes and they were encouraged to ask both correct and incorrect questions. At the end, there was a discussion which focused on what the teacher did and how he did it.

The final activity involved generating various methods of correction of speaking and writing to be written on the blackboard. Some of the types were: having students correct themselves, having other students make corrections, teacher corrects and has student finally "own" the correct statement, writing the spoken sentences and having the class look at it as a whole and correct it, teacher keeping notes of mistakes which are being made and then preparing a correction sheet to then give to the students to work on as an assignment, taping and re-listening, collecting written work and simply underlining the mistakes and indicating the kind of mistake it is for the students to correct themselves (e.g. "sp"= spelling, "WO" = word order, "T" = tense etc.)

Reactions

The objectives of the lesson were met in that a lively discussion about the area of correction was generated and the participants were able to see different modes of correction being executed. For future information, it would be much more effective if a discussion took place directly after each method of correction so that what went on during that time would be fresher in the participants' minds and they wouldn't have to resort to memory which at times ended up in confusion. As a result of this exposure to different forms of correction, I feel that the par-

ticipants did employ such methods in their own classes which in ways relieved some of the pressure on them as being the sole source of information. Again, there was the constant problem of having the Chinese teachers almost always tell you what you want to hear. They are able to very effectively state the most idealistic and progressive opinions about teaching which may, for the most part, be information which purely floats around in the cerebrum, rather than take a more active part in the actual classroom. It was interesting to note that a few volunteers in the correction lesson actually liked the first way of correction feeling that having the teacher correct them all the time was what they felt most comfortable with. Another drawback in the peer lesson where we actually had a Chinese teacher be the teacher in the interview, was the fact that the situation was contrived and at times seemed too forced in that the mistakes were prepared mistakes. However, it seemed a good idea to have a volunteer enact some of the ideas s/he had just witnessed.

Day 8

At this point in the training workshop, our core English classes were coming to an end and our students were filling the entire atmosphere with an intense level of anxiety. Due to the nature of what was going on outside the workshop, the workshop took a slight twist. Now we were going to concentrate on the various skill areas and expose the teachers to some new techniques they could directly apply to their classes. The first area we selected was listening.

In addressing these specific skill areas, we wanted the participants to look first at the purpose of teaching the specified skill and then the different ways in which to approach the skill. Thus, the first day dealt with addressing whether or not listening should be taught and why. Much of the time focused on teaching students how to listen, especially since listening a-la Chinese style meant laborious hours of transcribing tapes word for word. The discussion then followed into the different types of materials one could use for listening and the purpose of each material. Specifically, some of what was generated included clozes; the purpose for using cloze exercises being to work on word recognition and improvement of structure recognition. Listening to stories was also another type mentioned, having a manifold purpose of picking out the main idea, getting specific information, understanding how a story fits together etc. Other types of listening material discussed were dialogues, minimal pair drills, oral exercises, dictations, reduced speech exercises, plays, lectures, the news, etc.

After discussing listening, one of the Chinese trainees who had done considerable work with listening gave a demonstration lesson on the news from the Voice of America and presented it to the group as a listening lesson. After his lesson, we discussed what had been presented and what alternatives one could use.

Reactions

Having group discussions with Chinese participants is a very difficult task since there is much reticence on their part to initiate any discussion. The younger, less experienced teachers feel

awkward and wary of making their ideas known since they may come into conflict with the older teachers. There is also a question of losing face if one makes a mistake. Therefore, the discussion in the beginning was very directed by the foreign participants, and I did not feel as if any real communication was taking place. It would have been better to work in smaller groups with specific questions posed for the group to address. Secondly, our Chinese trainee's lesson did not exhibit the necessary elements of listening we wanted to stress. Namely there was too much stress placed on the students being asked for exact responses of what they had heard on the news instead of being able to correctly assess what they heard in their own words. Although I felt that this demonstration lacked many elements, it did bring up various essential questions regarding the actual purpose of listening and it brought up several controversial points on how a more progressive methodology clashes with a traditional one. Although I felt I had talked about the Chinese teacher's lesson in advance and was clear about what we wanted to stress, it taught me to perhaps be more exact and demanding when asking for input from our Chinese colleagues. However, by having one of the Chinese have input in the workshop, we were also making a definite statement. We did not want all the information coming from the foreign end.

Day 9

Teaching the skill of writing is not an essential part of the ESP program at the Second Foreign Language Institute; therefore, we chose not to stress it, but only to expose the partici-

pants to various techniques in writing which they could then use or alter for their own purposes. We chose to present the following:

- a. Dicto-Comp - This is a combined listening and writing exercise which requires the students to listen to a story told by the teacher two or three times. The students can then ask questions to clarify their understanding of the material and then must work in groups to re-create their understanding of the story in written form. Finished products are then reviewed by the entire class as a whole.
- b. The Cinderella Story - The first paragraph of a story is handed out or dictated to all of the students. They in turn must complete the story by writing one line each of the story and then passing the paper to the next person. Each student has a page with the same beginning paragraph; however, at the end there will be X (X = number of students in the class) number of stories. The students must follow a story line and be responsible to correct their own complete stories in the end.
- c. Soap Opera - This is an activity which can be used as a review of vocabulary items and which demands a bit of creativity on the part of the students. Vocabulary words (10-12) are listed on the blackboard, their meanings and pronunciation should have already been explained and gone over with the students. The students choose a few members of the class to be star roles in

the soap opera they are about to write. The class then creates a soap opera using all the vocabulary. The teacher supplies connectors and polishes the sentences given.

Reactions

The reaction of the session of the participants was extremely positive since it gave them alternative ways to work with writing and some techniques geared towards students working in groups and helping each other. They themselves enjoyed the activities, but also did not see these particular writing activities relevant or being an integral part of the ESP program since the students they would be teaching were professionals. They brought up the fact that the ideas could be taken and applied to more science-related situations. In addition, I felt it was extremely important that the teachers themselves experience what they would actually be giving to their students.

Day 10

Due to the sudden announcement of a meeting of all the graduating students in the English Department (where our trainees came from), one of our workshops was cancelled and so was the idea of discussing the skill of reading. One learns to flow with the inevitable changes in the People's Republic. We then decided to finish our workshop with various techniques for speaking in the classroom - the emphasis in the ESP program being speaking. This area needed a considerable amount of attention since it is the teacher in China who does the talking, direct-

ing, correcting, and asking of questions. Consequently, we ended the workshop stressing the need to have the students be the focus of attention especially in the area of speaking. The following techniques were presented and discussed:

- a. Find Someone Who ...- This is an exercise taken from Sharing and Caring in the Classroom⁴ which can be varied to promote discussion in accordance with a variety of tenses. For example, the students have lists of different actions: plant a garden, has eaten snails, likes the color purple etc. The students must go around the classroom asking different people whether or not they have ever planted a garden, eaten snails etc. If the response is yes, the student writes the person's name down next to the item and then goes on to another person to ask a different question. If the response is no, the student then asks another question on the list until s/he gets a positive response. The procedure is then repeated. Discussion afterwards in the large group can go into more depth and also provides a chance for the students to discover things about others that they would normally never have known.
- b. Categories⁵- In this activity, categories are written on cards as Vegetables, Things you can find in the classroom, Things you use in the kitchen etc. with six items from each category. Students work in teams having one volunteer try to elicit the items under the category by defining, explaining, giving examples, clues, but

without using any hand motions.

- c. Cocktail Party⁶- This activity provides a situation and assigns a role including name, sex, age, occupation etc. to each student who plays. The students then go around meeting each character, introducing themselves and discovering the story which slowly begins to unravel. Students find out that they are often related to other students and at the end each character must report the information he found out.

Reactions

This also turned out to be an enjoyable time for the participants and helped show them that a lesson can be a relaxing and productive experience, not to mention the fact that most of the talking and interacting is done by the students. It focused their attention on the need for students to take on a more participatory and aggressive role and it portrays the teacher in a far different light, one as an observer and guide - a resource person. Much work still remains on applying speaking exercises in every day classroom lessons where the students are required to produce and generate speech. As a final note, although this last class, like the two previous classes was enjoyable and did give the participants a variety of ideas to use in the classroom, it still did not address the real issues of teaching which we were trying to establish all along. Nonetheless, these exercises did show participants that a variety of objectives can be met in one lesson: having students generating yes/no questions, responding, asking WH questions, recounting experi-

ences, sharing information about themselves thus having more investment in speaking etc. In addition, this glimpse at speaking situations gave the Chinese teachers a vivid example of how linguistic material can be utilized by the students in producing authentic language in real communicative situations. Finally, the participants, through actually experiencing the different techniques, got a clear picture as to what is expected from the students so as to help them project possible problems, variations etc.

VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It may be some time before a true assessment of the impact of our combined efforts during the teacher-training workshop and during the entire ESP language program as a whole can be made. The workshop was only six weeks long and basically was a supplement to what was continually an on-going occurrence throughout the time we were in China. In essence, the workshop specifically brought greater attention to teachers 1) being more reflective of what they were planning and executing in the classroom, and 2) paying greater attention to the why and how they were teaching. It provided them with a connection between their theoretical background and the real experience they were having in the classroom.

One advantage that we had over other teacher-training groups in China was that we could directly see a result of our training when the Chinese teachers taught in the ESP core classes. Furthermore, our teachers were using texts which were quite progressive and new in the ESL field and thus learned how to use them directly. Other teacher trainers often met with the problem that their trainees would be whisked back to their staid institutions only to use the same lifeless, rote texts which never seemed to change. In this situation, teacher trainers would often opt for adapting these old-fashioned texts with some more progressive and creative techniques. We luckily did not have that particular problem, but had to orient our teachers to the methodology of using the newer texts as well as to the content of the texts themselves.

I did attempt to ascertain (by means of a questionnaire) a more direct measure of the effect of the workshop on the ideas of the teachers regarding teaching and the program. Although there are certain disadvantages to using this form of evaluation, I attempted to eliminate one source of disadvantage by having mini-interviews with the participants in order to be more certain that they were expressing what they meant and understood what was being asked of them.

My observations of the teachers in addition to the talks held on their teaching brought forth the following:

1. The teachers in general seemed to have gained some deeper understanding of their own teaching and saw a more direct relationship between their objectives and how and what they actually taught.
2. The teachers put more thought into the planning of a lesson.
3. The teachers began to deal with correction in a variety of ways especially in trying to create a non-threatening atmosphere.
4. The teachers were more aware of active and less active students and tried to create more of a balance in the classroom.
5. The teachers were more eager and confident in adapting materials and creating their own materials.
6. The teachers expressed that having more awareness of the parts of a lesson plan insured better results and thus facilitated their teaching.

We spent a fair amount of energy on creating awarenesses in our teachers as they selected, implemented and evaluated various teaching methods and classroom practices. What perhaps stood out most from this whole experience is that along with linguistic, psychological and pedagogical factors in teaching teachers, we must also consider cultural differences. The cultural factors perhaps played a more significant role than we will ever truly know in affecting how our teachers reacted to what the foreign teachers were exposing them to. The remnants of the Cultural Revolution, which had such a tumultuous effect on people, especially in regard to education, still floated around in different forms - students having tremendous power over teachers, colleagues refusing to share ideas and exchange information, complete obedience to certain teacher heads who were older or favored by the leaders but who knew nothing of the teaching methodology we were trying to employ.

Although the focus of this paper is an account of a teacher-training workshop involving teachers from the People's Republic of China, certain applications can be made to aid other teacher trainers working in other cultures. Rather than concentrate on specific techniques, I will stress the basic awarenesses which were as a result of this workshop:

1. The importance of having a clear understanding of the culture of the country and peoples we were dealing with cannot be stressed enough. We had to be aware of so many factors - the restrictions and

limitations teachers had within their own culture, especially in their work situations; the relationship between students and teachers, teachers and each other, teachers and the administration and the students and the administration. All played an important part in fully understanding the situation we were going to work in.

2. Being familiar with the situation we were going to work in began the process of understanding. Not only was it important for us to be familiar with the physical teaching environment (classrooms, seating, facilities etc.), but it was also helpful for us to know about the curriculum, classes, materials we would have to work with and the way the teachers taught. Furthermore, it was essential for us to get to know the teachers beforehand as people and not only as teachers.
3. In getting to know the teachers involved, we were beginning to create a non-threatening and non-invasive atmosphere. The fact that we had come as "trainers", especially foreign ones at that, was seen as threatening and interfering by the "trainees". In our particular case, some of the teachers we were dealing with had taught longer than we had and were older than us. It was obvious that at first we were trespassing on some very forbidden ground. Therefore, in establishing a rapport at first and finding out what the teachers felt they needed, facilitated smooth running of the workshop.

4. In order to establish this non-threatening atmosphere, we tried to provide ample opportunities where teachers could talk about issues of concern to them. Oftentimes, this was facilitated in small, mixed groups where the shy or younger teachers would get a chance to express their views. Here we tried to be supportive in getting teachers to express themselves and come to their own personal conclusions. And in demonstrating different techniques, we always sought to include the teachers in developing additional activities, critiquing the lessons they observed and mainly taking a more active role in the training process.
5. Lastly, from the very start, it was important for us to be consistent with the follow-up to the teachers' lessons and peer demonstrations. We were fortunate to have the opportunity to actually observe our teachers teach in the language program while the training class was in progress. Although every trainer might not have this ideal situation, certain parallel situations could be set up in order to provide a real situation which would give food for feedback and discussion.

Implementing a teacher-training program in a country such as China or in any country is basically an evolutionary process and not a revolutionary one. We were fortunate in that the teachers we were training in the ESP program would be going abroad for a year's study in ESL programs through-

out the United States. They, of course, will be more prepared and hopefully more open to what they will learn there - an advantage in itself. However, they will have to return to a system which perhaps will not have accelerated at the same speed as they and so they will have to apply their gains and knowledge to the existing environment. There is also a question as to how they will then be utilized in existing language programs when they return; i.e. whether they will be allowed to institute changes or teach in a new and different way. Therefore, I maintain that the process of teacher-training is a slow one, one which also involves deliberate collaboration with the trainees on all matters of the program, and must be handled by foreign ESL/EFL trainers in a patient, but persistent way.

Notes

¹ E. Margaret Baudoin, Ellen S. Bober, Mark A. Clarke, Barbara K. Dobson, Sandra Silberstein, Reader's Choice (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press).

² Alvino Fantini, "Focus on Process: An Examination of the Learning and Teaching of Communicative Competence," in Beyond Experience, ed. Donald Batchelder and Elizabeth G. Warner (Brattleboro: The Experiment Press, 1977), pp. 47-54.

³ Fantini, pp. 47-54.

⁴ Gertrude Moskowitz, Caring and Sharing in the Foreign Language Classroom (Rowley: Newbury House Publ., Inc., 1978), p. 50.

⁵ Staff, English Language Department - School for International Training, Index Card Games for ESL (Brattleboro: The Experiment Press and Pro Lingua Associates, 1982), p. 47.

⁶ Staff, English Language Department - School for International Training, Index Card Games for ESL, p. 56.

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