THINKING Classroom

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THINKING Classroom

A Journal of Reading, Writing and Critical Reflection

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Letter from the Editor

An international journal causes us to ask questions about ourselves in relation to the rest of the world. In this issue, readers might consider if their own nation's publishers suffer from the same pressures as publishers in Bosnia and Herzegovina? (page 16) How are advertising icons used to create "desire" in your country? (page 27) Do our students respond to stories as students respond in more or less affluent parts of the globe? (page 19) This publication is an attempt to make possible the kind of cross cultural sharing and growth that thoughtful answers to such questions invite. Such comparisons may also serve well as a springboard for our own critical thinking and reflection.

But "other" cultures and "other" ways of doing things are not always easy to appreciate. In countries where national traditions and values have been dismantled, the pressing concern is usually on rebuilding and reestablishing a national identity. "Other" ways of acting or being may appear as a threat or even an insult. Curricula at such points in history are often designed to create a new generation of citizens who will promote national interests and positive national images. This goal may be contrasted with a more broadly framed version: to help students know themselves both as citizens of their own nation/ethnic group and citizens of the world.

How might critical thinking affect nation building and ethnic identification? For those persons who believe that the source of national pride is a pool of superior genes, critical thinking must surely be viewed as a threat. For those who view the purpose of education as indoctrination, evidence-based reasoning and argumentation is not valued. While thinking critically, students are asked to consider situations from various points of view, to ask who benefits from particular decisions, to evaluate each idea on its merits, and to consider risks from various perspectives.

In contrast, if national pride is viewed as a celebration and respectful sharing—a sharing of what we have and an interest in that which defines others—then critical thinking becomes a powerful tool. Critical thinkers hope to understand action and art within context. Students are asked to consider possibilities, cause and effect, action and reaction. The purpose of such study is to create a more sensible world, a world in which people can talk humbly and honestly with one another, a world where people listen as well as speak.

As I think about the articles in this issue I am struck by how very hard it is to really hear one another. What do we really hear when we listen to one another's tales? Sandhya Rao, an Indian national, talks about the importance of story (page 19)—how the theme and shape of the tale is so much more important than the specific vocabulary or incidental details that an author uses. So, too, it is with *Thinking Classroom*. In our specific and local stories, we find common themes. And these themes tell us a great deal about the nature of school and teaching. Differences are also important to note, and differences are nowhere better captured than in the details of our stories. When Sergei Zair-Bek (page 33) talks about a university seminar, as an editor I need to make sure that his version of seminar is what I also mean by this term. What is expected of students in such a class? What posture is assumed by the teacher—is he a gatekeeper or a coach?

Here's the irony: The more we learn about other cultures the more we learn about ourselves. The articles that work best in this publication are the ones that enable us to visit your classrooms, that make visible the problems that you and your colleagues share as you have tea and chat after the students have gone home. How happy we editors are when an article arrives that makes us say, "Oh, yes, I know exactly what she means" or conversely "How interesting, I had never thought of it that way!" Respectful stories of students and teachers at work, rich in evidence and detail—that's what makes an international journal succeed.

Wendy Saul

What's New?

RWCT Certification

What makes a project really international for local teams? We believe it is not just being one of the 28 countries involved in RWCT, but maintaining real collaboration with friends worldwide.

In May 2002 our Czech colleagues, Hana Kostalova and Ondrej Hausenblas, came to Russia as international RWCT certifiers. They visited Samara and Novosibirsk to observe workshops and classroom sessions of those first-wave RWCT participants who wanted to become certifiers themselves. They were accompanied by the two Russian certifiers, Valeria Mariko and Olga Varshaver, who were observing the performance of those applying for trainer's certificates.

This kind of collaboration proved to be very fruitful for both sides. We always welcome a different but friendly perspective on the work we do here, we are grateful for the thoughtful insights that our Czech colleagues shared so generously. We hope that this kind of joint venture will become popular throughout the RWCT network.

Testing in Kyrgyzstan

June 30, 2002, was a significant day for university entrants in Kyrgyzstan. For the first time in history, entrance examinations for Kyrgystan's institutions of higher education were conducted by an independent organization. About 14,000 young people, in all regions of the country, simultaneously wrote the first-ever national education test. The available university positions (government-funded scholarships) were allotted to the applicants based on the results of the test.

The creation, organization, and implementation of countrywide testing were carried out with the active participation and financial support of ACCELS and the CARANA corporation. In February 2002, a group of Kyrgyz faculty and teachers visited the well-known U.S. test company ETS, where they received special training and were acquainted with the principles and technologies of modern testing. The American experts served as consultants during test development, but the Kyrgyz professors who created the test took into consideration the local conditions and traditions.

The test was created in three languages: Kyrgyz, Russian, and Uzbek; and consisted of four sections: *Mathematics*, *Practical Grammar of the Native Language*, *Reading and Comprehension in the Native Language*, and *a Reflective Essay in the Native Language*. The test was constructed so as to require the use of critical thinking: in questions and tasks, and in the reflective essays.

The initial test is now over, but its organizers and developers still have many questions and problems to resolve during the coming year, so that the 2003 testing can be conducted according to the highest possible standards.

19th World Congress on Reading 'International Literacy Links'

The International Reading Association hosted its 19th World Congress on Reading in Edinburgh, Scotland July 29–August 1, 2002. Approximately 1,000 educators representing some 60 countries attended the event. The four-day conference featured sessions, workshops, and symposia covering every facet of reading education. With a grant from the Open Society Institute, the Association was able to provide travel subsidies for 22 Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT) project participants from 15 countries to attend. The opportunity to trade ideas informally with colleagues proved almost as valuable as the formal presentations. One participant summed it up well when she said, "It's a lovely opportunity to meet people from all over the world and to get new ideas. You also get to know that the problems aren't so different. The opportunity to talk with people on a global scale opens lots of windows. You get a fresh view of things."

Keynote speaker Margaret Meek Spencer spoke on the importance of imagination. "I am convinced that imagination is at the heart of children learning to read," said Spencer, Reader Emeritus in Education, University of London. "For good or ill, imagination is the ultimate freedom," Spencer concluded. "It lets us see how things could be otherwise."

The conference closed with an invitation from representatives of the Reading Association of the Philippines to the 20th World Congress on Reading, to be held in Manila in 2004.

Symposium draws enthusiastic response

Some 150 participants attended the International Reading Association's Multiple Language Literacy Symposium on August 2,

held in Edinburgh, Scotland, immediately following the 19th World Congress on Reading. The theme of the symposium was "Building a Cross-National Research Agenda on Multiple Language Literacy."

In panel discussions, Eve Gregory of the United Kingdom addressed sociocultural issues and David Francis of the United States discussed how the aims of research help determine methodology. Chiou-lan Chern of Taiwan discussed orthographic issues, Dominique Portante of Luxembourg talked about developing initial multilingual literacy, and Zanele Buthelezi of South Africa talked about the challenges of instruction in that country.

David Klaus of the United States provided a closing summary, drawing upon personal experience and nearly a year of research he did as a consultant for the World Bank. Klaus cited the example of Papua New Guinea, which uses some 400 languages in initial education, then transitions students to instruction in English by third grade. "If Papua New Guinea can do it, no other country has any excuse," he concluded.

International Reading Association Literacy Award

The 2002 International Reading Association Literacy Award was presented to the Adult Education Division of the Eritrean Ministry of Education on September 10, 2002, in Paris. The award, which includes a US$15,000 prize, is presented every year by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in celebration of International Literacy Day.

The Ministry was commended for its dedicated effort over more than a decade of war and social crisis, for taking into account the special needs of ethnic groups and demobilized soldiers, and remaining consistently focused on providing literacy and nonformal education.

The International Reading Association Literacy Award recognizes meritorious contributions to the struggle against illiteracy. Through their projects, recipients of the award have aided millions of people around the world in improving their literacy skills.

For more information on International Literacy Day and the International Literacy Day Awards, visit the Association's website, http://www.reading.org/.

Teacher and Student: An Opportunity for Dialogue and Understanding

In spring 2002, the Open Society Institute–Moscow published *Teacher and Student: An Opportunity for Dialogue and Understanding.* (Vol. 1. Compiled by Ye. Genike, Ye. Trifonova. Ed. L. Syomina.) All the authors of the book—Ye. Genike, Ye. Trifonova, I. Shalygina, O. Shalygina, G. Chikunova, V. Fufykin, and I. Penkova—had participated in RWCT seminars in Russia.

Any innovation in education (and the RWCT project is no exception) faces many obstacles during its implementation. Teachers in a school or university who have to overcome these obstacles alone find themselves in a most difficult situation. This book is for them— to encourage them, raise their spirits, and help them feel that they have support.

A guidebook and collection of readings, the book was created in the course of practical seminars with teachers at the Vladimir Regional In-service Training Institute for Educators. The leaders of the seminars wanted to avoid merely transmitting ready-made information, and sought instead to organize teachers' own study of the professional literature, and to encourage cooperative learning. A collection of readings was compiled from works by the most prominent Russian pedagogues, philosophers and sociologists.

In the book the texts of the readings are marked according to the stages involved in the RWCT framework: pre-reading, actual reading, and post-reading. By using this format, the authors offer a model for a guidebook using RWCT principles.

Did the concept of "critical thinking" exist in Russia before the RWCT project started? Is there a difference between student-centered education in Russia and in the U.S.? What materials do we need to work as RWCT teachers? How can we increase the number of RWCT teachers in a school? The book offers answers to these and many other questions.

This book is like a multi-layered cake, whose ingredients were assembled from the authors' practical experience. Its target audience is quite broad, including teachers, school administrators, university faculty, and in-service training instructors.

Look Who's Talking

THE QUESTION:

My students seem to think that learning stops when they walk out of the classroom. I know there are many excellent and entertaining books related to the curriculum available in the library, but I don't know how to motivate the students to read them. How do you encourage outside reading?

Brikena Zogaj
Elementary school teacher and one of the first generation of trainers of RWCT, Tirana, Albania

There are different ways to encourage additional reading on topics being studied in class. In my experience, the following three steps are effective:

First, make it interesting for the children;

Second, include yourself in the group (you have to read and present as the children do); and Third, make them aware of the goal of their reading and the time available to complete the assignment, and provide feedback on their reading.

The question reminds me of the time I taught Andersen's story "The Daisy." The students and I went through the story and at the end of the lesson, I asked the students to find another story that had something in common with the one we were studying, and to compare the two stories. I was impressed by the variety in their presentations: some used Venn diagrams, some wrote essays, and some others just talked. I gave my presentation as well. During the children's presentations, I remember one of them said, "The first difference I found between the two stories was: the story we studied in the classroom was very much shorter than the one we had to read ourselves." This made me think that a good school prepares children to continue to learn outside of the classroom. Children learn more effectively when they construct meaning during reading on their own.

Yelena Obolyaeva
Elementary school teacher, Nizhny Novgorod

How can we induce students to read additional literature?

It is very important for elementary school children to learn to love books and to acquire the desire to read. We begin each day with five minutes of reading. Each child brings a book that interests him or her, looks at it, reads it. During the day the teacher allows time (5–10 minutes) for free reading before each lesson. In addition, we set up a special exhibit stand with a display of books on a certain theme. For a whole week this exhibit is freely available to the children, and they can look through these books during their usual five minutes of free reading. Every month we hold a contest titled "My Discoveries as a Reader." The children bring their favorite books to class, and tell their classmates about them. The main point here is that the books should be appropriate for the age group and not imposed by adults. A book presented by a peer always arouses greater interest. The teacher can also express his or her opinion of the book. I usually read together with the children, share my impressions with them. In reader's diaries, which are kept by the children, I try to recommend a special book to each of my students, one he or she would especially like. Inspired by such a personal recommendation, students will usually gladly seek out the book, read it, and share their impressions with the teacher.

Marilyn Rothberg
Elementary School Librarian, Pennsylvania, USA

As a school librarian in a K–5 elementary school, I work with teachers, reading specialists, and parents to encourage students to do outside reading. There are many

ways to help motivate students to read and we try to reach all of our students. Here are some examples of what we do at General Wayne Elementary School:

1. "Reading passports" or other visible ways of recording outside reading. Making a visual record of students' progress is very effective, and encourages them to read books that they may not have tried otherwise. Often I will introduce and discuss different genres of fiction and nonfiction, and ask the students to read a book in each genre during the year. Most of our classes have a nightly homework assignment of reading (whatever the student wants to read) for a certain amount of time, and choosing different genres helps to direct that reading.

2. Parent/child book discussion groups. I run monthly groups of 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders who meet together in the evening with parents to discuss a book we have

picked. Many teachers encourage their students to participate in this activity.

3. I do a lot of "booktalking" to classes, telling them of new or interesting books in the library. Teachers will request booktalks on specific topics, and often students will be excited about being the first ones to take these "hot" books out. I'll give out a bibliography of these books to the students, so they can be looked for later too.

Getting children to do reading outside their classroom is a true collaborative effort of teachers, librarians, and parents!

Ariana Vacaretu
Math teacher, Cluj, Romania

I may leave unanswered some of the questions that arise from the lesson. I also ask the students to

do project-based work, which usually requires extra reading. Then the students present their projects, and the whole class participates in evaluating them. Another idea is to organize activities that involve several classes, such as contests and quizzes. I always reward the winners.

Zoltan Kovacs
Physics teacher, Cluj, Romania

I try to leave some issues unresolved, and mention a few approaches to resolving them. The

students can solve them individually by doing some additional research, by covering the reading that was assigned

for the class, or by identifying other sources of information. For instance, in the Want to Know *column of the KWL chart filled in during class, I may include some questions that will not be answered during the lesson.*

A question for the next issue:
A lot of what we read in connection with our jobs is soon forgotten. What have you read recently in the field of education that has really made an impression on your thinking and your work?

Readers are invited to respond to this question, or to suggest questions for future issues. The editors will select items for printing. Please e-mail your answers and suggestions to: bmichaels@reading.org

Reflections

The Writing "Ideal" and the Pedagogical Hierarchy

Zoe Randall

I listen to my students falter in search of the right word, trying one and then another, seeking clarity yet stymied by the fact that they are addressing their "English teacher." I listen to myself strain for perfect elocution ("stymied"? Perhaps "obstructed" is the better choice—"frustrated"?) because I am that English teacher. And when the word finally comes, it has already been undermined by the struggle for its utterance. Its power, "that inner something that makes readers *experience* what you are talking about, not just understand it" (Elbow, 1981, p. 4), is reduced. I teach "voice" as the resonance of discourse—what makes words live and breathe—and as the facilitator of "power" in writing. Yet the teaching of language and rhetorical discourse as freedom within the hierarchy of academia may be nothing more than an unobtainable ideal. It is a challenge.

"Writing *without voice* is wooden and dead because it lacks sound, rhythm, energy, and individuality…. Writing *with voice* is writing into which someone has breathed," according to Peter Elbow (1981, p. 3). Yet consider the breath, which is forced out in uneasiness. Consider the limitations of freedom of discourse in any hierarchical society—especially academia. We can try to make our classrooms informal and egalitarian: My students and I sit in a circle; we call each other by our first names; we share our writing as peers. But I am still the "teacher/depositor" imparting knowledge into my "student/receptacles" (Freire, 1972, p. 58). Even in the most liberal classroom settings, I have the potential to oppress my students in my desire (or need) to maintain my author-ity. How can I make my students comfortable enough to forget academic intimidation and feel the self-confidence they need to express themselves freely without forfeiting that authority?

Many teachers (as well as students) accept the traditional hierarchical structure of the student/teacher relationship as a given and willingly concede to its social constraints. But others, who do not, still have to acknowledge that the very ideal of rhetorical freedom is culturally constrained. Elaine Chaika (1985) submits that although "language makes us free as individuals," it "chains us socially"—that "the social rules of language often force us into responding in certain ways…" (p. 429). When a teacher calls on a student, the student is expected to reply—usually in a certain manner. The response mechanism of most students becomes automatic.

Reflexive responses are not culturally atypical. For example, when we answer the telephone, rules of social discourse govern who will speak first:

> The first rule of telephone conversation in the United States is that the answerer speaks first. It does not have to be so. The rule could as easily be that the caller speaks first. That makes perfectly good sense, as it means that the one who calls is identified at once. Of course, *the American way* [italics mine] makes equally good sense in that callers are ensured that the receiver is at someone's ear before they start to speak. There are often several equally logical possibilities in conversation rituals, but any group may adopt just one of the possible alternatives. In other words, if we come across ways different from our own, we should not assume that "theirs" are any better or worse than "ours". (Chaika, 1985, p. 433).

As teachers, the challenge is to extend Chaika's notion of "their" and "our" way of answering the telephone to the classroom and encourage students not to conform to automatic, reflexive responses of hierarchical social discourse—especially important in multiethnic classrooms, where diverse social discourses, or "identity kits," to borrow from James Gee (2001), must be considered. Think of young Chinese women, for example, whose culture dictates docility (in my case they were Patti and Janet, pre-med students): They may never speak out at all. As teachers, we need to help our students understand and employ the rules of discourse that shape our *global* world without making them feel censored or repressed. One way of doing this is to reconstruct the paradigm that traditionally serves against classroom chaos: the rules of parliamentary procedure.

> *Writing with voice*
> *is writing into*
> *which someone*
> *has breathed*

We accept that the teacher is Chair, and the student must be recognized by the Chair in order to speak. Yes, thirty students calling out at once would disrupt the learning process. Yet although this is an extreme example, we might consider the frustration that mounts in the student who cannot speak because s/he has not been called upon. Consider the authority that teachers have to suppress students who have already had a "say" or who they may not want to hear from—the authority to sequester and squelch at will. I break students into discussion or project groups, step back (not too far), and listen. Note the shift in language style, what Gee calls "distinctive discourse markers"; perhaps "consume" a bit of youth speak: "That's mad beef in my hood," one student offered.

"Mad beef?" I queried from across the room. "What on earth is mad beef?" Smiles from my more reticent students; laughter pealing from others. For a moment I am the student ("mad beef in my hood," by the way, translates to "one of the worst things you can do in my neighborhood"). Although the physical classroom space, Room 311, for example, is the same, the social language of group discussion has freed us from the hierarchy of parliamentary procedure. As Gee astutely notes, "social languages are always integrally connected to…social activities" (2001, Social languages, para. 9).

Another dimension of authoritative power is the employment of Standard Edited English to further the hierarchical structure of the classroom, perpetuating the disparity between "theirs" and "ours." Teachers are regarded as the archetypes, the propagators, and the guardians of English; their job is to deliver their language to their students in *proper form*. Yet Dennis Baron points out in "The Myths of Teaching English" that "one reason why language instruction is felt to be central, yet perceived to be inefficient, is an educational philosophy that characterizes the teacher as an expert imparting knowledge to the student-novice." Baron further argues, "This may not be the most appropriate model for English language instruction, and it puts teachers in an unfair position" (1989, p. 49). The teacher is either the deliberate oppressor of free expression or an unwitting cohort in a grand scheme to sustain linguistic elitism by insisting on the employment of Standard English for all students.

Furthermore, the educational model of the English teacher as expert and students (especially those who have obtained mastery of their oral language skills) as language-based subordinates fosters a hierarchy that is detrimental to developing a writing voice. This voice can only be acquired through unbridled participation in the process of writing—by allowing oneself to be vulnerable and experiment with technique. Worse, many teachers who cling to the role of English expert are not writers themselves. How many English teachers actually play with the writing process, experimenting with language, syntax, and technique? Finally, teachers of English, due to the "curricular inadequacy" of their own training, "often

[have] no more than a smidgen of what might count as good linguistic or pedagogical theory" (Baron, 1989, p. 50). The language power of the teacher is, then, limited, too.

In writing about "Writing and Voice," Peter Elbow (1981) shows how this lessening of the teacher's linguistic power is further exacerbated through the anxieties that teachers suffer as experts and models:

> Real self. Real voice. I am on slippery ground here. There are layers and layers. For example, if I am teaching a class and feel very insecure or shaky, I am liable to compensate without even thinking about it and adopt a very confident and assured tone of voice. A student who knows me well might sense something fishy in my voice. (p. 293)

But what about the student who doesn't know the teacher well? That student only hears a pretense of subject mastery on the part of the teacher—a teacher afraid to show his or her weakness. This show of hollow aptitude is surely not an appropriate model, especially in the teaching of writing. The teacher plays the same game as the student: "See how smart I am!" Everyone is afraid to be vulnerable, and the learning process suffers.

Teacher vulnerability within the classroom setting would break down many of the hierarchical constraints that both students and teachers suffer. If we think of the "performance" aspect of teaching—of being "on" in the classroom—we can apply the actor's need for guileless accessibility as a prerequisite for success. In *Free to Act*, Mira Felner writes,

> The essence of acting is communication so it is important to recognize our personal inhibitions and work to let down blocks. Because of the difficult world in which we live, we learn to build elaborate systems of emotional defense. While this protects us from getting hurt, it impedes the communication process. Acting requires freedom; our feelings must be accessible to us so we can respond to the messages we receive from other actors. *Taking in* means allowing ourselves to be **vulnerable**. (1990, p. 106)

Actors learn that only after these defenses are let down can a character be developed and portrayed in a convincing manner. Similarly, only if writing teach-

ers and students let down their defenses can the ideal potential for power in their writing be realized. Teachers and students can begin to share their knowledge, experience, and their writing with one another.

In setting the groundwork for my own teaching at City College of the City University of New York, I open my syllabus with a quote from Peter Elbow: "The essential human act at the heart of writing is the act of giving" (1981, p. 20). Within a small workshop setting, we give and receive our writing to one another. I strive to establish a safe environment of fair and constructive criticism where we can share our work without the fear of being trounced upon. In brainstorming, for example, no *genuine* idea or design plan is a *bad* idea or plan. I've been known to come up with the silliest ideas myself, letting my students laugh with me, bringing home my point and alleviating their fear of suggesting something stupid. I share my own writing challenges, false starts, and criticism from editors.

Unfortunately, as demonstrated by Dennis Baron in his article, "Thank You for Sharing," the word *sharing*, itself, "has become diluted in its meaning" (1989, p. 98). Sharing has come to mean "what children do, or refuse to do, with their toys, or nations with their wealth…giving a piece of something to someone else…[and] whether material object or abstract idea of emotion—[sharing] is something valuable to the giver and something the receiver desires to have" (p. 98). Baron states that *sharing* has become a popular *buzz*word in religious, psychoanalytical, and educational circles—"a synonym for *tell*" (p. 98). Yet however clichéd the concept of sharing, the point is that we only share what we are confident about giving. Students will not freely give of their writing if they feel that their teacher does not wish to receive it. In this situation, the teacher cannot expect anything more from the student than cursory, "safe" work.

I remember when I was in high school and papers were due. The teachers for whom my classmates and I worked hardest were the ones who enthusiastically shared in our learning process— seeking more than just the end result— and who were willing to work along side

Photo: Giedrė Putnikaitė

of their students. Those teachers who were dispassionate about their students' work were the ones whose assignments were *banged out* the night before they were due—students adjusting margins and enlarging typeset to stretch two pages of prose into three, or padding paragraphs to meet the minimum number of words. I did the same thing—I was taught early on not to give more than what was required and/or wanted. I revised my work for punctuation and grammar usage, rather than for the formation and unfolding of my ideas. My priorities were to present my paper typed, double-spaced, and with a minimum of erasures and correction fluid, having checked my "topic sentences" and confirmed relatively smooth transitions from one topic to the next. Nothing more.

I try to remember what a drudge these papers were for me to write. And I try to remember the kindness of teachers who plodded through chicken scratch drafts with me, gently tending my progress. I always try to look behind the result of a paper, behind physical presentation, ever mindful of its substantial strengths and weaknesses. Yet, I must admit that I do give more time in reading the work of students who show that they have taken care—and a certain pride—in presenting that work to me. I try to rationalize my position by telling myself that part of my job is to prepare my students for the "real world," where how you deliver something is sometimes more important than

what you deliver. I catch myself frowning upon grammatical errors—wanting to stop the writing process and teach grammatical usage. Then I stop myself because I know that my students won't "learn" how to write from this method of teaching.

I have found that the forced teaching of grammatical rules as a prerequisite for expository writing actually hinders the writing process. "If we think seriously about *error* [italics mine]," writes Patrick Hartwell in "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar," "and its relationship to the worship of formal grammar study, we need to attempt some massive dislocation of our traditional thinking, to shuck off our hyperliterate perception of the value of formal rules, and to regain the confidence in the tacit power of unconscious knowledge that our theory of language gives us." Hartwell further points out that "most students, reading their writing aloud, will correct in essence all errors of spelling, grammar, and by intonation, punctuation, but usually without noticing that what they read departs from what they wrote" (1985, p. 7). Rather than teach students grammar, teachers would do better to let students self-correct, particularly in collaboration with each other, and, certainly, before an essay is to be handed in to the teacher.

But this practice requires the implementation of teaching writing as a series of recursive processes. And it requires a

willingness on the part of the teacher to "allow" *mistakes* in grammar, spelling, and explicitness—even support of a thesis—not absolutely, but initially, so that students can feel safe in developing their ideas before subjecting their work to academic scrutiny. The grammatically erroneous surface structure of student discourse should never impair a full fleshing out of the ideas behind the errors. We must give students the opportunity to work out their thoughts and their own style of presentation.

In his book, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (1990), Edward P.J. Corbett suggests:

> Just as the confusion between *grammar* and *rhetoric* could hamper an intelligent discussion of the effective use of language…[and] while it is generally true that we must possess grammatical competence before we can develop an effective style, "good grammar" does not invariably produce "good rhetoric." Nor does "bad grammar" invariably produce "bad rhetoric." (p. 382)

Corbett cites a statement given to a reporter by Bartolomeo Vanzetti in April 1927, from his prison cell, as he awaited execution:

> If it had not been for these thing, I might live out my life, talking at street corners to scorning men. I might have die, unmarked, unknown, a failure. Now we are not a failure. This is our career and our triumph. Never in our full life can we hope to do such work for tolerance, for justice, for man's understanding of man, as we do by an accident. (p. 383)

The eloquence and "power" of this statement is ever present in spite of grammatical errors—perhaps even in synergy with them.

But we, as English teachers, are trained to insist upon *flawless* prose. Our students, and the parents of our students, insist that we insist upon certain standards of language usage. The question is the extension of that insistence—what do we correct and how?

I've known writing instructors who "correct" a student's writing journal for misuses of grammar and idiom. I've seen first drafts of a student's work *red-marked* for spelling and punctuation. Students freeze at the sight of red ink; their ideas become subordinate to the constraints of their presentation, stifled and void of power. The teacher who insists upon "correcting" students' initial writings must take responsibility for crushing—and perhaps ultimately silencing—his or her students on paper.

Would it not be a better idea to allow our students the freedom to use language in such a way as to best facilitate their understanding of the world and the works of art, literature, and science that surround them? We could encourage our students to write in a manner that frees thought and language—giving them license to play with language, poetry, and prose. Mixing metaphors can be like mixing paints—trying to find the right color; playing hide-and-seek with euphemisms and clichés may be a student's way of cautiously searching for his or her own voice. In an informal and safe environment, all play is possible—the mess can be cleaned up later. "Go back to the circle, put away the red pen, and let's have fun with language."

But I'm still the teacher. I'm still the authority. I can't sidestep that role. So, how shall I deal with my authority?

In *Language and Power*, Norman Fairclough explores the general problem of socially designated authority in terms of the "social space" of the classroom and the "subject positions [the social roles of teachers and students] in schools" (1989, p. 38). Fairclough theorizes that a "discourse type" predetermines the subject position, and that what we do and say, within that subject position, follows the pre-established pattern. He further points out that teachers and students reproduce these roles through acting out these discursive positions:

> Occupying a subject position is essentially a matter of doing (or not doing) certain things, in line with the discoursal obligations of teachers and pupils—what each is allowed and required to say, within a particular discourse type…. But it is also the case in that occupying particular subject positions, teachers and pupils *reproduce* them; it is only through being occupied that these positions continue to be a part of the social structure (p. 38).

Therefore the habitually restrained discourse of the traditional classroom is self-propagating. If students and teachers were to make themselves vulnerable to one another, it would lessen the disparity

within this social structure. The teacher would become less of the authority, the student, less the novice. The "doing" would become more of an act of collaboration within the classroom setting and less of a signifier for role distinction.

Establishing a guileless classroom can easily begin with the implementation of some of the ideas that I have already mentioned: sitting in a circle; sharing drafts and journal entries (not only student drafts, but our own); allowing students to work through the revision process in collaboration; teaching grammar within the context of student writings, rather than by rote; nurturing the formation and organization of our students' ideas on paper; and by not being afraid to show our own weaknesses. When students feel comfortable and safe within the classroom, the self-conscious nature of the traditional subject position of teacher and student becomes transmutable, enabling authoritative power to shift easily between subject roles.

Not all students and teachers will feel comfortable with this shift of authority. Many students need a sense of exactness and may perceive this hierarchical shift as ambiguous. They know that the teacher is still ultimately in control (marking red letter grades on their papers) and may feel that any move away from the traditional classroom structure is charade-like and disconcerting. These students tend to perpetuate their role as academic inferiors through the act of subordinate discourse within the classroom—*spitting back* to the teacher only what they think the teacher wants to hear. In actuality most students do remain in the subordinate position, and most teachers are not willing to relinquish their authority and acquiesce to the destabilization of classroom hierarchy.

The reluctance to surrender control is not unique to the classroom teacher. In general, all human discourse is contingent upon a hierarchical structure, as exemplified in the following interview between a policeman (P) and a witness (W) (also cited by Norman Fairclough in his text):

(1) P: Did you get a look at the one in the car?
(2) W: I saw his face, yeah.
(3) P: What sort of age was he?
(4) W: About 45. He was wearing a…
(5) P: And how tall?
(6) W: Six foot one.
(7) P: Six foot one. Hair?
(8) W: Dark and curly…
(9) P: …What about his clothes?
(10) W: He was a bit scruffy-looking, blue trousers, black…
(11) P: Jeans?
(12) W: Yeah.

The relationship between the police officer and the witness is unequal, at best. The witness is subordinate to the officer, the officer taking no care to appease the witness by any means. Note the method of reduced questioning, of not having the time to take care; note how the witness is cut off mid-sentence (line 4), the interviewer not yet ready to consider the perpetrator's manner of dress; note how the witness is again cut off in line 10.

How often do we cut off our students? How often do our students freeze up and cease speaking at any wince or utterance that we, as teachers, may make? In a later chapter on "Discourse and Power," Fairclough deals with the social constraints, which pertain to speech patterns in terms of excessive social formality. I wonder if this formality lends itself to the hushing of students in the wake of a teacher's voice—the authority of the venerated teacher. Certainly, striving for formality strains everyone's diction and lends itself to grammatical hypercorrection, bringing us full circle in our concerns about authority and guardianship of the English language.

The focal point in the teaching of writing should be to help students make sense on paper—present their ideas in a logical, intelligent, and impassioned manner. And this should be the focal point of a teacher's assessment of student writing. Karen L. Greenberg supports this idea in an essay on "Assessing Writing: Theory and Practice." Greenberg lists ten writing tasks that students need to master:

[1] Select and limit a subject
[2] Formulate and clarify ideas
[3] Develop a logical way of organizing ideas
[4] Locate and synthesize adequate supporting material
[5] Create and evaluate rhetorical structures appropriate to the subject and readers
[6] Make paragraphs coherent
[7] Adapt syntax to fit intended purpose and readers

[8] Adapt diction to fit intended purpose and readers

[9] Edit the writing to conform to the conventions of academic use and mechanics

[10] Document any citations or references according to the appropriate style manual

We notice the order in which these tasks are presented: Formulating and clarifying ideas is foremost to editing in accordance to academic standards; writers must be able to have the freedom to organize their ideas before worrying about whether or not those ideas are expressed in "coherent" paragraphs.

Making sense on paper—the challenge of all writers: students, teachers, amateurs, and professionals—is a common denominator for bridging the hierarchical disparity within the writing classroom. Teachers should write with their students, allowing themselves to be vulnerable, while at the same time setting the model for a criterion of composition that otherwise may seem to be arbitrarily imposed. Through collaborative acts, such as writing and revision, the interaction between teacher and student becomes as meaningful as the subject matter being imparted and received. Furthermore, the subject role of the teacher is then open to redefinition in light of that collaborative process: Teachers who are willing to work alongside their students become socialized within the classroom setting—almost peer-like.

In her impassioned essay, "Cyborg Pedagogy in Cyborg Culture," Carmen Luke insists, "As we are all being pushed onto the on-ramps of the information superhighway…it is crucial for educators at all levels of schooling to take charge of reshaping curriculum and pedagogy in relation to IT" (1999, pp. 69–72). A given in our world of high technology. So why, from Freire and Elbow to Corbett and Gee, are we still fussing about something as seemingly straightforward as classroom procedure?

The answer is simple: We need to break down the hierarchical system of education in order to regain the respect of our students and free them to learn and to write. Voice is honesty. Power plays, masked insecurities, and the flaunting of one's intellect are not honest efforts to communicate or to teach. Real language power stems from an honest voice, nourished in a safe environment, which embraces vulnerability and accepts differences—cultural, dialectical, and academic. The acquisition of freedom through language is a result of that power. Thus we, as teachers, must rethink our hierarchical positions within the classroom, and enable our students to empower themselves through their writing.

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Reflections

Nothing to Read

Tinatin Valiyeva (Student)

Editor's note: *For centuries the Azeri language was written in Arabic script, but during the past 80 years the alphabet has been changed four times. In the mid-1920s the country adopted a Latin-based script, a decision based on both linguistic and political considerations. In 1939 Stalin imposed the Cyrillic alphabet on the Azeris and other Turkic nationalities. Finally, in 1991, Azerbaijan rejected both Soviet rule and the Cyrillic alphabet, and returned to the Latin alphabet.*

All these changes have complicated access to national cultural and historical knowledge, as written records have either been destroyed, are no longer "politically correct," or are simply unreadable to younger generations. For additional information, see www.AZER.com (search for "alphabet").

I had no idea that the alphabet was being changed. I was only five years old at the time and what did I know? When I went to school, I started out learning Azeri Latin. I didn't have any difficulties simply because it was my first alphabet.

The biggest headache for me today is that there are not many books published in Latin. I want to read more and more books, but I can't find any. Sometimes it seems like my generation has been completely forgotten by the adults. When they were growing up, they had all kinds of books to read in Cyrillic. They could learn all they wanted, but we don't have this kind of opportunity. It's amazing that so many years have passed since the adoption of the new alphabet, and yet we hardly have any books published in Latin, to say nothing of newspapers and magazines.

Thank God we started to learn Russian in school, so now I have learned the Cyrillic alphabet. Of course, Cyrillic was a bit difficult for me to get used to, but I knew I had to learn it if I wanted to grow up to be clever and intelligent.

My parents studied Cyrillic in school, but my two sisters and I started school learning the Latin script. At first I remember my parents had a hard time with Latin. When they would watch television, they would ask us kids what this or that meant. My grandmother still uses me as her "interpreter" when we walk around the city. She asks me to "translate" all the signs and whatever is written in Azeri Latin.

The best thing about the Latin alphabet is that it looks like English and other major (European) alphabets and so once we master it, foreign language scripts come easy.

All of these changes are good of course, but I'm really concerned about my future. Will we have to use Cyrillic books at the Institute, too? Why not publish more books in Latin? For kids my age, it's rare to see any book, novel, or story written in Azeri Latin.

I remember how several years ago one of my relatives brought me a book by Alexandre Dumas from Turkey. The novel was translated into Turkish, in Latin script. Though I don't know Turkish as well as Azeri, at least I know the Latin alphabet. Thank God our languages have a lot in common. I read that book with such great enthusiasm and then passed it along to some of my classmates. They were really surprised to see such a colorful book in Latin. We all wished that we could have books like that published in Azerbaijan. That would be such a wonderful day.
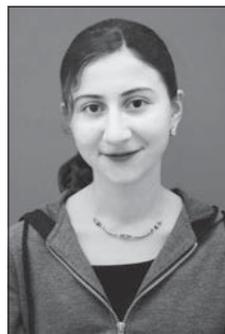
Tinatin Valiyeva (born in 1986) is in the eighth grade and studies in the Azeri track. Azeri is her mother tongue and the language that is used most often in her home. She also knows some Russian and some English.

Reflections

Publishing in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Muhamed Sarajlic

Before 1992, Bosnia and Herzegovina was one of the six republics of the former Yugoslavia. Each republic had at least one specialized publisher for textbooks and several publishers for other literature. Some houses published both textbooks and literature. Publishing was done in all the languages of the former Yugoslavia, and there were no linguistic, commercial, or content-related barriers in the market. Then came the war, first in Slovenia, then in Croatia, and then in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The former Yugoslavian republics became independent states, and political and economic divisions sprang up.

> *There is too much divisive content and too little integrative bridge-building*

After the war (which lasted from 1992 to 1996), publishing in Bosnia and Herzegovina significantly diminished due to the ravages of conflict and the reduced market. After the Dayton agreement, another question arose: What to publish and for which population? One problem was the choice of content and writers. The choice of books depends mainly on ethnic identity. Another problem was the market: Which part of the reduced market could consume what kind of literature, especially in view of the concept of ethnic and religious identity? Since the three main religions in the country wish to dominate certain parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, each of them influences, through political parties, the choice of writers and books.

The Experience vs. Principles

Where does literature for children fit in here? There are several points that were very important about publishing in Bosnia and Herzegovina during and after the war. During the war, many people used to write stories, novels, or diaries just to keep their intellect active. The most famous book from this period is *Zlata's Diary* (*Le journal de Zlata,* by Zlata Filipovic; Paris: Fixot et editions Robert Laffont, 1993; trans. Christina Pribichev-ich-Zoric, New York: Viking Penguin, 1994). This is a story of living in Sarajevo through the war as seen by a 10-year-old girl. At the same time, there were new small publishers who tried to publish such books. For such publishing, donations were provided through different humanitarian organizations, or for some of them through political parties, which were in power at this time. Thus arose a situation in which there were more than 500 publishers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They were dubbed the "one-book publishers." After the war most of them just disappeared or changed their business interest. *Zlata's Diary* could have been one of those books, as these publishers had neither experience in commercial publishing nor any idea how to exploit the potential for royalties, international sales, and contracts. Fortunately, the family took over the contact with a foreign publisher.

More serious publishers tried to survive in the market by publishing commercially viable books, which would be profitable but not very expensive. At a stroke, this compromise eliminated quality illustrations from books, as they are very expensive to produce. In the last

two years, some publishers focused on titles like the stories from Kur'an, Bible stories, or stories from contemporary life related to certain religious events or dates like Bayram, Christmas, etc. The former Yugoslav society was based on Marxist doctrine, which had no place for religion. All literature for children taught in schools had realist content, or was fiction unrelated to religion. Recently, publishers became interested in publishing religious books as the general view of religion changed. However, there is currently no scholarship on such literature, either about the texts or about the illustrations.

At this moment, it can be said that the publishers will continue to follow their commercial interests in book publishing, and, depending on the political situation, there will be more books for children to help them understand and appreciate their cultural, historical, and religious background. Scholarly analysis will come later.

Cover art by Vanda Blazevic-Babovic. Tesanj: Planjax, 1998.

Cover art by Hasan Fazlic. Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1997.

Dayton, Curricula, and Publishing

The Dayton peace agreement in December 1995 ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It established two entities, and educational functions were delegated to the entities' governments. On the national level of Bosnia and Herzegovina, much power rests with the Office of High Representative (OHR), established by the European Union to help in building a normal political environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, so that the people of the country ultimately can assume responsibility for governing themselves. OHR has the mandate to introduce laws in any sphere related to restoring normal life in the country. However, initially education was not viewed as an instrument of rebuilding the peace. Therefore, each canton in

the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska, got their own ministries of education with their own curricula. This led to a great differentiation of curricula, and thus divisions between children in terms of schooling to add to other contemporary differences.

A UNESCO Working Group reported in Heidelberg in 1999 the existence of curricula focused on a "national group" of subjects in primary and secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The analysis of the situation, curricula, school system, etc., led to the conclusion that there was too much division in teaching language, history, geography, and music. Each nation has its own views on the language it speaks (whether it is Bosnian, Serbian, or Croatian), and on contemporary history (was this war an aggression, a civil war, or a war of liberation?). To remedy this situation, the OHR analyzed the textbooks used in schools. This analysis showed that there is too much divisive content and too little integrative bridge-building. The textbooks contained aspects that would be provocative for people with a different national or religious background. The OHR made a report on all the textbooks published in both entities from 1993 to 1997 and ordered the removal of such contents from them.

In this period the only textbook publishers were the Ministries of Education in both entities. No other publishers were allowed to publish textbooks. After 1997, the Federal Ministry of Education decided to allow other publishers to publish textbooks. They announced a bidding process for textbooks written according to the new curriculum and to the report made by the OHR. But the Ministry kept

the revision of textbooks under its super-vision, and crucially, they put a cap on the price of textbooks depending on grade level and print run, so the price varies between 4.5 and 13 German marks. This policy left the publishers in a dilemma.

The publishers discerned the postwar problems. A Publishers' Association was established; immediately after the war there were about 500 registered publish-ers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but nowadays there are only 30 in the Asso-ciation. This clearly illustrates dimin-ished interest in publishing. Publishers are free to offer textbooks on the market through bookstores or through schools, but as the prices are low, this is not very profitable. The Publishers' Association has no influence on textbook publishing and prices.

Serious publishers are struggling to keep their share of the book market. Take as an example the case of Svjetlost publishing company. Svjetlost Serajevo is a publisher of literature (contemporary and classic, domestic and translated, scientific and essayistic), textbooks, and teaching aids for all educational levels from nursery schools to university. This publishing company was established 50 years ago and, before the war, was one of the leading publishing companies in former Yugoslavia with about 500 titles per year.

During the blockade of Sarajevo, its entire stock, which remained in the occupied territory, with all the books and textbooks from the publishing program, worth about 32,000,000 German Marks, was destroyed. The main building in the city center, where management and editorial functions are located, was severely damaged. In the period from 1992 to 1995, produc-tion fell sharply compared to the period before the war. Currently, conditions for continuing work have improved. Syjetlost has managed to keep almost all its employees who are important for the publishing process (editors, lan-guage reviewers, technical reviewers, illustrators, and other staff), and it has started to expand production. Its main problem is the lack of investment capital. But the production plan shows that again a great number of titles (about 200) have been prepared for

publishing. These include textbooks from school curricula, as well as addi-tional literature—required reading for schools, fiction, dictionaries, manuals, etc. The number of textbooks submitted for bids in the Ministry of Education shows the main interest and strength of Svjetlost as a publishing company. At the first bid, there were a total of 150 manuscripts, 130 of them submitted by Svjetlost; at the second bid there were about 100 manuscripts from all publish-ers, 80 of them submitted by Syjetlost.

The production of such a large number of textbooks can increase revenue and thus allow for the publish-ing of books that are not related to the classroom. This is the part of the market for which some interest still exists, but there are few interesting titles. Authors are struggling to find the best formula for that part of the market. Their inter-est is to publish their books and over-come the problems with language, local interests, etc., through the quality of their work.

It seems that the future of publishing is brighter. The OHR is working on a com-mon curriculum for all of Bosnia and Herzegovina, so the market will be increased in the area of textbooks as well as in the area of required and suggested reading in schools. All pupils will have to read books by authors from all over the country. There are many open questions about how to find the common themes in literature for children, which could help them find ways to cooperate. One way could be the introduction of projects like Common Themes in European Children's Literature in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I believe that there will be great interest in such projects on the part of teachers and pupils.

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Reflections

Multiculturalism and Political Correctness in Children's Books: A View from India

Sandhya Rao

Like a lot of things that have come into India from the West, the terms "multiculturalism" and "political correctness" have come into the world of children's books—late. So that now, when a lot of fuss has been made and dust raised about them in the West, we in India are only just beginning to see them as issues. For some of us, these are very important questions that need to be addressed immediately. For the majority, however, they are merely long afterthoughts. There is probably no more multicultural nation in the world than India, given the number of racial types, languages and dialects spoken, organized and unorganized religions practiced, and cultures represented. And as for point of view, the joke is: one plus one Indian makes eleven opinions! In this climate, therefore, the multiculturalism and political correctness debate cannot go along the same lines as it does in the West. Lines are nearly impossible to draw because there are more exceptions than rules.

This leads to the question: When we create books for children, which children do we address? The middle- and upper-middle-class English-speaking children who go to school in cities and towns? Rural children who go to one-room, no-roof shacks with one teacher who almost never turns up? Children attending elitist residential schools? Poorer children who are eager to go to school and whose parents are eager, too, so that their children may at least have one full meal by way of the noon meal incentive scheme in some states in India? Who?
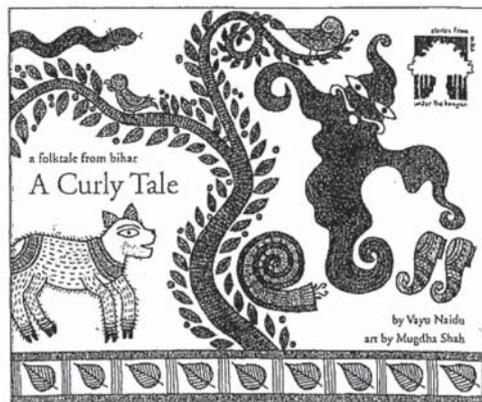
Seen in this context, the definition of multiculturalism as an effort to reflect the real world of varied people and cultures, or at least to help children find their own space in books, takes on new meaning. And political correctness? That is even more difficult. Different things have different meanings to different people in different cultures, regions, religions, and so on. Where do you draw the lines? Or rather, how do you cross them, obliterate them? The easy way is to pretend they don't exist.

There is very little study of children's literature in India save the odd dissertation often based on stereotypical ideas. So we have no way of judging; we have no parameters with which to examine children's books. Somehow, books for children are still not considered important enough for critical examination and evaluation. This is why we often first look to the West for models of multiculturalism and political correctness before we realize that no, those systems and standards don't apply in quite the same way. India as a mosaic of cultural representations must be reflected in the books. Where one rule can apply in one book, it cannot in another.

For instance, Hazel Rochman discusses Virginia Hamilton's work in her book *Against Borders: Promoting Books for a Multicultural World,* explaining how she once was on a committee that selected Hamilton as the U.S. nominee for the international Hans Christian Andersen award. Some said she didn't have a chance "because foreigners wouldn't understand her, wouldn't read her, wouldn't translate her…too difficult, too idiomatic, too local, they said. They were wrong. She won" (Chicago and London: ALA Books/Booklist, 1993, p. 25).

This notion of being too local, too idiomatic, too difficult is something we encounter with Western publishers and distributors all the time. The responses to Indian books range from "lovely picture, alien story," to "the English is funny," to "too culturally removed." Removed from and alien for whom, we may ask. For children, who clearly revel in stories of the unfamiliar—dinosaurs from a strange past, aliens from wherever…? Perhaps adult minds tend to judge from conditioned adult perspectives on behalf of children, whereas, left to themselves, children are naturally multicultural beings—comfortable with the familiar, yet quite accepting of the strange.

Interestingly, we once had some Sri Lankan distributors wanting some of our Tamil titles, but they had problems with the language. They said the Tamil used in Sri Lanka was a little different and suggested we change it to suit their needs. Surprisingly—and happily for us—they later got back saying they were willing to go along with the Indian Tamil because they felt it was time their children started reading other kinds of Tamil too! Sometimes, looking for simi-larities can kill a thing, while appreciating differences can make a work live. This was the case here. Take a book we did early in our publishing life: *Ekki Dokki* (Chennai: Tulika Publishers, 1996), a classic folktale about two sisters—one with one hair, one with two. Eventually, the girl with one hair gets lots of hair, the girl with two loses both, but they all live happily ever after. The objection in the U.K. was that showing a bald child would upset the feelings of children on chemotherapy for cancer. For a while we were stunned. Had we gone completely wrong? Then, upon reflection we realized that maybe that was their perception. In the Indian context, shaving the head is commonplace, connected with various rituals and beliefs, even the belief that doing it to children encourages more luxuriant hair growth! Then along came someone who had had a long battle with cancer herself and simply pooh-poohed the suggestion of it being hurtful. But it took that long for us to understand not to go by Western notions and that it is time the West understands us too.

It is the same with illustrations. We have come across comments from Western publishers to the effect that "nice books but the pictures are not Indian"—meaning of course, not their vision of "Indian." Too often, these publishers will change pictures around, change the color scheme to what they think it should be to fit preconceived notions, often leading to a completely wrong perspective. As far as illustrations go, only Mughal or Miniature style is "Indian"; nothing else is. Sorry, but maybe we know better! Then again, merely reiterating what one already knows doesn't make something multicultural or politically correct.
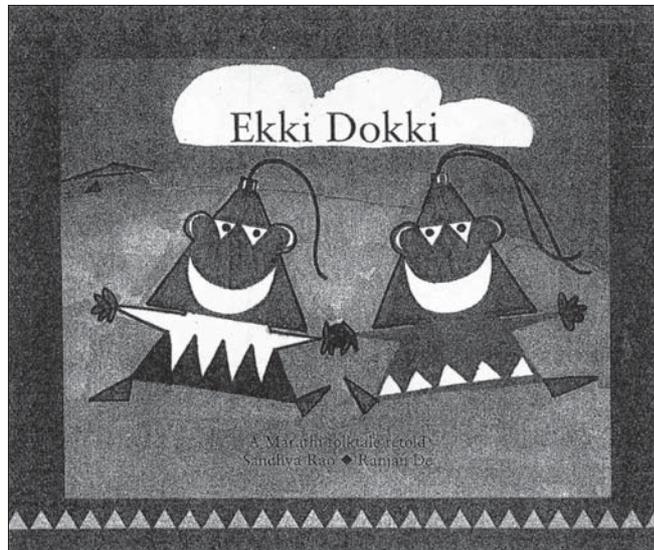
We cry ourselves hoarse in India, and to all those outside who will care to listen, that children here have for years been reading all about scones and chocolate eclairs, meringues and tongue sandwiches, pixies and gnomes, oak trees and ginger ale, perhaps not technically understanding all of it, but enjoying the books immensely. Loving them, in fact. All of us grew up on a diet of mainly imported British books. Anyone who has worked with children knows how naturally and easily they absorb what seems alien and strange to adults. It is a pity that adults decide what children read and impose narrow taboos on the kinds of books that may be written for them, instead of recognizing children's instinctive ability to live comfortably with the diversities that surround them.

Children extend their imaginations to include all possibilities, questions asked and answers sought. The difference is, they believe in the world they visit. When that is the case, who are we to determine which worlds they may and may not people?

These are the dangers Isaac Bashevis Singer warned of when he said, "In our time, literature is losing its address" (*When Shlemiel Went to Warsaw*, 1969, opening note, New York, Farrar). In the great race to be all things to all persons, we run the risk of being nothing to anybody. Books produced in India will, indeed must, reflect the Indian ethos in all its layers, moods, and complexities. Others reading these books must simply try to understand, just as Indian children try to understand the fine undercurrents of being black in the United States of America, or young Zlata writing her diary while Sarajevo is being bombed. Singer reminds us that we often come close to losing our sense of place and identity and, as a result, we are losing our voices.

Singer makes another equally valid statement: "Unknown words don't stop the child, a boring story will" (*Children's Literature 6*, 1977, pp. 13–14). That then is the crux. If the voice is true and if it calls with passion and appeal, readers will listen. It doesn't matter that they don't understand each word and punctuation mark. Do we understand every single thing in every single book we read? It's the same with books for children.

This is the way we in India understand multiculturalism and political correctness. Talking about something in one culture may be completely unacceptable in another, but that's okay. One of our authors, Cathy Spagnoli, once wrote to us about how American publishers were very touchy about body functions but the Japanese were not at all:

> Japanese children's books have for years included folktales with references to excrement, urine and so on. I used to be fascinated as a teller in Japan to watch other storytellers, often elegant librarians or stiff-looking businessmen, tell tale after tale about passing gas and how urine became a river and so on. Audiences loved them. I could never do that in the United States and the few times I have tried such tales I've had school principals giving me a talking to!

Stretching the point further, poet, translator, folklorist, and scholar A.K. Ramanujan believes that such stories were in fact part of the traditional toilet-training process for children, told to them while on the job, just as Indian folklore wove in "tales of passion and trouble, told to children by their grandmothers and servants as the dusk descends" (Radhika Menon, "Are There Taboos in Children's Literature?" paper presented at the Delhi Book Fair, February, 2000). These tales involved issues that may not meet the standards of correctness in children's books today—issues which, however, were commonly encountered by children living in large extended families. Stories have a way of speaking of what cannot usually be spoken, and these tales were tools to help children deal with the complexities of the world they lived in.

The correctness, then, comes in the manner of telling, not by imposing taboos. Books must reflect the people, the times, and things the way they are. Good books write about them easily, tinge them gently with color. In a lovely short story for children, "Clear Sky" (*One World*, Chennai: Tulika Publishers, 1998, pp. 9–16, translated from Tamil), feminist writer Ambai raises questions about existing gender and caste disparities. A reading of the story at a university seminar once led

to a heated discussion about including issues like caste in children's books. "These are bad things. Why talk about them and reinforce these in the minds of children who may not know about them at all?" ran one argument. The response was that others in the room had been at the receiving end of caste discrimination and children must surely be made aware that it is still happening today. Now, if children in the U.S. and the U.K. will not understand this, we must help them understand, just as issues of racial tensions and anti-Semitic feelings are understood by cultures that don't experience them.

A corollary to these issues is the question of who is qualified to write about a particular culture: only someone from within, or anyone who is sensitive and understands? The latter has its pitfalls, and the writer can be more vulnerable to criticism simply by virtue of being an outsider. But to restrict a writer on these grounds would be a pity, for a good writer can well overcome all such barriers. The onus is on publishers to verify authenticity of facts and tone, to see if a story rings true. It is also their responsibility to ensure that books claiming to be multicultural are truly so—not merely European, African, and Asian faces put together on the same page. But publishing, too, is a business, driven by global market forces, by the ideas of whoever holds sway at the time. Power is glamorous, and more likely to attract and influence than the other way round, even in the case of books read by children.

This is the imbalance that has to be corrected. We must ensure that multiculturalism does not emerge as another face of cultural imperialism. Only when there is a flow of books and ideas freely the world over can there be true multiculturalism. An acceptance of this would automatically unshackle political correctness from the rigidity in which it is held. The good news is that this is indeed happening, if in a small way. A review of a set of Indian folktales published by us—and modified in no way for non-Indian readers—carried in the *School Library Journal* of North America (Angela J. Reynolds, November 1998, p. 70) says, "The result is a cultural lesson that entertains and enlightens…. The stories have a familiar ring to them, but a distinct Indian tone that transports listeners to faraway lands." And again, the same story that was once rejected by some as too culturally removed evoked the response: "…a delightful, humorous creation story from the Bhilala tribe in Madhya Pradesh, a state in central India…. Accompanying this lively tale with its understated wit are primitive, stylized illustrations in bold primary and secondary colors on a rich tan background…it is a real treat to have this charming tale from an area not always represented in folklore collections" (Diane S. Marton, *School Library Journal*, July 1999, p. 89).

Clearly, multi-way understanding is essential and possible, too. While adults may have to consciously work at it, the advantage with children is that they are naturally open and will understand. Conducting a workshop for Tulika recently on writing for children, Suniti Namjoshi, one of Tulika's authors, beautifully encapsulated this expansive idea when she spoke of cyberspace as really a form of "common cultural space," a space shared not by computers but by human minds. With the Internet well on its way to becoming yet another medium in the evolution of storytelling, cultural flexibility and understanding become that much more important. To then put children in straitjackets would be to handicap them. We must free their minds.

Sandhya Rao is an editor with Tulika Publishers, Chennai, one of very few children's publishing houses in India; she also writes for children. She had spent many years in mainstream journalism before hitching her bullock cart to this star…it has been a deeply enriching and humbling experience to know how little it takes to make children happy and how much actually needs to be done.

Lessons

From Music to Culture: Developing Critical Thinking in Music Appreciation Class

Galina Muromtseva

A terrible indifference toward classical music has developed in our society in recent years. As a teacher of music appreciation in both high school and college, I see my main objective as helping students discover for themselves the rich and varied world of musical thought: complex and at the same time simple, familiar yet ever new. Classical music puts us in touch with the past and helps us understand the present and the future. By examining the development of the musical arts, we can follow the course of history. By contemplating a musical composition, we can discover a whole world for ourselves, and define our relationship to that world.

> *Music puts the process of interpretation into the foreground, front and center*

When we listen to music, we do not merely experience sounds (from the point of view of physics), we experience **ourselves.** Learning to listen means learning to hear. If we translate music into words, to answer the question, "What is this music saying?" we are only trying to guess, rather than actually listening. Yet in order to experience something new, we must hear something new. Then we can come to our own understanding, rather than repeating someone else's interpretation. I listen to music, and it tells me something about myself. This fact is more important than knowing the name of the composer or the title of the piece. Because certain teachers distrust a child's interpretation of a musical work, they have to impose a certain interpretation, to channel the children's perceptions in accordance with certain ideas or viewpoints. This sort of attitude toward musical interpretation causes the children to follow the musical content as outlined by the teacher, and search for confirmation of the structural-expressive scenario that has been laid out for them. Such an approach contradicts the very essence of musical art. The interpretation of music always depends on the individual, on his personal qualities and distinctive characteristics. Therefore it is impossible to set exact limits on how students should interpret a piece, and for all practical purposes it is impossible to establish exact criteria for evaluating musical interpretation. And is it even really necessary? The primary task here is to teach the students to follow their **own** interpretation-feeling-understanding of a musical composition. What is important is that the student comes to relate the musical field (where the composer has established a structural-expressive scenario and a certain spectrum of moods and emotions) with his own emotional and intellectual reactions evoked by the music. That is why people often say that appreciating music means enjoying the opportunity to perceive its most profound meanings—to hear and understand the tonal and structural composition of the musical field.

Listening to music can be a dynamic form of musical activity, and in order for this occur the listening should include the three components of forward motion: motivation, development, and conclusion.

Thus active listening should include these three phases, which can be also expressed from the point of view of the RWCT model:

Motivation	preparation-**precommunication** (focusing)	*Evocation*
Development	listening-**communication** (active interpretation)	*Realization of Meaning*
Conclusion	Reflection-**postcommuication** (output)	*Reflection*

Unfortunately, the idea of explicit musical interpretation is often reduced to recounting the contents of the music, memorizing the title and composer, and listing the expressive devices used. Under these circumstances the words actually become the subject of the interpretation, imperceptibly taking the place of the music itself. In this situation we must remind ourselves that language cannot express the full range of thought and meaning embodied in a work of art. Language only provides direction for the creative interpretation of a musical work.

Currently I offer a course in "Musical Culture" at a teacher's college and also teach music in a school. Observing my students, and reflecting on my observations, I am always asking myself: How can I set up an encounter with a piece of music so that the listener is enabled to work out a thoughtful interpretation for himself, to discover his own meaning in the music? In such a situation, the important thing for the teacher to do is not to instruct the students, but rather to create conditions in which students can discover and observe things for themselves, in connection with the music and the world around them. Focusing on the musical development of children necessitates rejecting many stereotypes of pedagogical thinking. For example, the teacher must approach the music along with the child, in accordance with the nature of the child and the nature of art.

As a preliminary result of my reflection on these matters, I would like to propose a possible model for working with musical texts.

Motivation—precommunication stage
What are we trying to achieve?

Anticipation of connecting with a certain time period or setting. A mood of readiness to listen and perceive. Shifting our attention away from ourselves to focus on the sounds, in preparation for hearing something new.

How can it be achieved?

Through
- The language of others (work with source documents: letters, diaries, music theory writings)
- Dialogues (interviews): "How did you spend your day today? What did you experience?"
- Reading poetic texts (with very personal content, requiring careful listening).

Commentary: Music puts the process of **interpretation** into the foreground, front and center. The world of the listener enters into the world of the composer, and becomes an essential part of it. The interpretation of serious music is a demanding and complex creative endeavor. Our response to musical art involves not simply a broadening of our perspective, but a renewal of our souls— a transformation of our views, our way of life, our behavior. The process of interpretation is connected with the ability to perceive the surrounding world, and mankind, in the richly varied spectrum of musical sound. No other art form demands—or serves to develop— this ability to listen in such a focused and attentive way.

Development—communication
What are we trying to achieve?

Listening in order to perceive something new involves working with the artistic text on three levels: physical (factual), emotional, and aesthetic.
1. Under the heading of "musical facts" we can include information about instrumentation, tempo, dynamics, and tone color (cool, warm, dense timbres).
2. The emotional level includes description of the character of a musical work, perceived moods and emotions.
3. The spontaneous interpretation of music is connected with experiences. When the experiences "come together," an idea is formed, and then we set off on an active search for ideas.

How can it be achieved?

1. Having listened to an initial musical excerpt, we collect facts by brainstorming (so we need not be distracted by them as we proceed). The teacher makes sure that everyone who wants to has a chance to participate, and that all the facts of the music (or more specifically, its superficial characteristics) have been noted.

2. Having listened to a second excerpt, we describe the emotional tone of the music by means of keywords. At this point the students write a five-minute essay: "Hearing this music, I feel that…" "The mood this music conveyed to me was…" The teacher may also suggest that they write a cinquain (the following example was written by sixth grader Olga Zhichkina):

> A melody
> Simple and profound
> Arrives, enters, and lives.
> Like a solitary bird,
> It sings in my soul.

3. For the third, longest musical excerpt, we make use of a dual-entry diary, filling in the left-hand side:

Ideas I heard in the music
Fierce struggle and Man's downfall
Victory of Light over Darkness
Inevitability of Fate

Other methods may also be used for working with meaning at this stage.

Commentary: The listener will not be capable of interpreting entirely new material unless he or she has reached a particular stage of development and acquired a set of essential skills. Working with music, we must keep in mind that it is possible to proceed by specific steps through the various levels of interpretation. The listener cannot stop at the factual stage, as the simple collection of facts will not lead to actual knowledge. The question is, how quickly can one make the transition to the next level of interpretation, and on what does this transition depend? There is no single recipe for this process. Each of the stages is one step along a continuous path, leading toward the aesthetic idea. The path cannot be traversed in a single lesson, or even in a single year. My proposed activities for each stage are based on the presumption that the listeners are adequately prepared, and capable of moving fairly quickly through the stages of interpretation. Timing must always be taken into account, which is to say that students will not hear and feel

Ideas I heard in the music	Interpretation
Fierce struggle and Man's downfall	Struggle always entails loss. It is not limited to war—Man may also engage in struggle during peacetime, to defend his point of view, for example.
Victory of Light over Darkness	Beethoven describes the victory of Light. I felt this very clearly in the music. But the composer lived long ago. Nowadays Light doesn't always win. The forces of Darkness are very strong. A great deal of Light is required to defeat them.
Inevitability of Fate	I don't think that Man must submit to his Fate. He has a great deal of strength that he can use to live as he chooses, to strive toward his goals.

everything, but only what they are ready for. The rest will just go past them, without leaving a trace. Therefore it is useless to try to "drag" a student prematurely to a higher level of musical consciousness.

At this stage it is less important to get answers from the students than to notice what questions they find intriguing and exciting.

Reflection—post communication
What are we trying to achieve?

The desired conclusion is reflection on the music we have heard and understood. New content, in the form of ideas and feelings, is assimilated, made one's own. We interpret the music as we have felt, understood, and received it. "The composer wants to speak to me through this music. What is there here, so meaningful for him, that can also become meaningful for me? Can it have meaning for everyone?"

How can it be achieved?

Here we return to the dual-entry diary, and complete the right-hand side. The reader can probably easily guess that the subject of this lesson was Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

Commentary: It is very difficult to elaborate on a specific conceptual form with aesthetic feelings and impressions, to transform these feelings into knowledge and fix them in the students' consciousness using analogies and ideas that are already familiar to them. But acquiring and comprehending new information in music classes can never be allowed to turn into a narrowly didactic process of immersion in music theory. We are now seeking new paths, connected with the ways in which children come to comprehend the world, and are introduced to human values, through Art. The philosophical underpinnings of the RWCT program make us cognizant of the ideas behind instructional activities, of the actual teaching and learning process. RWCT methods allow us to create the conditions for profound personal interpretation of a musical work, the world surrounding it, and Man's place in that world. This approach to the problems of listening to music allows us to broaden the very concept of interpreting musical ideas, and by comprehending a musical composition as a work of art we come to a better understanding of what is significant and valued in the culture.

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Lessons

Using Commercial Advertisements to Teach Critical Thinking

Susan J. Behrens and Leslie Levin

Critical thinking skills are an important part of today's school curricula (Kurland, 1995). At our institution, an undergraduate college, critical thinking skills are explicitly taught through three courses on writing, research, and public speaking. In addition, students learn to hone their critical thinking skills as they pursue courses in other disciplines.

We are language and business instructors and have been interested in how linguistic and marketing concepts can be used to teach critical thinking. For this reason, we developed an interdisciplinary course in which students examine business language to understand how companies shape consumers' perceptions of their image. We chose business language, specifically advertising, because it is an integral part of our modern, demand-driven economy and a form of discourse with which students are very familiar. Furthermore, students benefit from a linguistic analysis of business communication, particularly advertising, because it enables them to better evaluate the reality behind the company's corporate image.

The pervasiveness of advertising language is noted by the international renown of such commercial jingles and slogans as "Just Do It" (Nike), "You Deserve a Break Today" (McDonald's), and "Things Go Better with Coke" (Coca Cola). In addition, advertisements work well as a beginning "text" in the business classroom, for they start with the familiar. Later, other forms of business communication are introduced into our readings. We believe that by analyzing print and broadcast advertising, with an eye to language manipulation, students develop an increased sensitivity to language, a critical eye for marketing communications, and improved writing and reasoning skills.

The theoretical foundation for this course rests on concepts from the fields of linguistics and business. Knowledge of basic theory is necessary for students to intelligently analyze the advertising material. Students read about media discourse analysis, which focuses on the linguistic devices that contribute to coherence in a text and how authors alter their language to suit the audience (Brown & Yule, 1983). We also cover the linguistic areas of semantics (word choice), syntax (grammatical structure), figurative language (metaphors and similes), and gender differences in language. Business concepts include integrated marketing communications, in which a company carefully coordinates all its advertising and promotion to deliver a clear and consistent message about the company and its products; and the creation of strong brand equity. Brand equity refers to the value of a brand based on the extent to which it has high brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality, strong brand associations, and other assets such as patents, trademarks, logos, and slogans (Armstrong & Kotler, 2000).

Our syllabus integrates theory with practical application. Assignments are based on ads that the students (and we) select, write about, discuss in groups, and present to the class. Using print and broadcast ads as visual and aural stimuli, students write a variety of creative and expository papers: The creative papers present student responses to the advertising, such as how the ads made

them feel and how they would rewrite the ads to improve the delivery of the product message. The expository pieces explore topics such as the communication of company marketing strategies.

While our students are college undergraduates, and for the most part business majors, we believe the exercises we discuss in this paper can be applied to a wide range of ages and subject areas. These exercises can be used to develop strong critical thinking, writing, and inference skills in any discipline, from primary school onward. After working with ads, for example, students are more prepared to analyze other visual texts such as fine art or, with younger students, illustrations in books. And as with our own course, other written texts can be introduced into lessons and learned using the same tools of analysis we use with the ads. Students enjoy the unusual presence of ads in the classroom and warm to the work quickly.

> *Can you name the product if just shown the logo? How do the visuals support or contradict the text?*

We next describe several critical thinking lessons, with their learning objectives, and sample responses from our students. We first discuss the use of print advertising, specifically magazine ads and movie posters. We then move to broadcast advertising, specifically television commercials and the Internet.

Print Advertising

We start with magazine advertising for several reasons. First, print ads are easier to examine because there is no motion, there are fewer elements to analyze, and they can be viewed for a long period without having to rewind a tape. Second, magazine ads are preferable to newspaper ads because the production values are stronger: clearer typeface, better color, easier to read.

The objective of all lessons is to improve analytical and writing skills within the framework of a familiar form of discourse. The specific objectives of the lesson devoted to print advertising are to analyze the synergy between the visual and linguistic elements of an ad, and to understand how these elements create/reinforce a brand's image.

Students bring in magazine ads, exchange clippings with one another, and free-write about the ad in front of them. Free-writing is an informal type of writing used to generate ideas, much discussed in the writings of Peter Elbow (cf. Elbow & Belanoff, 1995). Students find free-writing a low-risk exercise that allows them to think through the process of writing.

The following questions can be used as prompts to a series of free-writes:

What are some of the striking images you notice?

Can you name the product if just shown the logo?

How do the written taglines in magazine ads differ from the spoken ones in TV commercials?

How would these ads sound if read aloud?

How do the visuals support or contradict the text?

How do the graphic elements enhance the ad: color, images, typeface?

Continuing with the free-write technique, students reflect on what particular advertisements mean to them. Students are told to write back to the advertisement by writing dialogues with the spokesperson or ad narrator. Often we require students to take on a role promoting the product, and this allows them to see the product from multiple perspectives. Following are specific tasks with magazine ads that we assigned and some student responses.

Magazine Lesson and Student Responses

One specific exercise we assign is for students to compare two ads from the 1950s that were popular in the U.S. The visual in each ad presents a well-known spokesman who has achieved the status of icon in his respective product category. The ad for Marlboro cigarettes shows the familiar Marlboro Man cowboy, which is still the icon of
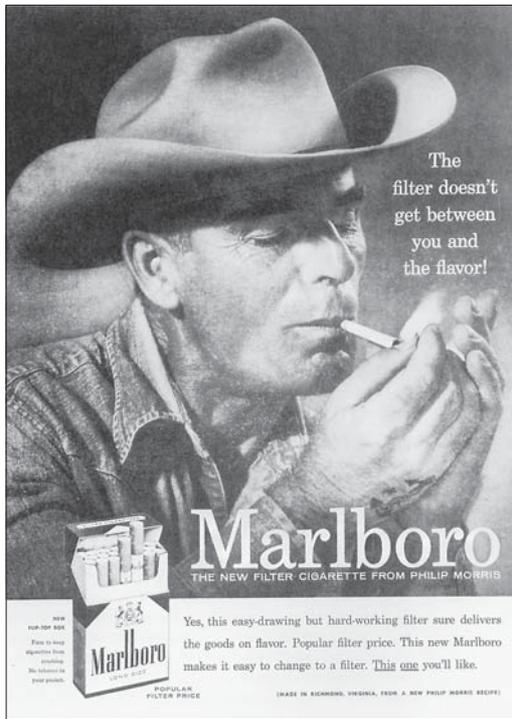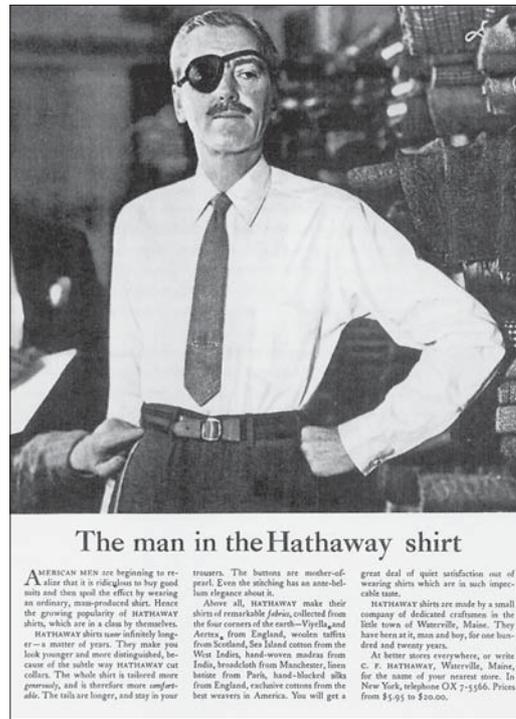
today's ads. Perhaps less well-known is the Hathaway Man representing Hathaway shirts, a sophisticated, well-dressed man with an eye-patch. These two images make a wonderful lesson in contrast. (These ads and many others can be found in Twitchell's *Twenty Ads That Shook the World*, 2000.)

We ask students to do various types of writing with these ads. Students discuss the difference in brand image created by the ads for Marlboro cigarettes and Hathaway shirts. They consider the following questions:

How strong is each of the brand images?

What does each spokesman contribute to the brand's image?

Would you recognize the product if shown only the visual?

How do the visuals support or contradict the copy?

Since voice quality is absent in the ad, how do font type and print size substitute for the spoken word?

Students analyze the strength of the brand image through the following visual and verbal elements:

Illustration

Symbols: cowboy hat, tattoo, work shirt vs. eye patch, necktie, dress shirt, etc.

Product shots and packages
Background activity
Typeface

Copy

Wording
Syntax
Length
Tone
Mood

For example, our students immediately noticed the different use of text in the two ads. The Marlboro ad uses several large-font slogans and a four-sentence paragraph under the illustration addressing the reader directly: "This one you'll like." The Hathaway ad, in contrast, includes a five-paragraph passage under the illustration discussing details about the product such as mother-of-pearl buttons and elegant stitching. Here too, though, the reader is addressed directly: "You will get a great deal of quiet satisfaction out of wearing shirts which are in such impeccable taste." This comparison of ads led to class discussion of how companies tailor their ads to the target audiences' traits, here a no-nonsense vs. fussy set of consumers.

Next, students address the following question: How would each brand's image change if the spokesmen were reversed? Students noted how the sophisticated appearance of the Hathaway man in his

immaculate attire would be completely out of place in the rough, rugged cowboy world of Marlboro-land. In fact, the image of the product would change from a strong, "manly" tobacco to one for those of subtle tastes.

In the second part of the assignment, students write ads for new or imaginary products and choose spokespeople to reinforce the brand image they want to create. This assignment generates amusing essays and lively class discussion as students consider local politicians and film or pop stars, among others, as spokespeople for a broad range of products. Students need to critically analyze their product in order to select a spokesperson whose personal, physical, and/or moral attributes match the product image they wish to create and communicate.

One very interesting example involves former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani. Before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 on New York City, our students cast then-mayor Giuliani in an unflattering light, hawking disagreeable (imaginary) products such as liver-flavored soda. After his image improved in the world's eyes, it also improved in our classroom. The students changed their image of Giuliani to a positive one with connotations of heroics and patriotism, making him the spokesperson for various "I Love New York" products.

Poster Lesson

In the unit on print advertising, we also use movie posters as another way to teach critical thinking. Inexpensive reprints can be found in poster shops, and hundreds of posters are reproduced at http://www.posteritati.com. Students are asked to write responses to posters through free-writing:

What is eye-catching, or not, about a poster?

How does printed language interact with the visuals?

Comparisons can be made between posters from mid-century and current ones, as well as between the foreign-language versions of movies and their domestic versions. We ask students to notice translation changes and any change of emphasis: What is the center

of attention in the poster? and How may it have shifted from the original version? If it is a movie with which they are unfamiliar, they try to tell the story of the film, based solely on the poster visuals.

Some cross-cultural comparisons our students made involved posters advertising *The Wizard of Oz* from different countries (http://www.posteritati.com). In a poster from Spain, the four main characters in the film wear startled, scared looks, while the figure of the Wicked Witch of the West hovers above them. In contrast is a poster from Argentina. The four main characters are all smiling, there is no sign of the Witch, and the slogan reads "The Happiest Film Ever Made." Our students discussed the different expectations movie-goers would have, encountering the poster from Spain compared to the one from Argentina.

Once students are comfortable with the poster as a linguistic and visual object, we ask them to develop their own posters for an imaginary movie. The creation of collages works well here, with pieces of ads from magazines, newspapers, and photocopies of posters matched with print and illustrations from the students. The posters are displayed in the classroom, and students respond in writing to one another's posters: as critics, movie-goers, and film producers. As their role as viewer changes, students experience how a shift in perspective influences their writing. Film producers must say something positive about even a terrible film, and film critics use different vocabulary from the average movie-goer.

Next we move to a discussion of lessons using broadcast advertising, specifically television commercials and ads on the Internet.

Broadcast Advertising

Broadcast advertising adds voice, action, and emotion to the printed word. We have three objectives for our broadcast lesson:

1. To analyze the structure of dialogue or monologue.
2. To develop sensitivity to spoken language and the visual components that are paired with it.
3. To compare students' memory of commercial dialogue and jingles with the actual language.

How have advertisers manipulated language so that years later people still remember "You Deserve a Break Today"? Students also examine how accents, tone of voice, and body language contribute to brand imagery and the advertiser's message. Our students noted, for example, that the volume of the advertising is often louder than the volume of the surrounding programming. The final objective is to work in groups and develop an advertising campaign. Teamwork is an essential part of the workplace, and many students are unaccustomed to sharing the workload. Thus, it is essential to reinforce collaborative work in the classroom. Following are specific tasks we assigned with television commercials and some student responses.

TV Commercial Lesson and Student Responses

To begin this lesson, we ask students to free-write about commercials they remember. They list slogans, bits of jingles, and dialogue that have been memorized. Almost all the jingles are for food products: McDonald's, Coca Cola, candy bars. We share these pieces of our culture and notice the recognition among students. This part of the exercise usually leads to even more memories as those hours of TV watching are recalled, and students become very aware of how much advertising they encounter and of the staying power of ads.

Next we ask students to perform some of these recollected commercials and consider the following questions:

How did the performers' voices change when they performed?

How much of the "script" did they remember or have to ad-lib?

What were some common elements of language use/body language?

Our students became more sensitive to such aspects of spoken language as speaking rate and the prosodic elements of voice: stress placement, intonation, and emotional tone. Our students also noticed that hand gestures and body postures are exaggerated in their re-enactments of commercials. Students write and perform their own commercials for either an imaginary product or

an existing one (but with a new approach to marketing it). Students respond in writing to each other's performances, discussing the performer's voice qualities, body language, use of formal or informal language, and the success of the sales pitch. They also discuss the unique elements of commercial language. A consistent comment is that a real conversation about the product would sound very different from the ones performed in class. This is a good lesson in the artificiality of advertising (and television).

A follow-up step at this point is to show some current TV commercials, which can be taped earlier or, if the classroom gets TV reception, seen in real time. This new material leads to comparisons among (1) commercials recreated from memory, (2) commercials constructed by students, and (3) current commercials viewed on TV. The class can also do a little time-travel and try to recall old marketing campaigns for current products. Some advertising agencies will distribute tapes of old commercials, which are wonderful to view in class. Our students noticed a change in Nike ads for running shoes from the 1970s, when non-professional athletes are seen jogging, to the 1990s, when superstar athletes act as the spokespeople for the company (Chiat/Day Advertisement Agency & Weiden/Kennedy Advertisement Agency, 1987–1997). For McDonald's, some of our students remembered all the slogans going back to the early 1970s. Again, the power of ads is evident, and we had lively discussions about the influence of advertising on our own ability to judge the quality of products.

Internet Lesson

If computers are available, analysis and writing of Internet advertising will add another dimension to this segment of the course. The Internet, a hybrid form of communication, provides the voice and motion of broadcast, but the viewer has the ability to control what he or she reads. An Internet lesson is a good way to compare three forms of advertising for the same product. Most major companies today spend some money on Internet advertising; therefore, students can easily find websites

for Procter and Gamble, Kraft/General Foods, or any of the other major consumer goods companies. Students select a single product advertised in magazines, on television, and on the Internet and write a piece that compares the advertising on the following dimensions:

Which visual and verbal elements are common to all three forms of advertising?

Which elements are unique to either print or broadcast advertising?

Is the product a better fit with print or broadcast advertising? Why?

Which form of advertising conveys the product's benefits best?

Are the visual and verbal message elements consistent among the three forms of advertising; if not, what are the differences?

> *We had lively discussions about the influence of advertising on our own ability to judge the quality of products*

The final part of this lesson is to develop a new campaign for the product using print and broadcast advertising. This project should be done in groups, and students should be encouraged to organize their groups like an advertising agency: some write strategy, some write ad copy, and some design the visuals. Again, students benefit from the collaborative, team approach to thinking critically.

Conclusion

In these lessons, we teach students to develop critical thinking skills by evaluating the kinds of advertisements they encounter every day. The evaluation is done actively through verbal response, performance, and writing about print and broadcast advertising.

We have used various forms of advertising—print, broadcast, and Internet—in conjunction with the following writing practices:

Free-writing

Dialogue/write-back exercises

Collages/writing to and about collages

Performances/writing to and about commercials

Comparison of print vs. broadcast advertising

Using these practices, students analyze commercial language and formulate concise responses in written and oral form. We believe these techniques work well in all classrooms to reinforce critical thinking skills and help instructors introduce other texts into the classroom. Students quickly warm to the tasks and, in a low-risk climate that includes informal free-writing and familiar material, make great strides in thinking through the writing process.

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Policy Matters

Innovative Approaches to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Cautious but Resolute Steps

Sergei Zair-Bek

A Brief Digression. I recollect my university years.... Coming to study in a pedagogical university, I had trouble adjusting to a system of teaching so different from the one I had experienced in school. The lectures were hard to endure, and during the practical sessions we were often given so much independence that doubts inevitably crept in: Does any training take place here at all? Our grades were totally dependent on final examinations, so our seeming freedom from ongoing assessment, and our ability to choose how and when to study, led to a kind of euphoria. Later, like most students, I began to differentiate among the teaching styles of our professors as they conducted their lectures, seminars and practical sessions. I came to realize that an offer of absolute freedom and independence in choosing ways of learning was not necessarily evidence of superior pedagogical skill.

Then I became a university professor myself, and for some time tried to find my own approach to conducting sessions with students. For example, I wanted to counter students' preconceptions of a lecture. Could a lecture be more than a content-packed monologue (although that might, in fact, be quite interesting)? Could we think of a lecture as something other than a process involving a professor transferring information to an audience with no feedback from students?

Introduction of New Approaches to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Natural Obstacles

The system of instruction in higher education is quite conservative. This is true everywhere, not only in Russia[1].

While educational theory and research-based practice continue to change, and methods of acquiring knowledge keep improving, universities still cling to the structures and methods that first appeared at the dawn of higher education, that is, lectures, practical sessions, writing and defending abstracts, course papers, and diploma degree work.

The structure of university teaching has been dictated more by the structure and discourse of the various academic disciplines than by considerations of pedagogy. The reasons for this are clear if we compare universities with schools. At school, students study artificially delineated subjects, with the basic aim of equipping them with certain cognitive skills, and teaching them how to use these skills to solve both educational problems and practical everyday problems. On the other hand, the university approach to teaching and learning corresponds more closely to empirical and theoretical scientific research methods. However, as university professors themselves admit, formulaic approaches are rather common.

An opinion. In the monograph "Educational Technology: From Method to Philosophy," V.V. Guzeev notes that the system of training in universities today looks very much as it did when the first medieval universities came to being. This system is based on underlying assumptions which, somewhat overstated, look like this:
- The contingent of learners is highly motivated;
- Students are selected through the admission process, and consequently are

[1] I have to note that in this context the word "conservative" is not entirely negative. In the long run, it is the fact that so many renowned universities stick to tradition that makes their diplomas so prestigious (though they often exploit these traditions, using them as a sort of "trademark").

relatively equal in terms of level of preparation;

- A student has no individual personality;
- Professors are the unique bearers of knowledge and culture, the luminaries of ideas;
- Lecture notes are the only source of wisdom, and accuracy of their reproduction is the only criterion for knowledge assessment;
- The students' high motivation to learn will be increased still further by the use of punitive measures against those who do not meet expectations. (Guzeev, 1996)

Education in many universities is characterized by strict academicism and the rote reproduction of information. This is so despite the fact that advances in cognitive science would appear to demand research-based approaches to education, and the development of critical thinking skills has become a precondition for success in solving educational and scientific/scholarly problems.

While the above-mentioned characteristics of university education—which, in my opinion, constitute the very essence of its conservatism—are very typical of the post-Soviet educational environment, I want to note that the same characteristics may apply in describing western educational systems as well. Though it seems paradoxical, the conservatism of higher education in the West can originate either in the high degree of autonomy enjoyed by universities (as in the British and American models), or in the historical tendency toward centralization (as in France or Russia). I will not analyze and compare the conservative features in the different models of educational management here (as it, in fact, deserves a separate discussion). Nor will I try to categorize the individual education systems. I just want to draw the readers' attention to the inherent conservatism of individual departments, faculties, and professors—in whatever country. Nevertheless, attempts at innovation are often made at this level. They may be successful or unsuccessful, and may affect either the forms and methods or the content of education, but such reforms are essential for the improvement of the system as a whole.

In recent years, certain practices typical of Western universities have been introduced in Russia, too. These practices include courses designed and presented by individual professors, the development of new specialties, mostly interdisciplinary in nature, etc. It might be expected that such a change in content would be followed by a change in the methods of teaching. However, as practical experience shows, neither professors nor university students are ready for quick changes.

Here is one example: A professor who participated in training seminars in the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking program (RWCT) started using portfolios in working with her students, to develop their capacity for self-analysis and self-evaluation, and their ability to reflect on the learning process itself[2]. But soon she complained that students were not supporting her efforts. Few of them were prepared to devote their free time to serious reflection, or to fill in various sections of the portfolio on a regular basis. And further attempts to force the students into using portfolios only led to grudging compliance, as the students' notes became more and more formal and perfunctory.

Such failures may be connected with the fact that (at least in the countries of the former Soviet Union) university faculty have no guidebooks to provide recommendations for using this or that new educational approach or set of strategies. Thus university professors often ask colleagues who have been trained in RWCT to provide convincing examples of how their RWCT strategies could be successfully integrated into programs of higher education. Professors are not content merely to extrapolate secondary school strategies and methods, as they, supposedly, have to solve educational problems of a higher level. Moreover, they themselves may not see how they could creatively adapt the new strategies to the teaching/learning process in the university.

Developing applications for innovative educational strategies and methods in the university environment is a long process of trial and error. For a professor who has decided to change his/her teaching practice, no doubt it is important to realize that what is most valuable here is not the

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[2] Portfolios are widely used in many countries but have not been widely used in Russia.

concrete strategies of a particular educational approach, but rather the basic philosophical ideas and principles that underlie the practical applications. Therefore—and this has become a subject of detailed discussions among participants in RWCT workshops in Russia—the aim is not mechanical application of techniques, but rather thoughtful adaptation of the suggested new approaches to the traditions and realities of higher education. A gradual shift in attitude of all the participants in the teaching/learning process—as opposed to radical (and most often harmful) changes—will be the key to success in the university[3].

In order to achieve this basic change in attitude, it is not enough simply to instruct a group of faculty members, or describe a new teaching model in a monograph. Systemic changes can only be based on a combination of:

- High-level administrative decisions;
- Demand from the consumers of educational services;
- Practical experience, i.e., methods tried out by a large group of university professors and students, and later presented as a series of suggested models with recommendations for how to use them.

Does this mean that we have to wait for all these favorable conditions to apply, or that we can use their absence to explain our reluctance to act? Surely not, since we are quite capable of furthering these goals. In fact, the existing demand from consumers may already be sufficient for us to make the first step.

Development of Students' Ability to Think Critically: A Crucial Skill

There is no question that in our society a demand for the development of critical thinking skills exists. I believe most readers of *Thinking Classroom* do not need to be convinced of the importance of these

abilities for the future life of our students. Unfortunately, it is often assumed that critical thinking skills are formed at school, and that university students have such skills in abundance. Therefore, such reasoning goes, there is no need to teach them. However, Diane Halpern notes in *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (1964) that "Psychologists have found that only 25% of first-year college students possess the skills needed for logical abstract thought—the type of thought needed to answer 'What would happen if…' questions and to comprehend abstract concepts" (p. 4). The importance of the development of critical thinking skills is also noted in the UNESCO *World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action* adopted in Paris in 1998:

> b) Higher education institutions should educate students to become well informed and deeply motivated citizens, who can think critically, analyze problems of society, look for solutions to the problems of society, apply them and accept social responsibilities.
> (c) To achieve these goals, it may be necessary to recast curricula, using new and appropriate methods, so as to go beyond cognitive mastery of disciplines. New pedagogical and didactical approaches should be accessible and promoted in order to facilitate the acquisition of skills, competences and abilities for communication, creative and critical analysis.
> (d) New methods of education will also imply new types of teaching-learning materials. These have to be coupled with new methods of testing that will promote not only powers of memory but also powers of comprehension, skills for practical work and creativity.
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> (*World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action*, Paris, 1998. Article 9—Innovative educational approaches: Critical thinking and creativity).

My personal experience, as well as that of my colleagues from the Hertzen

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[3] In Russia a guidebook for university faculty has recently been prepared based on nearly four years' experience of the authors and their colleagues in introducing RWCT strategies and methods into the practice of university teaching (authors I. Zagashev, S. Zair-Bek). The guidebook not only describes strategies that can be used at lectures and seminars, or applied for organizing independent work of students The authors also try to show how—through small but important changes—it is possible to alter the character of the university educational process, making it more research oriented, which is so important for developing students' professional competencies and for perfecting professors' pedagogical skills. The authors emphasize that development of critical thinking is not only a major practical goal in and of itself, but is also a tool to be utilized for other intellectual tasks of a higher order.

Russian State Pedagogical University[4], shows that university students experience considerable difficulties when they have to solve problems that require critical thinking skills. Often the difficulties occur even with such relatively easy tasks as analysis of a text, or evaluation of a classroom situation; and they are even more obvious in the face of difficult tasks, such as discussion of a controversial humanitarian problem.

In 1999, a group of faculty from Hertzen University carried out a research project involving 60 fourth-year students in the geography department. The students were given a written assignment that consisted of various items requiring particular skills described in Bloom's taxonomy—reproduction, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (1956). They were asked to perform these tasks consecutively. It was found that 85% of students coped successfully with the tasks involving knowledge; then the percent of successful students gradually decreased. Only 75% could do comprehension tasks, only 70% could apply the knowledge they had learned earlier, 60% could analyze, 40% could synthesize, and 35% could evaluate successfully. Conversations with faculty (20 people) revealed that, in their lectures and seminars, only 30% of the professors offered students tasks that required the whole complex of critical thinking skills.

The students who participated in the research were even harsher critics, with 80% of them reporting that their professors hardly ever asked them to do anything demanding skills of analysis or synthesis. Confronted with these findings, the faculty split into two groups. Those in the first group claimed that the methods they used were quite adequate for the students to master their subject. Those in the second group pointed out that there were lots of obstacles to using the whole spectrum of cognitive tasks during their class sessions: time pressure, insufficient academic level of their students, lack of teaching materials. Please note: Not one of those questioned admitted that he or she lacked the necessary methods to develop critical thinking in their students.

However in 2000, when Russian RWCT trainers started working with university faculty, most of the seminar participants realized that neither they nor their colleagues had ever made much use of specific methods to develop critical thinking skills. Their explanation for this fact was a lack of methodological strategies sufficiently credible and acceptable to such a highbrow group as university professors. The professors believed that developing such techniques was both necessary and timely. In addition, most of the seminar participants insisted that any changes introduced into the teaching/learning process must in no way contradict or diminish the well-established traditions of Russian higher education.

So you see, the consumer demands have been defined quite clearly: In Russia, RWCT trainers must now adapt RWCT for use in universities, connect the program with the national traditions in the sphere of higher education, and develop this approach through the practical experience of the faculty who use it on an everyday basis.

Opportunities for the Development of Critical Thinking in Students at University Seminars

The best opportunities for developing critical thinking through reading and writing in higher education present themselves during practical sessions. This is only natural, since during lectures a professor's monologue prevails, and during individual study we rely on the learning skills that students should have developed by this time. In practical sessions intensive work takes place involving a small group and their supervisor, work that is aimed at improving concrete skills and perfecting competencies. This kind of work is conducted in a dialogue mode. The class is small, which allows the professor to observe everyone. Such a setting helps establish stable relationships among all those present, it stimulates processes of deep reflection about the ongoing activities, and it facilitates analysis of the productivity of the process.

The most widespread format for a practical session in European universities is the seminar. Seminars are an effective means of developing the culture of academic research. They allow for direct contact between students and professors,

[4] The largest pedagogical university in Europe, based in St. Petersburg, Russia.

and an important result of such contact is the establishment of collegial relationships. Seminars we attend as students may remain with us throughout our lives, due to the atmosphere of scientific creativity, comradeship, and mutual understanding that the seminar leaders manage to create. Such seminars quite often go on to develop into regular scientific collaboration.

Once I was talking to a university colleague who asked about the amount of work I had that day. I said that I had three "pairs" (double academic sessions, 1.5 hours each) on my schedule.

– Lectures? asked the colleague.
– No, seminars.
– Then you have it easy, you lucky guy.
– Why?
– You don't need to prepare for them. Just give the students an assignment and then sit back and relax. And then just check their work. A piece of cake! Much better than giving a lecture.

This view of seminars is not rare among university faculty. The perception that it is not necessary to prepare for seminars, that it is simple to conduct them, is dangerous enough. In my opinion, it is seminars that mold the modern researcher, the professionally competent expert. Frequently seminars can evoke an interest in this or that science, which in turn brings students to attend lectures. The more varied the methods and strategies used, the more opportunities a professor has to establish informal contact with students. This, in turn, promotes not only successful learning, but also the scholarly growth of the professor himself.

Professors generally focus on the content aspect of seminars: the formation of concepts, the development of research, and business communication skills. Students, on the other hand, set different goals for themselves: They want to get some practical examples to help them understand (or even simply remember) the difficult material presented in the lectures, and they also want to collect data for their course or degree work. Only at the very end of the priority list, for both professors and students, do we find such goals as observation of the seminar process, analysis of the methods used, evaluation of their own activities and the activities of other participants[5]. However, in my opinion, ignoring these goals hinders both the development of the seminar leader's professional skills and the formation of young scholars.

Often the arsenal of strategies used during seminars is very small: discussion, explanation of new material, students' oral responses, written assignments. However, when students at one St. Petersburg university were asked what they thought would make seminars more interesting and useful, the majority noted:
- Clearer and more interesting content;
- Opportunities to express our own opinions;
- Discussions and debates;
- Working with various sources of information;
- Professor's respect for students' opinions; and
- Opportunity for group work.

To what extent do the traditional ways of organizing seminars meet these expectations? Alas, a traditional seminar often duplicates a lecture, and this drawback becomes especially obvious when, for example, students from pedagogical universities go on to their teaching practice. Their knowledge of theory and teaching methodology does not help them when they have to make actual decisions—selecting content for an upcoming lesson, choosing methods and strategies, or reacting to a change in the classroom situation, when students' unexpected questions and actions do not correspond to the lesson plan. Not only future teachers, but also the majority of graduates in various other professions, face such problems. Young graduates confess that they have been taught lots of theory, but in practice all this knowledge looks completely different.

Even if professors plan more interactive forms of work for their seminars, as the students claim to prefer, it will not have the desired results unless the students take an active role, unless they have self-confidence and a desire to reflect and discuss. This means that professors must

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[5] Here and further on I use data from analytical research conducted in 1995–1998 by a group of faculty from the Chair of Methods of Teaching Geography, Chair of Pedagogy and Chair of Methods of Teaching Natural Science of Hertzen Pedagogical university. This research, which consisted of questionnaires and random interviews of graduate students, involved more than 800 students. The results were used for strategic planning of psychology, pedagogy, and methods of teaching courses.

We know that it is easier to solve a problem if it is real, if we can relate it to our personal experience. Bring real-life problems to class? Why not? Several types of problems are appropriate for consideration in a seminar:

- Problems covered in the popular press (newspaper and magazine articles devoted to business, economic, ecological, social, legal, and other problems);
- Problems related to everyday situations (e.g., educational—choosing classroom strategies for a practice teaching situation; medical—diagnosing a disease and choosing the appropriate treatment and medications; scientific—investigating possible research models, etc.)
- Activities and games, e.g., business games, that model real problems.

James Bramsford has developed a problem-solving strategy called IDEAL that can be applied in the first two types of situations. I offer here my version of the strategy, based on the one adapted by James and Carol Beers, American RWCT volunteers in Russia.

I Identify the problem
D Describe its essence
E Elaborate possible approaches for solving it
A Act in order to solve the problem
L Learn from what you have done

1. Identification. The problem is defined in the most general form.
2. Description. The problem is revised so that it forms a question. The question should be very concrete and precise. It should begin with the word *How*, and it should not contain any form of negation.
3. Elaboration of ways to solve the problem. This should be done through brainstorming. No critique of variants is allowed. The most important aspect here is quantity—as many variants as possible.
4. Action aimed at choosing the best variant by means of weighing all pros and cons.
5. Learning by means of reflecting on what has been done to solve the problem.

Often students realize at this point that they should get back to points 1 and 2 in order to address the problem more accurately.

> **Example:** *While preparing education students for practice teaching the professor shows a video clip in which a student teacher is conducting a lesson on "The Climate of Russia" in a 7th grade class. At the beginning of the lesson he wants to review the factors that influence climate formation, so he calls a student to the blackboard. The student cannot answer the question. Then the student teacher calls another student, then another…. The result is the same.*

1. The professor stops the videotape. A problem situation has been set up.
2. Now it is important that the students work on defining the problem. At this stage they should work as individuals. Formulating a problem on their own takes them halfway to its solution. (Working independently, the students each come up with different wording, which may subsequently be changed during group discussion.)
3. When the problem has been stated, it is time to collect the information needed to solve it. With this purpose in mind, students recollect the essential facts from the video clip. In this particular case, it may have been important that:

- The topic being studied is *The Climate of Russia*;
- The student teacher asks students about factors that contribute to climate formation;
- The students cannot answer the question; the question falls into the category of "direct" questions (intended to reproduce knowledge); the teacher does not ask any leading questions.

Of course, different information can seem important to different students. Still, at this stage it is better not to ask them to exchange opinions.

4. The videotape alone does not provide enough information. To solve the problem, students need to collect other relevant information, such as information about teaching methodology, the structure of the school geography curriculum, their experience of working with schoolchildren (if any). At this stage, they can work both individually and collectively. In the example considered here it is possible to add such essential information as:

- *Climate* has already been studied in the 6th and 7th grades, so students already know how certain factors influence the climate of this or that territory;
- *The Climate of Russia* is a core theme in the course *Geography of Russia*, so it must be allotted sufficient time, and now part of the time has already been lost on individual dialogues with these three students;
- Not all students are comfortable standing in front of the class to answer a question at the blackboard, but they could be allowed to answer from their seats, looking up information in an atlas.

4. Now it is possible to explore various solutions to the problem. This work can be done individually, in pairs, or in groups.
   To solve this particular problem, the teacher has several possible courses of action:

- Stop the oral quiz and just tell the students about factors influencing climate formation;

- Direct the question to the best student in the class;
- Allow time for the students, working in pairs, to find an answer to the question with the help of the atlas. Then have them summarize the results of their work, taking the climate of Russia as an example.

5. A discussion is a good way to choose the best alternative. This allows the students to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each variant, and to project the possible outcomes for each.

To summarize the results of their work, at each stage the students are asked to fill in a form, as in the following example:

Problem Solving Sheet

1. What main problem should the teacher address?
To create conditions for the schoolchildren to refresh their knowledge on *Climate*

2. What important information is contained in the video fragment?
- Subject of the lesson
- The teacher conducts what amounts to an individual oral quiz.
- Three students cannot answer the question

3. What else do you know that would help to solve the problem? What does the teacher need to know?
- Students have previously studied *Climate*
- Not all students are comfortable at the blackboard.
- The theme "Climate" requires sufficient time.
- Climate information is available in the atlas.

4. What are three possible ways to solve the problem?
- Stop the oral quiz and tell the students about climate formation factors.
- Direct the question to the best pupil.
- Have the students use the atlas and work in pairs.

5. Which of the ways you proposed is the best? Why?
The third variant. It will:
- Refresh knowledge about climate formation,
- Avoid stress,
- Practice map-reading skills,
- Avoid wasted time, by putting new information into context of existing knowledge.

After finishing the discussion and choosing the best proposed solution to the problem, the students are given the opportunity to watch the video clip to the end. As they find out how events actually developed, they can analyze and compare their solution with the one chosen by the student teacher in the film.

prepare students for a seminar. Let us look at the explanations and advice given in *The Student's Handbook: 1000 Hints for All Occasions, From Your First Day at the University to the Defense of Your Thesis*. The authors emphasize:

> The purpose of seminars is, as a rule, to develop your practical skills in the selected specialty. Oral sessions develop your debating skills, while written assignments prepare you for the final stage of university life—writing a thesis. Tasks assigned by professors help you to comprehend new information, and develop your skills in searching for information and applying it correctly. Ideally you prepare for a seminar, and then have a discussion with your fellow students while the professor observes as an arbitrator. Forget your naive hopes that seminars duplicate the lectures, and that you can get away with disregarding one or the other. (2000, pp. 15–16)

Certainly, in a seminar it is impossible to foresee every situation that might arise in a school classroom or in another workplace. Besides, these sessions cannot be entirely devoted to practical training. However, increasing the variety of seminar work, creating conditions for reflection about the work done, assigning problems that involve exploring and analyzing various solutions, choosing various techniques for achieving results—all this allows for the development of such important professional skills as speed and flexibility in decision making, a critical approach to problem solving, respect for different opinions, etc. These qualities, once they are well developed, will undoubtedly help young graduates avoid serious difficulties as they begin their careers, and allow them to adjust much more quickly to new situations and new colleagues.

Back to the Beginning

Brief digression. What can be easier for a professor than teaching a student by rote? With this model, there are precise criteria to define the quality of the training (the amount of knowledge and skills obtained), the learning path is very straightforward (from here to there), and the evaluation system is clear. And, by the way, the outcomes are frequently very successful. To quote

an observation made in a seminar by one of our respected professors, S.Ye. Shishov, "If we judge a system of education by how well the goals pursued correspond to the means of teaching, then the Soviet system of education could really be regarded as the best in the world."

Here I have presented the insights of a large number of teachers and, however strange it may seem, of students. Some of the students think it is easier to absorb the material given at a lecture than to make any intellectual effort, or to investigate real scientific problems. What if their research should lead them to a different conclusion from the one presented by the teacher?

In the first part of the article I mentioned that many universities are even now characterized by academicism and a reproductive model of education. I repeatedly have been told by faculty that universities have developed optimal and well-balanced formats and methods of teaching: seminars, lectures, practical work, etc.; and that the majority of the new pedagogical approaches do not fit into these formats. And so I ask a natural question: Do all these structures, in their classical form, really provide opportunities to develop and educate students in a way that is appropriate for the 21st century?

We can, very tentatively, point out the functions that strategies and methods should serve in modern universities:

- Encourage students to take an active role in their education;
- Equip them with the means to work productively with a variety of information texts;
- Allow for and encourage individual choice and creativity;
- Develop the ability to think critically, and to exchange ideas about values;
- Promote real cooperation in team work;
- Provide models for responsible pedagogical behavior and communicative skills;
- Help students manage their activities.

Clearly, it is extremely difficult to achieve all this through traditional educational methods. Can new pedagogical approaches resolve the problem? The answer to this question will be clear only after we have gained sufficient practical experience based on the regular and systematic use of such methods. However, when such new methods have been described poorly (or not at all) in relation to higher education, university faculty members themselves need to become the authors and developers of concrete, practical models. Only by offering and adapting their own experience, and the experience of their colleagues, can they enable new attitudes to take root and grow.

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Policy Matters

Confronting A New Curriculum Requiring Critical Thinking Strategies

Yevonne Pollock

Experience working as a teacher trainer in schools in Australia and New York has shown me that teachers respond in widely varying ways to new curriculum initiatives that require critical thinking strategies.

However the responses of the teachers on both sides of the world are very similar. This indicates that many concerns of teachers are universal and demonstrate a general response to such situations regardless of country and culture.

Some teachers take to the new directions with enthusiasm, imagination, and energy. These people are wonderful to work with and need little further encouragement. Other teachers can show resistance to initiatives in varying ways:

1. I already do this (even when they don't).
2. How can they expect me to do this?
   –I have too many students
   –My students are different—different languages, economic background, religious background, cultural background.
3. I've been teaching successfully for many years.
   –Why should I change?
   –My students have always been successful anyway.
   –They always get high scores.
4. We are already so busy we don't have time to add these new things. Our program is already too crowded.
5. I'm going to retire in a few years, so why should I change?
6. I've seen other new ideas come and go. I'm sure that if I just keep doing what I'm doing this new idea will also fade from view.

In a three-day workshop for a group of New York teachers many of these excuses were offered during discussions. The teachers who say "I already do this" often then demonstrate by their remarks that they have not understood the strategy. In fact when I was working in the schools with them they showed their misunderstandings by how they taught.

With respect to the second point above, they said things like, "My class is too big; it will only work in small classes." Yet class sizes in Melbourne, Australia were about 28 children except in the early years, and teaching the new curriculum there using these strategies worked quite well.

New York schools are very multicultural and some teachers said these strategies wouldn't work with such a diverse population. Yet schools in Melbourne were also very multicultural and it would and did work very well. Some classrooms had children from 15 different countries working cooperatively using the new curriculum.

The crowded curriculum came up time and again as an excuse not to try these strategies. That was an appropriate time to discuss timetables and rationalizing the basic curriculum content. (In some schools the solution to finding more time was to incorporate the 30 minutes set aside to pack up the classroom at the end of each day.)

Not all teachers reacted like this to the new curriculum. Many teachers were ready to receive new ideas, try out strategies, and share with each other their successes and failures. What is the difference between those teachers who respond with enthusiasm, imagination, and energy to change, and those who are resistant?

What influences the way teachers do things, and the way they think about their work? Heather Fehring from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

University in Melbourne carried out an intensive observational study of a small number of teachers to see what influenced their decisions in their classrooms. She summarized the themes she identified in the following way (1998):

1. Knowledge: past experiences, values and attitudes, professional competence, view of learning
2. Peer Group: other teachers, friends, respected colleagues, principals
3. Administrative Directives: education policies, curriculum documents, assessment/testing procedures
4. Community Expectations: parents, students, the wider community

In her view, individual responses to new initiatives involved an interaction among these four themes.

If all teachers are subject to similar influences, why are some receptive to change and others not? There is now very extensive research literature regarding teacher change. One of the most telling features of this research is the fact that there is no simple solution to why and how teachers come to change what they do. The research from Canada (and observations in Australia and New York certainly support some of these ideas) suggests that there are a number of themes or factors involved.

The teachers' own reflection on their role is central. Michael Fullan (1993 a) has pointed out that teaching has a high moral purpose. When asked, most of the education students at his own university said they wanted to be teachers because they wanted to make a change to the lives of their students. There were very few teachers who didn't have the best interests of their students at heart. Even those teachers whose approaches seemed wrong or self-defeating from modern educational perspectives were often people who wanted the best for their students.

Fullan's argument under this theme or factor is not that some ways of thinking about the teacher's role are wrong, but instead that to help teachers to change they must be encouraged to think carefully and to articulate fully what their beliefs and values are. Citing one of his colleagues he says,

> Change is mandatory; growth is optional. You don't have a choice about change; it is going to happen. The choice is how you grapple with it in a way you can handle it. Including rejecting it successfully. (1993 b)

The ability and willingness to analyze one's own professional role and one's own teaching is fundamental to critical thinking. To expect teachers to develop critical thinking in their students means that they must be allowed and encouraged to do it for themselves. All of the teachers who were successfully changing their teaching to meet new demands— either of their own making or resulting from changes imposed on them—were able to talk about and reflect on and analyze what they were doing.

Now reflection doesn't come naturally or easily in the classroom. For most of the day, teachers are involved in action. In the classroom teachers have plans to get through particular activities and most of their attention is focussed on how their students are responding to those activities. Teaching calls on teachers to act first. Their actions should be consistent and coherent, but in the fast and sometimes confusing action of the classroom teachers generally don't have time for contemplative reflection. What this means is that the reflection that is necessary for successful planned teaching has to be provided for. This point must be emphasized strongly. If reflection is an important component of teacher change then those who want to introduce a change—either a new curriculum or a critical thinking approach—will need to find ways of encouraging teacher reflection.

Michael Fullan and his colleague Andy Hargreaves (1991) have compiled a set of guidelines for teachers who are trying to deal with change. They are as follows:

1. Locate, listen to, and articulate your inner voice.
2. Practice reflection in action, on action, and about action.
3. Develop a risk-taking mentality.
4. Trust processes as well as people.
5. Appreciate the total person in working with others.
6. Commit to working with colleagues.
7. Seek variety and avoid cliques.
8. Redefine your role to extend beyond the classroom.
9. Balance work and life.
10. Push and support principals and other administrators to develop interactive professionalism.
11. Commit to continuous improvement and perpetual learning.
12. Monitor and strengthen the connection between your development and students' development

Now these guidelines are all very well as advice, but before they could be implemented by any individual teacher, there would have to be some preconditions established.

This brings us to the second theme in the research literature. It would be very difficult for teachers to talk about their own work reflectively if there was no one to talk to. Collaboration is an important aspect of successful teacher change. When teachers work with trusted and respected colleagues with whom they can share their experiences and thinking, then all of them are enriched and strengthened by the interaction. It is important to understand that collaboration is more than being friendly. It's the kind of relationship that produces shared planning, preparation, and shared reflection on assessment.

> *Critical Thinking can only survive when many voices are heard*

In a school where collaboration occurs there is a different atmosphere. When a collaborative culture exists teachers enjoy their work more, students benefit, and visitors are aware of the positive environment. But even if it is beneficial for teachers to collaborate as they deal with the new curriculum, what is the role of critical thinking?

Teachers who have been through the RWCT experience already know the answer, but it bears repeating. Critical Thinking can only survive when many voices are heard. Only when individuals are confident that their experiences and insights will be listened to respectfully and sympathetically will they be prepared to share them.

What this means is that successful change occurs when a collaborative environment can be established for teachers as well as for students. This is, of course, a real challenge for principals, deputy principals, district administrators, and ministry officials. How can a collaborative culture be established and maintained within the classroom, the school, and the system?

The third theme in the literature is to do with the administrative climate within a school, and whether that climate makes it easy or difficult to work collaboratively. Is it easy to plan cooperatively or to visit each other's classrooms to watch each other teach? Is training and support provided for the staff? Does the staff believe that the administration is working to facilitate the work of the teachers and students? Is there a clearly stated, well-understood shared set of values and goals?

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) have provided a set of guidelines for principals. They are as follows:

1. Understand the culture.
2. Value your teachers: promote their professional growth.
3. Extend what you value.
4. Express what you value.
5. Promote collaboration, not co-option.
6. Make menus, not mandates.
7. Use bureaucratic means to facilitate, not to constrain.
8. Connect with the wider environment.

Fullan and Hargreaves's final advice gives a nice introduction to the final theme in the research literature. This is to do with the kind of external influences that work upon schools. These include influences like bureaucratic demands, media representation of educational issues, and even home-school partnerships.

Forty years ago the prevailing attitude of the school system toward the wider community was: leave it to the teachers—they're the experts. Recognition of the role that parents have in the education of their children was still to come. An extreme example of the prevailing attitude was a school principal who painted lines on the school ground, with the instruction that parents were not permitted to cross the line. Happily those days are gone, but there are still barriers to prevent a free interaction between schools and the communities they are meant to serve.

The research emphasizes that schools cannot isolate themselves from their communities and at the same time expect to be fully effective in meeting the needs and aspirations of those communities. Australia claims to be a multicultural society, but it's only in the last 15 years that the teaching profession

has come to reflect some of that multicultural diversity. Even changes in the ethnic composition of the profession won't necessarily bring about changes in the ways schools relate to their communities. In New York many examples of this fact were also obvious. The failings in these schools to cater to multicultural diversity were the same as in Melbourne. Communities with large populations of ethnic groups are not reflected by the school curriculum, nor is the wealth of culture inherent in such groups included in school studies.

Schools usually do not operate as independent agencies. They are often only a small part of huge bureaucratic systems. Teachers and principals in these systems are important parts of the change process, but the system itself can support or hinder the introduction of successful change. Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) have extended their advice to the systems themselves.

1. Develop more trust and risk as a system, especially in selection, promotion, and development processes.
2. Foster increased interaction and empowerment in the system.
3. Give curriculum content back to the schools.
4. Restructure your administration to meet current needs.

Where does Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking meet the criteria for these issues in change? There are the theoretical principles and very effective implementation strategies. There is also a framework for professional development both at the school level and in teacher-training institutes. All this encourages teacher growth through reflection and collaboration, which are two major factors of change. Now add an administration that is supportive, and external influences that are clearly understood, then change need not be threatening. Remember what Fullan said:

Change is mandatory; growth is optional. You don't have a choice about change; it is going to happen. The choice is how you grapple with it in a way you can handle it. Including rejecting it successfully.

What kind of advice can be taken from all this? First, there is no single recipe that will suit all situations. The most successful plans are only made successful by what happens after they have been implemented. There is no way of knowing in advance how things will turn out. DeGuess (1997, p. 155) quoted a line from a poem by Antonio Marchado, which he asserted was the most profound lesson in strategic planning that he had ever heard. The line is: "Life is a path you beat while you walk it." Life is not laid out in front of us—we make the pathways as we live it. Everything cannot be planned for in advance.

For all of that, it seems that any innovation or change will succeed or fail based on how the issues around each theme are attended to and handled by all the participants in the process.

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Yevonne Pollock is an Educational Consultant with Darvall Research and Consulting, Inc. in Victoria, Australia. An earlier version of this paper was included in Collected Articles of International Scientific and Practical Conference: Students' Critical Thinking Skills Development in the Framework of National Educational Standards Elaboration-Kyiv, Ukraine- January 25-27, 2001 *published by Intellect Scientific-and-Methodical Center for Critical Thinking Development, Kyiv, Ukraine.*

Website Review

www.eschoolnet.org
by Holly Buck and Brigitte Parry

Loteni is an Italian primary school teacher looking to collaborate with other teachers on a modern art project. Eva works in a small school in southwestern Norway and is looking to plan a project with other schools about energy sources and uses around the world. Anke is a teacher from a German secondary school that is about to start teaching Dutch, and she is looking for a partner school in the Netherlands. Jirina has a class of Czech students who want to make friends with a class of English-speaking pen pals.

Where do all their paths cross? On eSchoolnet's Email Exchange, a virtual intersection of involved educators looking to expand their students' worlds. The Email Exchange is just one of the features designed to help teachers across Europe collaborate…and collaboration is just one of the aims of eSchoolnet, a remarkable multilingual learning community set up by the European Schoolnet Office, which represents a partnership of 23 European Ministries of Education.

The European Schoolnet was created three and a half years ago to help teachers

- access information about new initiatives, projects, collaboration opportunities, and online resources;
- learn about free information harvested by European colleagues;
- create relationships between and among those using the Internet by offering news in as many languages as possible; and
- save time and money by surfing the web for contacts and materials.

With these goals in mind, the project gave birth to both a comprehensive website (www.eschoolnet.org) and the European Schoolnet teachers' newsletter, which is sent every three weeks to about 25,000 teachers worldwide. A decentralised team of translators situated in education institutions or ministries of education faithfully convey the messages of editor Brigitte Parry in 13 languages, including English, French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, Swedish, Danish, Slovenian, Japanese, Icelandic, Catalan, and Hebrew. Through eSchoolnet's newsletter and website, you can identify curriculum resources on every school subject, meet pen pals from around the continent, join an online workshop to learn new teaching skills, or work on international classroom projects.

ESchoolnet provides curricular resources (www.eschoolnet.org/resources) in three sections: "Favourites," which samples the top resources selected by educators across Europe; "Spider," a search engine for education resource databases; and "Subjects," resources arranged by topic cross-curricular or thematic units. Activities are adaptable, and can easily be fit into any subject area.

For help integrating information and communication technology into existing lessons, see www.eschoolnet.org/practice. The "Practice" section features exam-

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Website Review

ples from European teachers and principals; new eLearning suggestions are also welcome. Ideas, lesson plans, and success stories are organized by discipline. Also in the "Practice" section, everyday life at school is discussed—find out how schools in other countries deal with the sudden return of "hustle and bustle," or click on a map to virtually visit different schools across the continent. Moreover, online training workshops are also available at www.eschoolnet.org/training. Strengthen your own skills; or if you have something you would care to share, create your own workshop.

Christian, an English schoolteacher, decided to try out an online workshop she heard about on eSchoolnet, even though she had no idea what to expect. She was surprised at the "real feeling of community" that was generated, since it is "often assumed that computers dehumanise people." An article about her experience, "Behind the Scenes at an Online Workshop," can be found in eSchoolnet's "Virtual Magazine" (www.eschoolnet.org/magazine). From news about technology to information about events, the Virtual Magazine keeps teachers up to date. Learn about programs that award research trips to teachers. Discover the "Virtual Novels" project, where 6,000 students from 30 different countries are playing differ-

ent characters and writing stories about the virtual places they collectively interact in; and find out what other projects teachers are creating together.

> *The possibilities for classroom Internet collaboration are limited only by your imagination*

If you're inspired by the efforts of successful teachers, and want to collaborate on a project of your own, you're in luck: eSchoolnet also assists readers seeking to create international classroom projects. Information on how to establish a project is available at www.eun.org/eun.org2/goto.cfm?sid=575. This section is especially useful for the teacher who has never created a collaborative project on the Internet. Or consider taking part in projects already up and running—for example, join a French school project where students who live by the sea exchange information about fish, boats, and pollution with students from other countries. Or assist a Belgian elementary school class in a tree-growing project. The possibilities for classroom Internet collaboration are limited only by your imagination. For advice and tips see www.eschoolnet.org/collaboration.

In the "Community" section of eSchoolnet, you can learn how to set up your own virtual community and use existing tools to share files, send instant messages, and write e-mails. Interested in giving students an authentic reason to write in a foreign language? Then visit the "Pen Pal Corner" at http://www.eun.org/eun.org2/goto.cfm?sid=816, which encourages students to swap e-mails with others across Europe.

Looking for other ways to involve students online? How about entering a cartoon competition (with the theme "tolerance")? Or encourage your students to join the eXplora Challenge, an international contest for secondary school students, where teams of students create websites and learn from each other. These projects change frequently, offering students new ways to experience eLearning.

Whether you are seeking to engage students in information and communication technology-related activities, or improve your own skills and exchange eLearning ideas, eSchoolnet's website and newsletter are valuable resources.

To subscribe to the newsletter in the language of your choice: http://www.eun.org/eun.org2/eun/en/Collaboration_eschoolnet/content.cfm?ov=9119&lang=en

To contribute, contact the editor: Brigitte Parry brigitte.parry@eun.org

Announcements

Linguistics Conference

The Al-Farabi Kazakh National University will host an international conference, *Psycholinguistics and Sociolinguistics: Conditions and Perspectives* in Almaty, Kazakhstan, September 18–19, 2003. Topics will include Language Policy, Societal Bilingualism, and Child Bilingualism. Working languages for the conference are Kazakh, Russian, and English. Deadline for submitting proposals is November 30, 2002. For more information see: http://www.linguistlist.org/issues/13/13-1947.html#2

Children's Literature Association International Sponsorship Grant

The International Committee of the Children's Literature Association will sponsor one international scholar to present a paper at the Association's annual conference, to be held in El Paso, Texas, USA, June 5–8, 2003. This year the Association's special country focus panel is on Slovenia.

The Committee invites papers that focus on any aspect of Slovenian children's literature. One scholar from Slovenia will be chosen to receive a grant to attend the conference and present his/her paper in person (in English). The grant allows for up to US$1000 toward documented expenses in connection with the conference (to be given in U.S. dollars during the conference). While the grant will be awarded only to an indigenous scholar, others interested in this region are strongly encouraged to submit papers to the panel.

The deadline for submissions is January 15, 2003. The paper, with an accompanying cover letter, should be sent to the Children's Literature Association, PO Box 138, Battle Creek, MI 49016-0138, USA; fax 616-965-3568; E-mail kkiessling@childlitassn.org

Additional information is available from Meena Khorana, Chair, Panel on Slovenia.

E-mail meenakh@aol.com

Nominations for International Reading Association Awards and Grants 2002–2003

The International Reading Association sponsors a number of annual awards to recognize outstanding educators, writers, researchers, and journalists. Listed below are awards that have application deadlines in December 2002 or January 2003. Application for these awards may be made from anywhere in the world (recent winners have included researchers in Cyprus, Trinidad, and Norway). Further information about these and other IRA awards (including guidelines and application forms in PDF format for many of the awards and grants) is available on our website: www.reading.org.

Media

The **Broadcast Media Awards for Television** recognize outstanding reporting and programming on television that deal with reading and literacy, recognize the value of reading in today's society, and/or promote reading as a lifetime habit. Entries must be oriented toward the general public rather than professionals in reading education and should be informational, critical, or motivational rather than instructional. Entries must have appeared between January 1 and December 31, 2002. Association members can encourage entries by notifying broadcast media personnel that a program is appropriate for consideration. For information on submitting Television entries, write to Public Information Office. E-mail pubinfo@reading.org. Completed entries must be received by January 15, 2003.

The **Print Media Award** contest recognizes outstanding reporting in newspapers, magazines, and wire services. Entries may include in-depth studies of reading instruction, discussion of research, or ongoing coverage of reading programs in the community and must have appeared between January 1 and December 31, 2002. The contest is limited to professional journalists. Association members are invited to inform their local newspapers of the contest and to encourage the authors of worthwhile articles to enter. For applications, write to Public Information Office.

E-mail pubinfo@reading.org. Completed entries must be received by January 15, 2003.

Professional Development

The **Gertrude Whipple Professional Development Grant**, which carries a monetary prize of up to US$5,000, is awarded to assist a member with the planning and creation of professional development projects, the production of high-quality materials, the marketing and scheduling of meetings and workshops, and the logistic support for conducting them. For guidelines, write to Council and Affiliate Services Division.

E-mail gcasey@reading.org. Proposals are reviewed by a committee throughout the year.

Research

The **Elva Knight Research Grant** is a grants program of up to US$10,000 for research in reading and literacy. Non–North Americans and classroom teachers are especially encouraged to apply. It is expected that at least one grant each year will be awarded to a researcher outside the United States and Canada and that one grant will be awarded to a teacher-initiated research project. Research is defined as that which addresses significant questions for the disciplines of literacy research and practice. Projects should be completed within 2 years. Studies may be carried out using any research method or approach as long as the focus of the project is on research in reading or literacy. Activities such as developing new programs or instructional materials are not eligible for funding except to the extent that these activities are necessary procedures for the conduct of the research. All applicants must be Association members. For guidelines, write to Research and Policy Division.

E-mail research@reading.org. Deadline for submission is January 15, 2003.

The **Helen M. Robinson Grant** is a US$1,000 annual grant to support doctoral students at the early stages of their dissertation research in the area of reading and literacy. All applicants must be Association members. For application forms, write to Research & Policy Division.

E-mail research@reading.org. Completed applications must be received by January 15, 2003.

The **Jeanne S. Chall Research Fellowship** is a US$6,000 grant established to encourage and support reading research by promising scholars. The special emphasis of the Fellowship is to support research efforts in the following areas: beginning reading (theory, research, and practice that improves the effectiveness of learning to read); readability (methods of predicting the difficulty of texts); reading difficulty (diagnosis, treatment, and prevention); stages of reading development; the relation of vocabulary to reading; diagnosing and teaching adults with limited reading ability. This grant program was established to honor and carry on the work to which Dr. Jeanne S. Chall has dedicated her academic life. All applicants must be Association members. For guidelines, write to Research and Policy Division.

E-mail research@reading.org. Submission must be received by January 15, 2003.

The **Nila Banton Smith Research Dissemination Support Grant** is intended to assist any Association member to spend from 2 to 10 months working on a research dissemination activity. The grant is funded from the Nila Banton Smith Endowment and support shall not exceed US$5,000. For guidelines, write to Research and Policy Division.

E-mail research@reading.org. Deadline for submission is January 15, 2003.

The **Reading/Literacy Research Fellowship** is a US$1,000 award to a researcher residing outside the U.S. or Canada who has experienced exceptional promise in reading research. Applicants must have received a doctorate or its equivalent within the past 5 years. All applicants must be Association members. For guidelines, write to Research and Policy Division.

E-mail research@reading.org. Completed entries must be received by January 15, 2003.

The **Teacher as Researcher Grant** program is intended to support teachers in their inquiries about literacy and instruction. Grants will be awarded up to US$5,000, although priority will be given to smaller grants (e.g., $1,000–$2,000) in order to provide support for as many teacher researchers as possible. All applicants must be Association members. For guidelines, write to Research and Policy Division.

E-mail research@reading.org. Deadline for submission is January 15, 2003.

Teacher

The **Teacher as Researcher Grant** program is intended to support teachers in their inquiries about literacy and instruction. See information above.

The **Ronald W. Mitchell Convention Travel Grant** provides funding to allow teachers of children in grades 4 and 5 (ages 10–11) who might otherwise not have the opportunity to attend an IRA annual convention. Two grants are awarded each year for up to US$1,000 each to support a first-time attendance of a teacher. For guidelines, write to Executive Office.

E-mail exec@reading.org. Completed applications must be received by December 1, 2002.

Non-English entries

All entries must be submitted in the time span specified for each award. If a selection committee decides that an entry submitted in a language other than English deserves closer scrutiny for which a time-consuming partial or complete translation is needed, the entry may be considered for the following year's award.

The International Reading Association,
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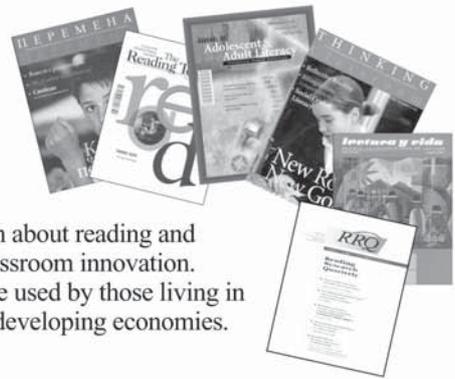
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