

96 學年度 外語 系(所) 乙(教學) 組碩士班入學考試

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Directions: The following excerpt is taken from a short article in the journal *TESOL Quarterly*, one of the most important journals in Applied Linguistics. Please do the following:

- When writing your discussion, you may draw upon your own experience as a learner/tutor/teacher and you may cite any reference that you know.

- The best essay is the one that is well-supported, well-organized, free of grammatical and vocabulary errors but at the same time use academic-level language.

[illegible]

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96 學年度 外語 系(所) 英語教學 組碩士班入學考試

科目 英文閱讀與寫作 科目代碼 4203 共 5 頁第 二 頁 *請在【答案卷卡】內作答

Source: *TESOL Quarterly*, Volume 40, Number 3, September 2006,
pages 595-604

Title of the article: English lessons

Author: Ruth Spack (a professor at Bentley College in Massachusetts, USA)

Necessary background knowledge:

The Vietnam War took place between mid 1960s to 1975, with the fall of Saigon, the capital city of South Vietnam at the time. The War was between South Vietnam, backed by the USA, and North Vietnam, backed by the Soviet Russia and China. During this period, there was an influx of Vietnamese immigrants to the USA, especially in the form of Vietnamese brides of the American soldiers who were fighting in Vietnam. The word "servicemen" refers to American soldiers.

The movies *Good Morning Vietnam* and *Lilies of the Field* that are referred to in this article are movies that portray the relationship between the American soldiers and the Vietnamese people during the war.

Excerpt starts here:

I imagine most of us remember the moment when we realized that teaching English to speakers of other languages is not an innocent endeavor. In my case that moment came in the Air Force in 1971, not long after I had received a master's degree in English and certification to teach ESOL. My husband, a pediatrician, was stationed at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, where I volunteered to teach Vietnamese brides of returning servicemen. What a wonderful opportunity, I thought. Armed with verb tenses and vocabulary, I could make use of my own basic training to help these women learn English and adjust to American culture. There was a war raging out there, and I could aid people who had suffered as a result of that very conflict.

At first things went just as I had hoped. But I soon came to understand that my work entailed more than simply teaching a new language and culture. In that classroom, I was compelled to engage with a perilous mix of race, class, gender, and colonialism. As the women learned more English and became more comfortable talking with me, I heard stories that revealed a deep pain that they had hidden while we were studying verb forms and idioms. I learned that it was common practice for their soldier husbands to have taught the women English during their stay in Vietnam but that these "lessons" included curse words whose meanings were not explained. The husbands would later roar with laughter, when, now living in the United

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States, their war brides would respond to their mothers-in-law's comments with such expressions as "No shit!" and "That's fucking unreal!" Such linguistically inappropriate language exacerbated already tenuous relationships, for several of the soldiers' mothers had trouble adjusting to the presence of their racially different daughters-in-law. Even the verb forms I had been teaching lost their innocence when I became aware of a dangerous link between language and social class identification: One woman suffered abuse when she corrected her husband's English, telling him he should say "He doesn't," not "He don't."

As I reflect back on this teaching experience, I understand now that I entered the field rather naively, unaware of the colonialist mentality that may impinge on the teaching of English to speakers of other languages. I did sense that what Stephanie Vandrick (2002) calls "a colonial shadow" (p.411) had enveloped the minds of the U.S.

servicemen who were teaching English to their spouses. I did not realize, however, that it had also affected me: an ESOL instructor who mistakenly thought I was in the classroom to do good rather than to teach. In "ESL and the Colonial Legacy," Vandrick critiques her own childhood behavior toward those who lived in the village in India where her parents served as missionaries, and she extrapolates from that experience to analyze her current teaching. In retrospect, Vandrick recognizes that she unwittingly saw herself as a miniature hostess in a foreign land, "graciously dispensing gifts, hand-me-downs, trinkets, wisdom, religion, and Western culture" (p. 413). Now an ESL professional in a U.S. college, she asks herself whether she is still positioned as a gift giver, this time dispensing the "wisdom made available through the English language, 'American culture,' and academic skills for the American university" (p. 413).

... (Some paragraphs in the original article are skipped.)

What I learned from teaching the Air Force brides was that the moment I strayed from my preset curriculum, allowing for natural conversation to arise, I enabled the students' openness, which in turn opened my eyes to the real contexts in which their language learning was taking place. I had discovered what I would later learn is a "participatory approach" to language instruction (Auerbach, 2002), which is rooted in students' realities and promotes literacy as "a tool for making change in the condition of students' lives" (p. 273). I came to understand that, because acquiring another language is inextricably linked to a learner's identity and background, my classroom needed to be responsive to students' sense of who they were and what they had already experienced and to the complicated ways their linguistic, cultural, and racial identities impacted their acquisition of new ways with words. Together, collaboratively, the students and I reshaped the curriculum to address their actual needs and concerns.

I would like to be able to say that after my Air Force experience, I immediately and radically changed my teaching. However, in other settings, I continued for a while to depend on materials that were state of the art

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but not meaningfully related to students' real concerns or not sensitive enough to their racial, cultural, religious, class, or gender identities. My own slow progress can be explained by the fact that transformative teaching rarely follows a straightforward path. But my Air Force volunteer effort did groundwork for a lifetime of reflection on teaching ESOL. My own experience and research have shown that the key to meaningful language acquisition does not lie solely in well-intentioned teachers or inventive pedagogical strategies.

...

None of us in the ESOL field to day would intentionally promote an ideology of racial and cultural superiority. But there is evidence that scholarship in the field continues to perpetuate cultural essentialism and determinism (for a discussion of this phenomenon, see Kubota, 2001 ; Kubota & Lehner, 2004 ; Leki, 1997 ; Spack, 1997 , 1998 ; Zamel, 1997). For example, a claim persists that Asian cultures aim to reproduce information rather than to extend knowledge as Western cultures do (Ballard & Clancy, 1991 ; Silva, Leki, & Carson, 1997). Such cross-cultural comparisons may be designed to offset misunderstandings about cultural difference. But, ironically, such generalizations may foster the very misrepresentations they attempt to refute. The idea that students from Asia are reproductive learners becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, often blinding instructors to students' actual competence, adaptive strategies, and critical thinking skills (Watkins & Biggs, 1996). ... [Although] the ESOL researchers state that students from Asia are incapable of critical thought, the way these teachers and researchers inscribe cultural difference has damaging consequences.

TEACHING TOWARD A CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING

I have often wondered how my own education might have been different so that, earlier, I could have taken a more critical stance toward language teaching and learning. Perhaps it could have been more like an undergraduate course I teach, "Language and Literacy: Theories into Practice," in which students tutor English language learners in community agencies and schools. Some of the class time focuses on theoretical and pedagogical material to prepare students for their tutoring. But my goal is for students to gain a critical understanding of the underlying historical, social, political, and economic structures that inform the ESOL experience — information that had been missing from my own early training. To that end, we read historical studies of immigration and language policies to see how minority populations have been both welcomed and discriminated against, how the U.S. government has both fostered and restricted linguistic diversity, and how English became the medium of learning in U.S. schools, if not the official language. We examine such issues as the English-only debate, the literacy crisis, and the global impact of English — how it is spreading worldwide, how local conditions are spawning varieties of the language, how mastery of English establishes positions of power in government and commerce. We raise questions

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about the nature and dominance of standard English and the new linguistic colonialism that is taking root.
And we read the Vandrick (2002) article, discussed earlier, so that students can address their own
ethnocentric tendencies.

In addition to scholarly texts, we read news articles, personal narratives, and poems that focus on the
themes of language and literacy. We also analyze classroom scenes in films such as *Good Morning, Vietnam*
and *Lilies of the Field*, not for pedagogical purposes only but also to consider the colonialist context of the
movies' language lessons or to question the underlying assumptions about the primacy of standard English.

Perhaps the most compelling course materials are works of fiction, for they render the lived experience of
language learning in a way that theoretical, research-based, pedagogical, and even autobiographical
materials simply cannot capture. The stories' imaginary constructs offer a distance that enables a frank and
open conversation in the classroom. At the same time, ironically, the literary qualities of the stories, their
poignancy, and the raw truths they reveal, draw students in, inviting them to reflect on their own
experiences, practices, and expectations. Together, the stories show how linguistic and geographical
background, social and economic positioning, age and gender, and racial and religious identity play a role
in English language learners' educational lives, influencing whether, when, how, and to what extent they
acquire a new language and adopt new ways of behaving and knowing. It is precisely this kind of
knowledge and understanding that I want students to bring to their own experience as tutors.

End of Excerpt