



Teaching Pronunciation Long Distance

by Greta Muller Levis (1990)

Distance Learning is a growing option in ESL teaching. For many of us this is a vague concept - What actually constitutes distance learning? Distance learning can occur using the Internet, TV, or videos.

At North Carolina State University (NCSU), in Raleigh, distance learning usually consists of an ordinary class which is televised and watched by students in their homes. The distance students watch the broadcasts and do all the homework and tests according to arrangements made by the professor. After the first semester a course is taught like this, it is then available on videotape for students to watch at home.

My experience with distance learning began when I saw NCSU science, math, and other courses broadcast on TV. I was intrigued by the possibilities of using these classes for authentic language input in our ESL classes. As I explored this possibility, I found myself to be not just a user of these classes, but I actually signed up to teach an ESL pronunciation class.

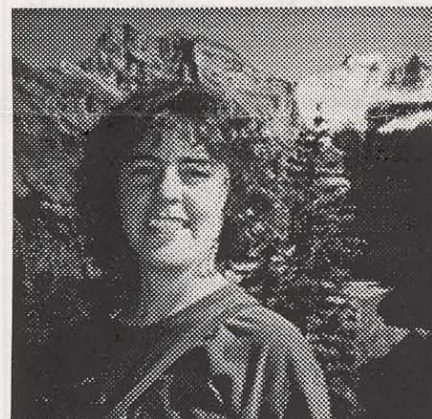
Preparing to teach a distance learning class involved a whole new set of decisions about how to develop a class. Initially, I had to consider how I was going to communicate with my students. How much and what kind of contact would I need with them? Since it was an oral skills class, I decided that homework should be audiotaped and mailed in to me. I would return the tapes with my recorded feedback. Additional communication should occur by telephone whenever possible. Also, some

communication could occur through e-mail or fax. Students would be required to come to campus twice each semester to give oral presentations and to take the midterm and final oral exams.

While planning the course, I had to adapt my syllabus to fit the demands of the special room and the fact that off-campus students would not be in the classroom to participate in pair- and group-work. Classes taught through Instructional Telecommunications are regularly scheduled classes but are offered in special classrooms that have professional videotaping facilities.

I took the lead of the Spanish and French teachers who had taught such classes before me and decided that we could still do pair and group work activities in the classroom. Students working at home were reminded to continue practicing out loud while the classroom students were doing the same. Then I acted as "Phil Donahue," the talk show host, by moving up to one small group or pair with the big microphone so those students at home who wanted to could listen to the other students practice and receive my feedback.

Other practice activities were done with the students passing the microphone among themselves. Individual students also gave oral presentations. I assigned the students to bring in an item to tell the class about. The zoom-lens overhead camera could make even a student's stamp collection come alive on the TV screen in the classroom and at home. The distance students of



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course didn't have the same audience when they came in to give their presentations to me, but they had obviously learned from what they saw.

The constraints of being broadcast on TV affected me in two main ways. First, I had to consider the classroom atmosphere. For the sake of the in-class students, I wanted to keep the atmosphere casual so they would not feel self-conscious about being filmed and televised. However, I wanted to maintain a professionalism appropriate to the more public nature of the class. So, I worried more than usual about how I looked and acted.

Second, I had to be extremely well prepared. Spontaneity was more dangerous

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with the larger and unknown audience. Both of these constraints worked to the class's advantage: My teaching was on the whole more consistent than usual, I was conscious of trying to smile more frequently, use more appropriate body language and dress professionally, and I focused more than usual on the needs and feelings of the students. I did, however, find that my sensitivity to daily excellence made it hard to watch myself and improve. On those few occasions when I did turn on my TV to watch, I found so many things wrong that I couldn't watch longer than 5 minutes. Now, a year later, I can more easily watch and learn from my successes and mistakes.

I had two main groups of students for the class: ghost students and my regular students. Everyone in town knew me, from grocery store clerks, to lifeguards at the pool, to my daughter's preschool friends. Many of the foreign language teachers in our department admitted watching my class daily to improve their pronunciation, and some American friends argued with me about issues like reductions and blending. Paying students, however, have been harder to come by. While the class was on TV, numerous non-native speakers watched the class and practiced their English, but only a handful paid the registration fees and took the class for credit. The usual problems for many ESL classes seemed to apply to this class as well - non-native speakers didn't register because of the cost and/or visa restrictions.

My regular students typically have jobs or family responsibilities and take the class because it meets their scheduling needs. With only one exception, they have been very motivated. Their progress with English pronunciation has been unusually high. They have consistently gotten the highest grades in the class.

Was it worth teaching an ESL class through distance learning? The answer, I believe, is a definite 'yes'. Student success and improvement combined with the obvious motivation of the students has made the class very rewarding to teach. In addition, constant re-evaluation of my preparation and teaching, both during the semester the class was recorded and in subsequent semesters, when the class is offered by video, has helped me to be a more reflective and successful teacher.

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Faculty Update

A series of pronunciation books, entitled *Speechcraft: Discourse Pronunciation for Advanced Learners*, by **Laura Hahn** (1986) and Professor **Wayne Dickerson**, has been accepted for publication in 1998 by The University of Michigan Press. The project consists of a core textbook and workbooks for different ESP audiences, such as international TAs and college students.

Judith Gordon (PhD, Applied Linguistics, UIUC) will join the DEIL faculty as Program Coordinator/Lecturer in English for Specific Purposes this summer. She will teach a course on ESP and work on developing an ESP internship for the MATESL curriculum.

This past semester Professor **Larry Bouton** has been on sabbatical and Professor **Howard Maclay** (Dept. of Linguistics) has been the Acting Director of DEIL. Larry has taken advantage of his "time off" and travelled to Costa Rica and Ukraine to give presentations on pragmatics and culture.

Professor **Molly Mack** has been selected as a Resident Associate in the Center for Advanced Study for 1997-98. She will collaborate on developing a course entitled: "The Mind, Brain, and Language."

Professor **Yamuna Kachru** is retiring this May from the Department of Linguistics. Her service to DEIL over the years has been great. She shares a few words with us here:

I came to the UIUC campus in 1965 and was associated with the Department of Linguistics. When I was appointed Associate Professor in 1968, the appointment was divided between three units: Center for Asian Studies, Department of Linguistics, and Division of English as a Second Language. Initially, my role in the Division was to advise select international students writing their MA thesis. Later, I volunteered to develop the course on Pedagogical Grammar of English when a need was felt for such a course. I served as Acting Director of the then Division of English as a Second Language in 1984-85, and again as Acting Director of the Division of English as an International Language in 1988-89. Over the almost three decades of my life on the campus I have enjoyed working with my colleagues (who are my friends, too) in the Division and its IEI, and the MATESL candidates. On the eve of my retirement, I wish the Division and its IEI a bright future.

DEIL's 50th

In connection with DEIL's 50th anniversary celebration this coming fall (October 17-18), we are assembling alumni recollections.

Please send us a brief account of your most amusing, endearing or important memories by July 1.

After all, your story is essential to our story!

Many thanks,

Pearl Goodman
Susan Taylor

Alumni Update

DEIL Awards

1997

Congratulations to the following graduate student award winners:

DEIL Peter Stevens Award for Academic Excellence

Juliet Jones

DEIL Silver Anniversary Award for Excellence in ESL Teaching

Susan McDonagh

DEIL Peter Stevens Award for Excellence in Teaching in the IEI

Darenda Borgers

Cheryl (Wexler) Scott (1975) has returned to a local school district teaching ESL to elementary-aged students after spending many years teaching night school ESL and tutoring from the home. With two children in high school and one to begin in the fall, she feels it was the "perfect time to return to a faculty setting" and she "loves it!" scottfam@cyberenet.net

Trine Dahl (1976) has been living in Trondheim, Norway, with her husband Patrick and two sons since completing her MATESL degree. She works as a consultant for hard-of-hearing children and as a speech therapist with both specific language impaired children and adults who have suffered strokes. Last fall she became the director for the Municipal Speech Clinic, which serves people of all ages and speech language disorders. Although not directly teaching ESL, she "has had tremendous use for the knowledge from the field" in her work. Trine has also completed a Doctor of Education program in Norway. patrick.a.vogel@medisin.ntnu.no

Lourdene Huhra (1980) has been busy since her days as a MATESL student. She has taught in Spain, worked as the Director of the International Office at Illinois Institute of Technology, worked for the City Colleges of Chicago, and even done an MBA in international business. Currently she is the Assistant Dean for International Education at Milwaukee Area Technical College. One aspect of her job involves getting federal funding for programs; to date she has gotten about \$500,000 from the U.S. Depart-

ment of Education, most of it for curriculum and faculty development programs. huhral@milwaukee.tec.wi.us

Yeon Hee Choi (1985) is back at her alma mater, Ewha Womans University in Korea, after teaching for 3 1/2 years in the department of English Education at Chonnam National University. She says "I love teaching here, even though I am so busy with all the work at school, my own research, and a lot of outside work including some projects for the Ministry of Education." She was at TESOL this year and got to renew friendships with many DEILers at the reunion. yhchoi@mm.ewha.ac.kr

Peggy Sharkey (formerly, Qureshi) (1986) sends email from Osaka, Japan where she has been teaching at Kansai Gaidai for three years. If you remember, before that she was in Barcelona at the North American Institute for five years. Now she and husband Lew are making preparations to move back to the U.S. (Saratoga Springs, NY) this fall with their one-year-old son, Michael. They have started their own company, Speakeasy Language-Adventure Tours, a company which organizes custom-designed group tours of the U.S. for ESL students. They are looking forward to being back in the U.S., close to friends and family. You can reach her at: speasy@flare.net

Barbara Bair (1988) gave a presentation at the Pragmatics conference in April entitled: "Training ITAs in the pragmatics of questions". Barb teaches two courses for International Teaching Assistants in DEIL and is busy as the mother of Julian (6) and Glenna (2). barbbair@staff.uiuc.edu

John Levis (1989) completed his PhD in the Dept. of Educational Psychology/SLATE, UIUC last year. He, wife Greta, and daughter Deesha have been in Raleigh, North Carolina for three years now. John's official title is Assistant Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, but he writes: "I'm Mr. ESL here. I get all the calls ("Hi, I'm a waitress but I want to travel to Indonesia to teach English. What book can I use?"), make the decisions, have almost complete freedom in developing courses, direct a 5-week Summer Intensive Program (does anyone want a job?), write grant proposals, sit on committees, am developing an ESL teacher certification program, am learning to be ultra-organized ... Everything I know seems to come in useful

at different times."

levis@social.chass.ncsu.edu

Mariko (Onuki) Masden (1989) is a lecturer of Japanese at the International Student Center of Kumamoto University in Japan. masden@gpo.kumamoto-u.ac.jp

Carolyn Quarterman (1989) has accepted a position starting in June at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. She will teach in the Intensive program during the summer and will be a full time lecturer in the fall. Carolyn is happy that she will be able to work once again with her former DEIL colleagues, John and Greta Levis. 105317.3105@compuserve.com

Nobuko Chikamatsu (1990) is in her second year as assistant professor at DePaul University teaching Japanese and Applied Linguistics (SLA, Psycholinguistics). nchikama@condor.depaul.edu

Mei-chen Huang (1990) is happy about her appointment as an associate professor at the National Central University in Taiwan. fuguaytz@msl.hinet.net

Nina (Skokut) Ito (1990) writes that she "finally" got married to Shin Ito this spring. She is currently teaching at Cal State Long Beach University in southern California. NinaSkokut@aol.com

Reiko Ono (1992) is currently teaching at Kobe Kaisei College, a small women's college in Japan. Her responsibilities include teaching English Grammar, English, Teaching English as a Foreign Language, and two Sociolinguistics seminar courses. H00916@sinet.ad.jp

Julie Prentice (1992) has been teaching in Beijing for eight years. She works with adults in a Training Centre, as well as doing materials development and some one-on-one tutoring. prentice@nsl.chinaonline.com.cn.net

David Malatesta (1994) is finishing his third and final year at Asia University in Tokyo. He spent a few weeks in Vietnam in the spring and now he's "back to the grindstone" with the start of the new school year. David's still playing the bass — he just joined the jazz band on campus. He would like to network with DEIL alumni as he looks for a new job in Japan starting next spring. If you have any leads, write him at: malatest@asia-u.ac.jp

Jane Alsberg (1995) has taken on a new position in DEIL and the Office of In-

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structional Resources. She is coordinating the U of I's SPEAK tests and orientation for new international teaching assistants as well as teaching ESL 404 - a pronunciation course. alsberg@uiuc.edu

Patricia Clemente (1995) sends us more news from Bonn, Germany where she is teaching Business English at a language center to adult professionals who are involved with the European Community. She really enjoys her students, describing them as "smart and so cultured!"

ma@bonn.iz-soz.de

Yasuhiro Nakajima (1995) will be a doctoral student at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa beginning this August. Starting in July, he will teach ESL courses at the Hawai'i English Language Program (HELP) and will continue his research on language testing, which includes criterion-referenced language test development (CRLTD). majikana@students.uiuc.edu

Chin-Chuan (Sara) Kang (1996) is working in the HongKong Bank in Taiwan. She is currently in charge of English training for the Tainan branch and is able to make

use of some of her DEIL ESP training in this position. sara4961@ms10.hinet.net

Su Liu (1996) recently moved to St. Peters, Missouri. You can reach her on line at: zpei@ccsmtp.memc.com

Heidi Shetzer (1996) stays busy these days teaching ESL at the University of New Orleans and working with her Internet consulting business, Dirt Road Media. Her work focuses on integrating the use of the Internet into Intensive English Programs. hshetzer@ix.netcom.com

Jenny Wyse Suri (1996) has been teaching ESL at Northern State University in Aberdeen, South Dakota during the past academic year. After surviving one of the worst winters in the Dakotas, she is now looking forward to moving to Philadelphia with her husband Raj this summer. surij@wolf.northern.edu

DEIL's 50th REUNION

October 17 - 18, 1997

SEE YOU in C - U !!!

From the Editors

This spring has been another busy semester for us here at DEIL . . . It was great to catch up with some of you at TESOL in Orlando and then again at the Pragmatics conference here in C-U. If you miss getting together with your fellow DEILers, consider coming to the 50th anniversary celebration this fall! It will be a wonderful opportunity for reminiscing and networking with old and new friends. If you have any ideas for the reunion, be sure to let us know by sending in the response sheet on the insert.

As you can see from the email directory enclosed in this issue, more and more of our alumni are wired nowadays. Whatever your mode of communication, please remember to help keep us up-to-date by sending us changes of address, jobs, etc. Due to the nature of the "traveling bug" that's a part of many of us, some of us do move around a lot. Keep us posted as to where you're at and what you're doing, both personally and professionally. It's always good to hear from you!

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∞

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DEILing You In

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