

## Movie Reviews: A Multi-Skills Approach to Redesigning a Grammar Course

**Dennis Bricault**

*North Park University, Chicago*

*ESL 0980: Advanced Structure: A comprehensive review of complex sentence structure. Proofreading forms an important part of the course.* The title and course description are sure to conjure up images of hours of grammar worksheets and uninspiring exercises. Over the years I've taught Advanced Structure, I have seen it evolve from a fairly traditional grammar review course into one that presently serves as the capstone activity for students in North Park University's Academic ESL Program. While we continue to cover many of the same grammar topics that students have worked on since the course was first designed, core assignments now revolve around reviews of movies watched outside of the classroom setting. As a result, students are challenged to develop all of their skills as they watch a series of movies and respond in various related activities, both inside and outside of the classroom. I would like to provide an overview of the approach, the course

assignments and activities used, and some perceived benefits, as well as a few caveats for teachers who might wish to adopt a modified version of this course design.

A little context and historical background might be in order. North Park has a three-level (low intermediate, high intermediate, and advanced) intensive Academic English program. Students enroll in four classes (reading, writing, speaking-listening, and structure) and are in class 18 hours a week for 15 weeks. A typical advanced-level student has a TOEFL placement score of around 500 but with only fair to good writing and speaking abilities. The course was originally conceived as one that focused on verb tenses and subordinate clauses; evaluations were based on in-class instructor-designed tests as well as proofreading quizzes. While this approach yielded positive results (i.e., students were performing well on exams and passing the program's exit writing test) and favorable feedback on course evaluations, I couldn't help but think that I could be doing much more in the class to make it more communicative, engaging, and meaningful.

My first attempt at overhauling the course was to move away from a test-based course to project-based course. I dispensed with in-class exams – the pattern I had observed was that students “study for the test, take the test, and forget the material soon thereafter” – and created a course in which students completed a major cross-cultural research project over the 15-week term. While this approach worked fairly well over a few years, several limitations became evident. First, the bulk of student writing that I was receiving was at

the end of the semester, which resulted in more summative than formative feedback – not a desirable outcome either for the students or the instructor (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Sorcinelli, 1991). Furthermore, I realized that many of our students found the task too daunting (due in part to a scarcity of materials on many cross-cultural topics) or not in line with their own goals (many students did not plan to continue studying in an American university setting). Finally, the activities involved in the research project did not line up well with concepts and skills being covered in the students' other courses – reading, writing, or speaking-listening.

After coming to the realization that the research-project approach was not providing students with the best opportunities to develop their language skills, I embarked on a mission to re-design the course once more. This time, I conducted a survey of current and past Advanced Structure students to gather their opinions of a few ideas for a future course; I then ran the ideas past my colleagues in ESL, the English Department, and the Writing Center. The model I have settled on uses movie reviews as the central focus of the course assignments and in-class activities.

The concept of using videos to enhance the course is certainly not new (Stempelski, 1992): students are required to watch several movies outside of class and write reviews — simple enough! The real challenge was to turn these writing assignments into truly meaningful, multi-skills activities that would challenge students both inside and outside of class. I began by  
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### Submission Information

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# Message From The President / Board News

Kasia Stadnik, Illinois State University



Kasia Stadnik  
2006-2007 President

**A**s this year's President of ITBE, I am writing this message to welcome all members of our organization to another year of what we hope to be successful professional experiences and to introduce myself to you in my new role. I must admit that as much as I am truly happy to be able to do my share of work for ITBE, I am also looking into this year with a certain dose of anxiety—it IS,

after all, a professional organization whose size alone (about 900 members) can inspire an awe and whose many engagements require constant attention and careful consideration.

My work as a member of the Executive Board began several years ago, when I became the Newsletter editor. For nine years, I put together the Newsletter and attended the Executive Board meetings about once a month. It was those meetings that taught me what an incredible amount of personal involvement it takes on the part of the volunteer Board members (and others) to make sure that ESL and Bilingual Education teachers in our state have a forum to express their interests, voice their concerns, share their values and experiences, and experience a sense of comraderie and belonging. Full of true admiration for the efforts of people like Marsha Santelli, Jane Curtis, Julie Howard, Ana King, Virginia Gibbons, Laurie Martin (to name just a few) and yet unable to participate in the work on the many ITBE activities at that time due to family responsibilities, I vowed to get more involved as soon as my situation allowed me to.

When I got back on the Board last year as the First Vice President and started attending the meetings, I witnessed a truly impressive display of professionalism and almost complete devotion to the mission of ITBE when the many experienced, as well as relatively new, Board members “rescued” the convention when it seemed nearly impossible to do so. I am certain that most of you would have no trouble recognizing names

such as Paul Angelis, Madonna Carr, Ana King, Laurie Martin, Marsha Santelli, and Alan Seaman because they seem to have always been involved. I hope that, like me, you also noticed how many newer Board members (in addition to Yasmin Ranney, last year's President, and Irene Brosnahan, the Newsletter editor for the last three years) “caught the bug” and participated very actively in organizing the professional events that all of us so look forward to every year. Claudia Becker, Eric Bohman, Jennifer Eick-Magan, Margaret Gigous, Betsy Kubota, Maja Teref, to name just a few, all made it possible for all of our members to enjoy the benefits that ITBE offers.

Even though so many of the experienced and devoted Board members have decided they need a break this year from the relentless pace of working for ITBE all the time, I have their assurance that they will help with their expertise. That paired with the fact that I will be able to work with the newly elected Vice President Russell Clark, whose professionalism, integrity, and personal warmth I find so inspiring; the fact that the other newly elected members—Angie Balodimas-Bartolomei, Britt Johnson, Angela Mains, Holly Lawyer, Jason Schneider—show so much enthusiasm for the positions they sought; the fact that Marilyn Nystrom, our new Executive Secretary, and Eric Bohman, the new Treasurer, stepped in to help with the work makes it possible for me to look into this year with a lot of optimism.

Just like my predecessors, I encourage you to try to be an *active* member of ITBE. Even if you are unable to get directly involved in organizing the ITBE events, you can still make a difference by sharing your vision of what it is that *you* would like this organization to do for all its members.

Best wishes for a good school year!

Sincerely,  
Kasia Stadnick, President 2006-2007



## Highlights from the May 20, 2006 Board meeting and the special post-convention 2006 meeting on July 17, 2006.

During the final Board meeting of the year 2005-2006, the discussion focused on the summary of the major events and undertakings of the ITBE. One of the first items on the agenda, however, was the announcement of the election results (Vice President Russell Clark, members-at-large Angie Balodimas-Bartolomei, Britt Johnson, Angela Mains, Holly

Lawyer, Jason Schneider) and of the approval of the revised Constitution. The discussion also included the 2006 convention, which received overall positive evaluations. Planning for the 2007 convention began with the decision to hold it again in Naperville. Although some attendees and publishers would like the convention to get back to the Chicago downtown area, there is not enough time to consider an alternative location for 2007. The Board approved the addition of one more graduate scholarship and of additional categories to the poetry contest. Several long-term Board members whose terms came to an end and/or who decided to take a break from the responsibilities of ITBE received recognition. Additionally, the new Executive Secretary, Marilyn Nystrom, and Treasurer, Eric Bohman, were welcomed in their new roles.

(continued from page 1)

looking at the grammar topics we normally cover (singular/ plural, subject-verb agreement, quantifiers, determiners, adjective clauses, noun clauses, articles, adverbials) as well as the rhetorical styles taught in the tandem writing course (descriptive, narrative, compare-contrast, cause-and-effect, and argumentative). I then developed writing tasks that would incorporate elements from both classes at roughly the same points of the semester.

Finally, I decided on a general theme (education, ethics, social problems, migration) that would drive the choices of the movies that students could choose to watch. I settled on the four following assignments:

#1. **Theme:** Education. **Rhetorical style:** Narrative.

**Grammar point(s):** Use of the past tense. Subject-verb agreement. Quantifiers and determiners. **Task:** Write a two-page synopsis of one of the movies. **Sample movies:** *Stand and Deliver*; *Lean on Me*; *Mr. Holland's Opus*; *Paper Chase*; *Higher Learning*.

#2. **Theme:** Ethics. **Rhetorical style:** Descriptive.

**Grammar point(s):** Adjective clauses. Premodification. **Task:** Write a two-page paper describing the main character in great detail; discuss the ethical dilemma s/he faces. **Sample movies:** *Wall Street*; *The Firm*; *Liar, Liar*; *Shattered Glass*; *Twelve Angry Men*; *Jerry McGuire*; *Citizen Kane*.

#3. **Theme:** Social Problems. **Rhetorical style:**

Argumentative. **Grammar point(s):** Noun clauses. Articles. **Task:** Write a two-page paper in which you describe the social problem highlighted in the documentary. Then give three reasons why this social problem could or could not occur in your home country. **Sample movies:** *Roger & Me*; *Bowling for Columbine*; *Supersize Me*; *Lost Boys of Sudan*.

#4. **Theme:** Migration. **Rhetorical style:** Cause and effect. **Grammar point(s):** Adverbials. Conditionals.

**Task:** Write a two-page paper discussing why the main characters left their homes, where they went, and what happened. **Sample movies:** *In America*; *The Emigrants*; *Grapes of Wrath*; *Coming to America*; *A Man Called Horse*; *Dances with Wolves*.

Taken as a whole, these four assignments accomplish a wide array of objectives. First, they require students to consider a broad theme, select a related movie, watch it in its entirety, engage in four rhetorical styles of writing, and focus on form as well as content. They produce short, frequent papers, rather than one longer research project: in so doing, they build up their language skills (by concentrating on subject-verb agreement early on, then noun modification, and finally working their way up

to complex sentence structure), thereby enabling the instructor to give more immediate formative feedback. Likewise, students are more apt to spend more time proofreading if they are producing shorter (2-3 pages) papers.

So far this reconfiguration might not strike you as particularly innovative or multi-skills, but the four reviews are really just one facet of the course activities. I have also developed three in-class exercises that target other skills as well. During the first week of the semester, I use one two-hour class period for the sole purpose of watching a full-length movie, *Dead Poets Society*. Students are given a viewing guide that prompts them to look for different types of interactions (student/student, students/Mr. Keating, students/other teachers, other teachers/Mr. Keating) and different features of the Welton School (curriculum, extra-curriculum, traditions). The guide serves the dual purpose of getting students to dwell on a limited range of events and people from the movie while at the same time encouraging them not to pay close attention to every detail. We dedicate a part of the next class to discussion of the viewing guide in small groups, and then I talk to them about how to determine what is and is not important when watching a movie in conjunction with the class. In short, this activity provides them with a framework for “how to watch a movie.”

A second activity which has proven to be very productive is the small-group discussions that allow students to synthesize orally various dimensions of the movies – setting, characters, synopsis, tensions, to name a few. They also have an opportunity to rate the movies on a scale of one to four stars. Students are placed in groups according to the movies they watched, though depending on the class, they could be in groups where each student has watched a different movie. The goals of this activity are straightforward – free oral production and listening comprehension. I keep my distance as they talk, offering assistance when asked or at times injecting an observation or cultural explanation.

The third in-class activity is as close as I come to giving students a traditional test: the proofreading exercise. As has been the case with the rest of the course, this activity has evolved over the years. It began as a paragraph full of grammatical errors that students had to correct – an exercise that has its merits, but which does not necessarily reflect what a student can do to improve his/her own writing. The most recent version of the proofreading exercise requires students to respond to a question about the movie s/he has watched (e.g., for students who watched *The Paper Chase*, they have to write about Professor Kingsfield's classroom; for those who saw *Stand and Deliver*, they describe Mr. Escalante's first day

in math class). Students write one, and only one, paragraph; they are encouraged to use all notes, books, dictionaries, and other resources as they produce and proof-read their own writing, which more closely replicates what they will have to do on their own once they have completed their ESL classes. The exercises are evaluated on the basis of content, organization, and grammar. I decided to use very specific questions as the basis of the exercise when I suspected that some students were relying on their faint recollections of having seen the movie years ago, or, worse still, hadn't watched the movie but had relied on a few Internet reviews to fudge their first paper. By including a proofreading exercise and an in-class discussion following each set of movies, I feel more confident that students are watching the movies with greater care. I also have samples of in-class writing as a way of gauging the writing they do outside of class, i.e., ensuring that they are doing their own work, or at least the bulk of it!

The four reviews comprise roughly half of the final grade, while the in-class activities and proofreading exercises count 10% each. Another 20% of the final grade is based upon an independent movie review project, which is the “capstone” activity of this de-facto capstone course. In about the tenth week of the term, I give students the guidelines to this final project: they must choose one full-length, English-language movie (not one they have used in a previous review), and write a longer (usually 3-5 pages) review. They must also incorporate the perspectives of at least three other movie reviewers, one of which must be an opposing view. For example, if the student thinks highly of the movie, s/he must find at least one reviewer who has a less favorable opinion. This final movie project aims to accomplish a broad number of objectives: in addition to refined writing, proofreading, and language usage, students must also do some low-level research to find reviews (drawing from their reading classes); they use proper citations (a skill practiced in their writing classes); they are made aware of the issue of plagiarism and practice how to recognize and avoid it; and they make a short presentation to the class on their movie – a synopsis and a recommendation (using their presentation skills from their speaking-listening classes). They write two drafts and meet with me individually to discuss the first draft, which allows us to negotiate meaning and clarify questions. The results of these final papers and presentations have been very encouraging: students are producing some fairly polished analytical and descriptive writing after just fifteen weeks, and the finished product is often a source of pride for many of them.

The movie review model has yielded the following benefits in the Advanced Structure course:

- more frequent feedback throughout the course rather than just toward the end;

- exposure to several rhetorical styles of writing, which aligns this course more closely with the tandem writing course;
- closer attention to a progression of structures studied throughout the course;
- opportunity to discuss research and address the issue of plagiarism;
- greater student participation through a series of engaging and challenging assignments;
- development of students' critical thinking, both through writing and discussion;
- development of a capstone activity that should reflect the students' best work;
- improved performance on the exit writing test;
- higher student motivation (King, 2002);
- a channel to expose students to authentic language and culture (Bricault, 2002).

There are, however, several potential limitations for teachers considering a similar redesign of their course:

- there is the potential for more grading of papers, particularly if you use multiple drafts;
- the development of appropriate rubrics takes significant time and thought;
- choosing appropriate topics and movies (Arcario, 1992; Mackenzie, 1997) requires careful consideration;
- designing meaningful, related in-class activities can also be time-consuming;
- coordinating with other skills classes may not be feasible or easy to do;
- some students may not consider movies as a “serious” medium.

A grammar review course, therefore, does not need to rely on a traditional format or be textbook-based. By redesigning my Advanced Structure course to place movie reviews at the core, I have observed that students find the writing assignments and in-class activities more engaging and rewarding. It is an approach that takes some careful planning, but the feedback and results observed thus far have been most encouraging.

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## ILLINOIS TESOL•BE ELL Elementary Student Poetry Contest 2006 - 2007

### **Attention all Primary and Intermediate ESL/Bilingual Education Teachers:**

This year, Illinois TESOL•BE ([www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org)) is sponsoring its second statewide Elementary Poetry Contest. This is a great opportunity for your students to let their creativity shine, communicate powerfully in the English language, and express the importance of their own culture/cultural experiences.

#### **Eligibility:**

Contestant must be a student who is

- A full-time student enrolled in grades 3 – 5 in the state of Illinois.
- A non-native speaker of English, enrolled in a TBE/TPI program.
- Sponsoring teacher must be a current member of Illinois TESOL•BE.

#### **Form:**

- Students are to write an original Acrostic, Diamante, Haiku, or “Open” poem. Font: Any style or size. The poem can be handwritten. It must fit on one 8½” x 11” piece of paper.
- Entries must be submitted with a complete cover sheet. Cover sheet must include the student’s name, grade level, home language, name of the sponsoring teacher, name of the school, school address, and school phone number. (There will be no identifying information on the page of the poem. This includes any mention of the contestant’s name or school.)

**Conditions:** Failure to abide by any of these rules and conditions will result in the disqualification of the student’s poem from the competition.

- Each student may submit only one poem.
- The sponsoring teacher must be a current member of Illinois TESOL•BE.
- All poems become the property of Illinois TESOL•BE.
- All poems must be original material of the author.
  - The poem is based on prior knowledge or experiences.
  - No teacher editing.
  - Computer editing (grammar check) will not be allowed, except for spell check.

**If a student has plagiarized any part of the poem, it will result in immediate disqualification .**

**Deadline: All entries must be POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN  
December 29, 2006.**

**Mail Entries to:** Illinois TESOL•BE ELL Poetry Contest  
Margaret Gigous, North School, V.P.S.D # 45

We encourage you to have as many of your students as possible participate. Please review the Guidelines and Rubrics in the ITBE website for more details. Winning applicants will receive a gift certificate award for first and second place in grade levels 3, 4, and 5. Recipients will also be recognized at our Annual Convention on Friday, March 9th or Saturday, March 10, 2007, at the Holiday Inn Select, Naperville, Illinois. The essay cover sheet must accompany the written entry. All essays must be postmarked by **December 29, 2006.**

For additional information on the Illinois TESOL•BE Elementary Poetry Contest, please visit our website at [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org), or contact me:

Margaret Gigous  
North School  
150 W. Sunset  
Villa Park, IL 60181  
(630) 530-6285 (work)  
(630) 627-7578 (home)

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
Margaret Gigous and Ruth Becker  
Illinois TESOL•BE Elementary SIG Co-Chairs

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(cont. from page 5)

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## GREAT MISTAKES!

When is a mistake not a mistake, but a developmental leap? Quite often, I believe. One of the benefits of teaching at a specific level for a long time is that you learn the fine art of mind-reading. That is, you can look at a student-produced sentence containing an error and know that it represents progress because you know the thought process that went into it.

The classic example of “overgeneralization” given in introduction to linguistics courses always mentions “I goed,” a terrific milestone in child language development. A parent who hastens to correct the child may have missed the point: their child has now absorbed the concept that *-ed* is the past tense morpheme. What Junior doesn’t know yet is the breadth of its distribution; he is simply overgeneralizing the rule. But he has a rule!

Some of my current students have had some exposure to British English, back in Eastern Europe, and because of that they have a marked tendency to say “haven’t” in place of “don’t have” for the simple present negative of the verb *have*. I provide a lot of practice on the negative form and on short answers, too, since they have a tendency to reply “Yes, I have,” to the question “Do you have a pencil?”

So, I could only be amused and delighted when, a few weeks ago, I received homework from a hard-working student with the sentence “I don’t have had breakfast yet,” in an exercise using present perfect tense. I quickly realized that, rather than making a random and incoherent sentence, she had taken my admonitions about “don’t have” to heart and was substituting it any-

where she saw a negative using the word “have”! In other words, when asked to make the sentence “I’ve had breakfast” into a negative, she looked at the auxiliary “have,” and thought “Oh, I know! Kristin told me the negative of “have” isn’t “haven’t” - it’s “don’t have”! And she popped it in the sentence.


I got another great mistake today. Last week I had taught some rules for articles, including one that explained that a commonplace or well-known location can be referred to with “the,” even on the first mention. We can say “I’m going to the store,” even when you don’t know exactly which store you’re going to because we have a cultural understanding about the commonness of “the store.” I explained that “the hospital” could be used this way, as in “They’re taking her to the hospital.” So a student wrote on the board, “Before I came to the US, I had worked in the hospital.”

These wrong answers are really “right” and are growth markers; in fact, they are so right that it’s time to move on to the next level of complexity. And that’s why mistakes can be so “right on.”

Kristin Lems ([KLems@nl.edu](mailto:KLems@nl.edu)) has written articles, chapters and books about ESL teaching for 20 years, since her Fulbright to Algeria in the mid 1980’s. She’s co-author of an upcoming series on case studies of best practices in reading fluency, for Scholastic. She coordinates the ESL/Bilingual Approval program at National-Louis University.

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# Member Snapshot

**Name:** Ruth Becker

**Place of birth and current residence:** I was born in New York City and currently live in Racine, Wisconsin.

**Currently working as:** I am the ESL coordinator for the Beach Park School District in northern Illinois and also the head ESL teacher at my school. I have enjoyed many positions dealing with second language acquisition and literacy. I have taught in a bilingual program in Puerto Rico, at Delgado Community College in New Orleans, and the Intensive Language Institute at the University of Illinois. In addition, I was a faculty member at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, where I taught the reading and language arts courses, and I was a Curriculum Designer/Site Supervisor for the PLATO Elementary and Adult Reading Computer-Assisted

Education Projects at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign.

**Years in education:** 20 years

**Years as ITBE member:** Three years

**A memorable experience:** When I was teaching at the community college in New Orleans, I taught a class that consisted primarily of political refugees. The students were Cambodian boat people, Iranians, and Nicaraguans. Their eagerness and enthusiasm for learning English and starting a new way of life were remarkable. I admired their courage and their ability to share the stories of their struggles with the class. Also, no matter what their background, they were willing to accept any job in order to get ahead. This class showed me what it really means to be a teacher, with both sides giving and learning.

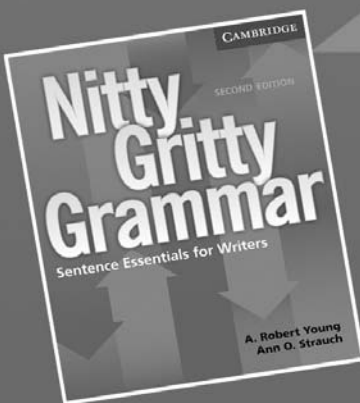
**A regrettable professional experience:**

I regret that I don't know more languages. I know Italian, French, and Spanish, but I wish I also knew Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chinese, and Mayan. I think knowing more languages helps us to be better language teachers.

**Professional passions:** I am curious about how children learn. I like to observe them and to key in on the process. I am also interested in second language writing. My dissertation was on the transfer from first to second language writing, and I would like to further pursue this area. I am also very interested in vocabulary development.

**Future plans:** I would like to take an intensive Spanish class and live abroad so that I could achieve advanced Spanish fluency and proficiency. I would also like to integrate more cross-cultural activities into the curriculum in my classroom.

**Beyond work:** Spending time with family and friends is foremost. I also enjoy swimming and snorkeling; music, especially attending concerts at Ravinia in the summer; reading, and traveling. I really enjoy being a member of ITBE!



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**Elizabeth Minicz**, Associate Professor  
*Harper College, Palatine, Illinois*

Writing this issue's column has been especially difficult because when I did my research, nearly every article I found was related to the immigration bills passed by the House and the Senate. On June 14 when I wrote my column, no compromise bill had been passed. Whatever the final version, our students, adults or children, whether in ESL or bilingual classes, will be affected in ways we cannot begin to comprehend. I am concerned and confused by the information in the news, as I suspect you are too. I usually search for quirky or offbeat stories to report, but this time all the 'bites' are about the immigration controversy and citizenship; they're much more serious than I'd like. Oh well. The news doesn't always please.

### **English and Assimilation**

On June 8, 2006, *The Washington Post's* staff writer, Michael Abramovitz, reported on President Bush's recent visit to a community center in Omaha, Nebraska, where immigrants learn English, as he continued his campaign for immigration legislation. Abramovitz said President Bush, who has been trying to bridge the gap between the Senate and House bills "coupled a call for strict border enforcement with a plea that newcomers be treated compassionately." The President says that illegal immigrants who are here need to learn English and assimilate into American culture. I am not sure there is agreement in this country as to what assimilate means so I hope the President will clarify what assimilation means.

Abramovitz quoted Bush as saying, "Congress must approve a plan that would give hope to those illegal immigrants who have lived in the United States for a long time. It makes no sense at all to say we can find people and run them out of the country." Nebraska's Senator Chuck Hagel (R) is a supporter of the President's approach to immigration changes, but not Senator Ben Nelson (D). He said, in response to Bush's visit to Omaha, "Nebraskans want to secure the Border first and then deal with the 12 million illegal residents already here." Bush wants to double the size of the border patrol and is sending 6,000 National

Guards to assist them. I hope, as does the President, that they will act compassionately.

### **Applications for Citizenship Increase**

Fierce debates, protest marches, angry demonstrators, slurs against immigrants, and fear have led to record numbers of applications for naturalization. According to an article in the June 9, 2006, *Washington Post* by Sudarsan Raghavan and Karin Brulliard, there was an 18 percent increase in applications from January to April 2006, compared to the same time period last year. The numbers speak for themselves, in English, of course.

- 251, 385 applications filed between January and April 2006
- an 18 percent increase in petitions to sponsor relatives, compared to the same time in 2005
- a 12 percent increase in visits to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration website over the same time period in 2005
- double the number of downloaded citizenship applications as last year (140,000)
- as many as eight million immigrants are eligible to become citizens

Chris Bentley, a spokesperson for the citizenship and immigration agency, said, "We saw a dramatically higher upswing than we have ever seen before." Representative Luis Gutierrez, (D-IL) said, "People get worried that they will change the rules, and the changing of the rules will impact them personally, in terms of their status. Immigration policy is complicated enough. If you're a recent immigrant legally here, the debate is scary." Do you think so?

Around the country, immigrants have been attending "citizenship workshops." Gutierrez said that a workshop he promoted in Chicago on April 29, 2006, expected 300-400 applicants. Over 1,000 showed up. When the House passed the Sensenbrenner bill in December, "It sent a jolt through many immigrant communities," said Frank Sharry, executive director of the National Immigration Forum, an advocacy group.

July 1, 2006 is National Citizenship Day. More about that in another column.

### **New Citizenship Test Still in the Works**

I have reported in past issues about the efforts to revise the citizenship test and lamented the passing of Illinois' Peggy Dean last summer. She was one of the most optimistic people I have ever met, and I wonder what her take would be on the revisions—and the delay.

Chris Seper of *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland, Ohio) wrote about the new test in a May 28, 2006 article. He quoted Alfonso Aguilar, chief of the Office of Citizenship in the Department of Homeland Security, as saying, “Our goal is to have a test that is meaningful, that can serve as a tool to learn civics and patriotism.” It is expected that new test items will require applicants for naturalization to understand concepts like the separation of powers. Rather than asking people to identify the colors of the flag, the new test will require them to answer questions about the Oath of Allegiance and the Pledge of Allegiance. Seper says David Leopold, a Cleveland immigration attorney, is worried. Seper said, “My worry with any kind of test is whether it affects any group differently than it does another. I’ve been through this process with professors and farm workers. Frankly, people are not going to grasp some of the concepts as well as others. Are we going to make citizenship a decision based on intellectual ability?”

I share Leopold’s concern since I work with adults who have less than nine years of education in their native countries. I see the differences in cognitive ability among my students. Aguilar counters Leopold’s concern with assurances that “a battery of English as a Second Language experts will review the test so it is easy to understand.”

What is not reassuring is that additional money for civics classes is not likely to be available. Harper College has been fortunate in that it applied for English Language/Civics Education funds when they were first available and has received funds for the last five years. No new programs have been added to the originally funded ones in Illinois. In anticipation of new civics regulations for federal funds, a select number of adult education programs in Illinois will be piloting curriculum and standards this coming fiscal year. One thing for certain is there will be more program accountability a la No Child Left Behind.

### **Citizenship Fast Track: Join the Military!**

Mike Barber of the *Seattle-Post Intelligencer* wrote in a June 3, 2006 article about the increasing numbers of men and women who are using their military status to become citizens. Barber said, “Some become citizens after they have already seen combat, and some after dying for their adopted country.”

On July 3, 2002, President Bush signed an executive order that enables active-duty service men and women to get on a fast track to citizenship, to “move to the front of the line.” According to Barber, “The order allows those serving on or after September 11, 2001, to immediately file for

citizenship. Applicants pay no fees, and their children under 18 who are legal residents also automatically become citizens.” The process takes about six months. Spouses do not automatically become eligible for naturalization, but they can apply as the resident requirements are waived.

### **Some more interesting numbers:**

- More than 20,000 service men and women have been naturalized since 2002.
- More than 35,000 service members have applied for expedited naturalization. Another 35,000 are eligible to apply but have not yet done so.
- More than 537,000 people became citizens in 2004; more than 7,500 were service members.
- More than 6,000 service members became citizens in 2005.
- About 75 service members have been granted posthumous citizenship.

I had no idea. Did you?

### **No Visas for Foreign Brides and Grooms**

The *Chicago Tribune* of June 14, 2006, ran an Associated Press (AP) story by Lara Jakes Jordon about the glitch holding up visas for the prospective spouses of about 10,000 U.S. citizens. Unfortunately, the Department of Homeland Security missed its deadline to create new forms as required by a law that went into effect in March of this year to protect mail-order brides from abusive American spouses. Too bad that a lot of wedding plans were put on hold as a result of the legislation that Congress approved in December of 2005. Chris Bentley, (Where did we see that name before?), a spokesperson for Homeland Security, said the delay in processing applications was because the applicants did not address one or both of two new questions. Applicants for visas are queried about whether or not an international marriage broker was involved in matching the intended spouses, and if the U.S. citizen has been accused of a violent crime or convicted of three or more alcohol or drug-related crimes. I am definitely supportive of the intent of the law, but I wonder why it takes the Department of Homeland Security, the agency also responsible for processing naturalization applications, so long to fulfill its mandates in a timely fashion. Makes one think that the new citizenship test won’t be ready next year either.

**Katerina Vallianatos**

Tutorium in Intensive English, Chicago, Illinois

**Starfall** ([www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com)) is the companion website of a text series for young readers of pre-elementary to first grade. Attention-getting graphics, creative flash animation, and quality sound make learning the alphabet and reading fun. Starfall's *ABC's* section introduces children to letter sounds. Click on any picture of a wooden letter block and children will be introduced to the sounds of the alphabet including short vowel sounds. Click on a short vowel at the bottom of the page and a teacher sings a song to help children remember these new sounds. Finally, click on *ABC* at the bottom right and a teacher will sing a different version of the alphabet song, which will help children remember all the sounds that they have learned on the page. The *Learn to Read* section has early beginning reading practice. Start with the word completion exercises, then read through a story, and finally, watch a fun instructional video. The *It's Fun to Read* section is for intermediate beginning readers and includes a variety of high-interest reading activities: *All About Me, Art Gallery, Magic, Music, Poetry, Tongue Twisters, and Bird Riddles*. All are fun and involve the reader in learning new words and reading sentences. The *I'm Reading* section, for high beginning readers, provides the opportunity to read entire stories: *Three Little Plays, Fiction and Nonfiction, Comics, Folktales, Greek Myths, and Chinese Fables*. In addition to the main sections of Starfall, there are more reading activities: *Calendar, Gingerbread, Grandparent, Pumpkin, Snowman, Turkey, Groundhog, Valentine, 100th Day, Clover, Wordhunt, Earth Day, and Flower*. These teach shapes, colors, numbers, and more. On the entire site, most pictures and words can be clicked on to hear the corresponding pronunciation, which is especially useful for ESL students. Starfall is a nice site for students who need reading practice and who like to have fun and stay active on the computer.

**EFL Literature Circles** ([www.eflliteraturecircles.com](http://www.eflliteraturecircles.com)) is a 6-page article by teacher Mark Furr at Yokohama City University in Japan. In it he explains what a literature circle is, and he gives you all the handouts you need in order to start one. A literature circle is very similar to a book club or reading group, but tailored to an educational setting in which students have specific roles: group discussion leader, summarizer, connector, word master, and pas-

sage person. Mark Furr has added one other role to this list, and he calls it culture collector. Students take more responsibility for their reading and understanding by taking on these roles, and the reading classroom becomes less teacher-centered. See page 6 and click on any of these roles to get a handout which you can photocopy. For additional information beyond Mark Furr's website on literature circles, you can refer to the book by Harvey Daniels entitled *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups* (2002).

**Agendaweb** ([www.agendaweb.com](http://www.agendaweb.com)) gathers online ESL exercises from sources all over the web and categorizes them for easy retrieval. The site could definitely use an overhaul in design, and you will understand exactly why when you visit it; however, with some patience, you will look past this flaw and appreciate the fact that the site's author has gathered thousands of exercises for you. Just be sure to take this piece of advice on navigation: Look over the main page, and always jump to your exercises from this main page. To do so from other pages is more cumbersome. That said, the site has thousands of exercises in *Vocabulary, Grammar, Verbs, Listening, and Reading*. Keep in mind, however, that the quality of the exercises could vary since each is by a different author.

*Announcing.... A New Scholarship*

**New Graduate Scholarship Offered by ITBE!**

Illinois TESOL•BE Executive Board recently voted to add another \$1000 graduate scholarship to the line-up of scholarships and awards it already offers. Currently, one \$1000 graduate scholarship and one \$500 undergraduate scholarship are available each year. Now with two graduate scholarships being offered, applicants will double their chances of receiving a scholarship! The Board appreciates the dedication of students and teachers in the field and wants to support them in their efforts to seek further education. Applications for these scholarships, as well as the Professional Development Awards to attend the annual convention, can be found in this issue of the Newsletter.

Betsy Kubota  
Awards Committee Chair



**Illinois Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages • Bilingual Education**  
**\$1,000 Graduate & \$500 Undergraduate Scholarship Application**

Illinois TESOL•BE demonstrates its commitment to the field of English as a Second Language and Bilingual Education each year by awarding a \$1,000 graduate and a \$500 undergraduate scholarship to deserving students. Starting this year, an additional graduate scholarship has been created so that ITBE can offer **two \$1,000 graduate scholarships to eligible applicants**.

**Applicants must:**

- be currently enrolled in a program in TESOL, bilingual education, or a related field at an accredited college or university or be practicing professionals or paraprofessionals who will enroll in relevant coursework
- demonstrate financial need
- be members in good standing of Illinois TESOL•BE (see box below)
- submit a completed application form, along with all required supporting materials.

**CHECK ONE:**

I am applying for:     \_\_\_ **\$1,000 GRADUATE Scholarship in Honor of Marsha Robbins Santelli**  
                                   \_\_\_ **\$500 UNDERGRADUATE Scholarship in Honor of Jane Curtis**

**PLEASE PRINT:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ ITBE Membership Expiration: \_\_\_\_\_

School Name and Degree Program: \_\_\_\_\_

(check one) Currently Enrolled \_\_\_\_\_ Will Enroll in 2007-2008 \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPORTING MATERIALS:**

- 1) A letter of application (word-processed and double-spaced) which includes the following: a) a description of your involvement to date in the field of ESL/BE; b) an explanation of your professional goals and how your program of study will help you meet those goals; and c) a brief statement regarding your financial need.
- 2) Two letters of recommendation
- 3) An official transcript of your academic work (Unofficial transcripts will **not** be accepted.) or a letter of acceptance if you are not currently enrolled in an academic program.

All applicants for the \$1,000 Graduate and the \$500 Undergraduate Scholarships must have valid memberships in Illinois TESOL•BE through March 2006. To become a member of ITBE or to renew membership, mail a completed membership application and your dues along with your scholarship application materials. You can also renew your membership online at [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org). Membership applications are available on our web site or in the ITBE Newsletter. Check your status by using your member log-in on the ITBE web site or by e-mailing us at [membership@itbe.org](mailto:membership@itbe.org).

**MAIL COMPLETED APPLICATIONS,**  
**POSTMARKED BY DECEMBER 1, 2006, to:**

**Illinois TESOL•BE Awards Chair**  
**Executive Secretary**  
**PMB 232**  
**8926 N. Greenwood, Niles, IL 60714-5163**

Scholarships will be awarded at the 33rd Annual State Convention on March 3, 2007 in Naperville, IL. Recipients will be notified by phone and by mail. For additional information, e-mail [awards@itbe.org](mailto:awards@itbe.org).



**Illinois Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages • Bilingual Education  
Application for Professional Development Award**

Each year, Illinois TESOL•BE demonstrates its commitment to the field of English as a Second Language and Bilingual Education by awarding a maximum of ten professional development scholarships for ITBE members to attend the annual convention. The Professional Development Award covers registration for the March 9-10, 2007 ITBE convention in Naperville, IL. In addition, either hotel accommodations for Friday night or a maximum of \$50 worth of transportation expenses will be covered.

**Applicants for the Professional Development Award must:**

- a) be practicing or retired ESL and/or bilingual education teachers, or full-time or part-time time graduate or undergraduate students enrolled in a program in TESOL, bilingual education, or a related field;
- b) demonstrate financial need;
- c) not be eligible to receive support for the ITBE convention from their institutions;
- d) be members in good standing of Illinois TESOL•BE through March 2006; and
- e) submit a completed application form along with all required supporting materials.

***Application***

**PLEASE PRINT:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ ITBE Membership expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_

Current employer(s) and Position(s) held: \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPORTING MATERIALS:**

- 1) A letter of application (word-processed and double-spaced) with an explanation of how you will benefit from attending the Illinois TESOL•BE State Convention and a brief statement of financial need.
- 2) A letter from an employer or academic program verifying employment or enrollment and financial need. (NOTE: Individuals whose employers offer financial support for professional activities are not eligible.)

**MAIL COMPLETED APPLICATIONS, POSTMARKED BY DECEMBER 1, 2006, to:**

**Illinois TESOL•BE Awards Chair  
Executive Secretary  
PMB 232  
8926 N Greenwood  
Niles, IL 60714**

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- Nominations
- Technology
- Exhibits and Advertising
- Part-Time Issues
- Professional Development Events

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**Make checks payable to Illinois TESOL•BE**

Mail your check and this form to: Executive Secretary, Illinois TESOL•BE, PMB 232, 8926 North Greenwood Avenue, Niles, IL 60714-5163  
Illinois TESOL-BE will assess a fee of \$50 on all returned checks. Purchase orders cannot be accepted. For credit card payments, please use our online registration at [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org).

\* Student membership applications must be accompanied by verification of full-time enrollment (e.g., current semester registration).  
\*\* Family members residing at the same address may apply at the joint membership rate.

**Membership in Illinois TESOL•BE is separate from membership in TESOL.**

The Professional Planner

<b>August 26</b>	<b>Illinois TESOL/BE Executive Board Meeting</b> 150 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Suite 1590
<b>September 29-30</b>	<b>2006 WITESOL Annual Convention</b> Paper Valley Convention Center, Appleton, WI For more information, visit: <a href="http://www.witesol.org">www.witesol.org</a>
<b>October 7</b>	<b>Illinois TESOL/BE Executive Board Meeting</b> St. Xavier College
<b>November 5-7</b>	<b>NAFSA Region V Conference</b> Concourse Hotel, Madison, WI For more information, visit <a href="http://www.region5.nafsa.org/conference">www.region5.nafsa.org/conference</a>

If you need information on the above dates, please visit website at [itbe.org](http://itbe.org)





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