

Perspectives

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This section features: (1) reactions of readers to articles and reviews published in the *Journal* and the replies of authors to whom the comments are addressed (if forthcoming) and (2) viewpoints and opinions expressed in the form of a report, commentary, or interview on issues or topics of current interest.

Cette section sera consacrée à deux types d'articles:

1. La réaction des lecteurs aux articles parus dans la revue et la réponse de leurs auteurs, s'il y a lieu.

2. Les points de vue et les opinions, présentés sous forme de comptes rendus, de commentaires, de chroniques ou d'entrevues, sur des sujets d'actualité ou d'intérêt général.

ENGLISH IN THE WORKPLACE INSTITUTE: MY PERSPECTIVE

Donna Payne

During August 13 to 24 when many teachers were enjoying their first break of the summer, forty participants gathered in Toronto for the *English in the Workplace Institute*. The objective of this course was to instruct potential teacher-trainers in the fundamentals of EWP. It not only met this objective but proved to be much more than I expected. The Ministry of Citizenship and Culture was responsible for the organization of the course and their untiring effort made it the success it was.

The participants represented existing workplace programs, organizations interested in establishing EWP programs and individuals keenly interested in the concept. They came from British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and various regions of Ontario. The instructors were a team from Industrial Language Training (ILT) in Britain. The team included Clarice Brierly and Elisa Christmas, both Unit Heads and Valerie Yates and David Green from the National Centre for ILT.

The course was presented in three modules: Marketing or Promotion, Surveys and Assessments, and Delivery. The Marketing module included defining and presenting the service. It involved telephoning skills, focusing on the target and recognizing factors which affect the market. Included in the second module were techniques for company and union negotiations (prior to and during a training session), interviewing skills, analysis of communications and a self-appraisal questionnaire. The unit on Delivery included integrated communicative training strategies, a range of possible services, the needs of an ESL student and methods for

meeting those needs. All three modules were adapted to the Canadian situation.

The National Centre for ILT was established in 1974 to meet the need for more effective communication skills in multi-racial workplaces in Britain. Local units were started in various centres around the industrial sections of England during 1975-77 and continue to be created as the need arises. At present there are 30 units usually located in the colleges. Each unit employs 4 or 5 full-time teachers with a unit head who spends an equal portion of time on promotion and administration. Teachers are responsible for promotion, analysis, delivery and evaluation. Staff at the National Centre are in charge of co-ordinating staff training, promotion, research, development and professional support. ILT is funded by Man-power Services and the funds are administered by the local educational services.

Initially, ILT perceived itself as a service to provide functional ESL classes to immigrants at their place of work. Through a natural development their self perception has altered. Critical analysis of their programs indicated that their service, although helping the individual student to acquire *some* English, was not greatly improving communication at work. It became evident that each workplace needed to be studied as an entity with particular attention to organization and communication systems. After careful analysis of these aspects of the industry, training is tailored to the needs of the whole workplace. This training might involve providing supervisors, trade unionists and others with skills and information relevant to effective communication in a multi-racial workplace; training personnel to be more efficient in worker training, interviewing or other specific areas; multiracial awareness training; and *perhaps* ESL classes. Their main objective is not to teach immigrants to speak English but to initiate changes that will improve communication in the workplace. They no longer see themselves as strictly ESL teachers but as "change agents."

This foreign philosophy put me into a state of cultural shock. I initially rejected it. It was unacceptable! As I learned more, I saw it as a reasonable objective for ILT but not for *me*! I made excuses for my position. It won't work in Canada! We don't have the expertise! We don't have the credibility! We don't have the support! Eventually, however, I accepted the idea that improving communication in a multi-cultural workplace must be the ultimate goal in our programs. It is *our* responsibility to find the means to overcome difficulties. Perhaps, as one instructor suggested, we might use the British experience to speed up our process of evolution.

I'm sure that *English in the Workplace (London, Ont.) Inc.* will be affected by my exposure to the ILT experience and expertise. Some of the beneficial changes I hope will occur are:

- using more positive marketing strategies

A concrete example of this occurred recently. My co-worker was asked how much our program cost. In response she gave our usual answer, almost apologetically, "It's free!" I immediately remembered the ITL answer: "Our service is very costly. However, since we are government subsidized, there is no direct fee."

This improves the credibility of the service since many people believe "You get what you pay for."

- examining the existing systems of communication at a workplace
- analyzing these systems to identify the appropriate area of training

Last year our organization delivered a course to improve general communication for a group of supervisors and lead hands. We approached this as a stepping stone for eventual ESL training at the workplace. I now realize that the course was not a stepping stone but the footings for improved multi-cultural communication.

- keeping informed of present industrial interests and terminology
- adapting our service and presentation to business trends
- educating ourselves in the organization and philosophy of unions
- involving all sectors of each workplace in programs, i.e. union, management, workforce, consumer
- developing curricula to provide programs on multi-cultural awareness and communication
- teaching ESL students learning strategies in addition to English language skill
- training teachers in all aspects of English in the Workplace
- assisting in the organization of EWP programs in Ontario with eventual Canada-wide affiliation.

Canada has not yet developed its full potential. Programs do exist; however, we are separate cells in our own environment with our own objectives, strengths and weaknesses. We realize that we are rich in human resources. There is the potential for forty trained people to train others, initiating a mushrooming of awareness. Action groups have been formed to research organization (municipal, provincial, federal), a means of Canada-wide communication, funding, central resources and definition of services. A meeting of people interested in EWP is in the planning stages for the TESL conference in Toronto, December 1984. Reports from various action groups will be given at that time and further action formulated.

We need to link together to form a body. The *English in the Workplace Institute* provided us with the necessary elements. The linking process is our responsibility.

