

CHAPTER 9



Freeing the MA Grammar Course From the Limits of Time and Space

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◆ INTRODUCTION

After teaching the core MA grammar course in a traditional classroom setting for almost 15 years, I moved the course entirely onto the Internet. This asynchronous version was designed to achieve the original course goals in this new setting: The course was still about English grammar and the teaching of English grammar. However, new goals were added, related to the experience of teaching and learning in the Web environment: The graduate students and I had the possibility of expanding our knowledge and skills at academic communication outside the traditional classroom setting.

◆ CONTEXT

English Grammar for ESL/EFL Teachers is one of seven required courses in the MA in applied linguistics degree program in the Department of Applied Linguistics and ESL (AL/ESL) at Georgia State University (GSU), in Atlanta, in the United States. In addition to the required courses, MA students take another five electives for a total of 12 three-semester-hour courses. Other required features of the degree curriculum are explained in the description of the program in a later section of this chapter.

Approximately 75% of the teacher learners in the program are native speakers of English from various locations in the United States. The remaining 25% are nonnative speakers of English from Cote D'Ivoire, China, Egypt, Japan, Korea, and elsewhere. All of the graduate students intend to teach ESL/EFL to adult learners, and most look forward to teaching in EFL settings. The teacher learners have undergraduate degrees from the usual backgrounds for potential ESL/EFL teachers, having studied modern languages, English, anthropology, philosophy, and similar disciplinary areas. Most have some prior experience teaching ESL, often in EFL settings. Generally, the nonnative-English-speaking students have a better abstract knowledge of English grammar than do the native speakers from the United States. Some of the native-speaking graduate students bring active fear of grammar to the course, seeming to find being analytical about the structure of English a forbidding challenge. Others approach English grammar on the basis of rules learned long ago and only vaguely remembered and understood. A few have serious doubts about the importance of grammar in their careers and enter the course declaring that "they

don't believe in the teaching of grammar"; most are open to learning more about English and to learning about ways that English grammar might be incorporated into curricula, courses, lessons, and materials.

The faculty members who teach in the MA program are tenured or on tenure track with doctorates from U.S. universities. The practicum is sometimes taught by an experienced teacher from the department's intensive English program. Academic specialties represented on the faculty include an assortment of the disciplines often found in programs in applied linguistics—education, educational psychology, English, intercultural communication, linguistics, second language acquisition, and sociolinguistics. My own background is in English literature and linguistics, and I have long paid attention to matters involved in the analysis of English and in the teaching of English grammar in ESL settings, especially when grammar and writing are combined. Additionally, I am the department's first adopter when it comes to computer technology, and so the revision of the grammar course for the Web is a natural outcome of my interest in English grammar and the exploration of teaching and learning on the Web.

DESCRIPTION

The MA in AL/ESL at GSU has the following required courses:

1. General Linguistics
2. Second Language Acquisition
3. The Sound System of English
4. English Grammar for ESL/EFL Teachers
5. Intercultural Communication
6. Approaches to Teaching ESL/EFL to Adult Learners
7. Practicum

In addition, teacher learners can select electives from an assortment of courses taught in AL/ESL, including courses in assessment; materials design, development, and publication; pragmatics; L2 reading; L2 writing; L2 listening comprehension; sociolinguistics; and research design. A course in corpus linguistics is also offered for advanced MA and doctoral students.

All MA courses are designed to combine knowledge of theory with practical applications to teaching. In addition to the courses, teacher learners must also meet a series of graduation requirements that include (a) having a minimum of 90 hours of classroom-based experience during the period in which they are in the degree program, (b) participating in a minimum of two professional development activities each semester they are in the program, (c) writing an MA paper that is a revised and expanded version of a course paper, and (d) preparing a portfolio to document their degree work. These graduation requirements were added to the degree as a result of faculty concerns that an MA degree for teachers of ESL/EFL must be more than a series of courses and a research paper. Our own professional lives involve the academic trio of teaching, scholarship, and service. In a review of the curriculum for the MA degree, we became concerned that we were giving future teachers an incorrect vision of the work and life of professional teachers by suggesting that

course work—the scholarship piece of the three-part division of academic lives—was the whole rather than a part of the whole. The current design requires that graduate students, like members of the teaching faculty, have lives that combine scholarship, teaching, and professional service.

Design

English Grammar for ESL/EFL Teachers is a three-semester-hour course that is offered twice a year, usually in the spring and summer terms. Along with the courses General Linguistics and the Sound System of English, this course is planned to provide teacher learners with a foundational knowledge about English and issues in the teaching of English for ESL/EFL learners. Because the course is taught totally on the Web, it also provides teacher learners with an intense experience of many of the possibilities allowed for teaching and learning in a nontraditional environment with no required meetings other than an orientation during the first week of classes.

Purposes

The course has three overarching goals:

1. to enhance teacher learners' knowledge of English grammar using a descriptive approach combined with information from corpus studies about language-in-use
2. to develop teacher learners' skill in planning courses and lessons that feature grammar and writing
3. to introduce teacher learners to Web-based learning and teaching

Each of these goals involves several subgoals.

The grammar goals include not just learning about English grammar but also learning about resources that are available for further study upon completion of the course. The course materials and projects provide teacher learners with opportunities to learn about the major reference grammars available for English and also to learn about using research tools for finding additional resources on grammar and teaching ESL/EFL.

The teaching grammar goals include some work with second language acquisition (the learner issues) and L2 teaching (the teacher issues). Both the course paper and the readings move teacher learners from abstract knowledge about English grammar and the learning and teaching of English to the application of that knowledge in lesson design for courses that include grammar as an element of the class.

The learning and teaching on the Web goals involve giving teacher learners a wide range of opportunities to learn about the Web. Most of the teacher learners come to the course having had some experience with Web-based discussions from other courses in AL/ESL. Rarely has a participant taken a whole course on the Web. The course is designed to give the teacher learners opportunities to learn about ways that they might themselves teach ESL in such an environment in the future. That is, the Web goals include preparing the graduate students for teaching in nontraditional environments that profoundly alter teacher-student approaches to their tasks.

Textbooks and Other Materials

Because a major goal of the course is to introduce teacher learners to the reference grammars that are available for English, the core text is Greenbaum and Quirk's (1990) *The Student's Grammar of the English Language*, a condensed version of Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik's (1985) *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. The course paper requires teacher learners to seek information from Quirk et al.'s *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*; Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan's (1999) *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*; and Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's (1999) *The Grammar Book: An ESL/EFL Teacher's Course*. In addition to reading in reference grammars, teacher learners read an assortment of book chapters and journal articles that are provided through the GSU library in a Web-based system called DocuWeb (see <http://docuweb.gsu.edu>). Although the selection of readings changes from term to term, it consists of materials such as Reid and Byrd (1998), Larsen-Freeman (2001), and Conrad (2000).

Requirements

Like most graduate courses, this one requires reading, discussion, and the production of a paper. However, the Web-based environment has led to a new approach to requirements as to how teacher learners carry out these traditional required tasks.

Evaluation

The grading system is the part of the course that most directly shows the rethinking of all the elements of a course that was required in moving to the Web in an asynchronous WebCT (2002) environment (see <http://www.webct.com>; also see chapter 3, Footnote 2). Prior to the change, the grading system was traditional, with a set percentage for the midterm, a set percentage for the paper, a set percentage for the final, and a set percentage for a presentation to the class on the content of the paper.

The new version of the course uses a system through which points are assigned for the completion of a variety of tasks at particular deadlines that are set at weekly, biweekly, and term intervals. The most radical change is that no tests are given. Because the course has no required class meetings after the initial orientation session, the proctoring of examinations became an enormous design problem. Some Web-based courses require students to come to campus or another location to take examinations, but that requirement seemed to go against the very spirit of Web-based instruction. At numerous conference sessions given by teachers with experience on the Web, I learned that Web-based learning is better evaluated in terms of products and tasks other than examinations. I was already moving in the direction of evaluation through the creation of products such as papers and portfolio collections of artifacts of learning. I also realized, while examining the discussion system in WebCT, that teacher learners' online discussions could be viewed as documents and written products; thus, they could be included in the grading system in more robust ways than are often available in traditional classroom settings.

The rethinking of evaluation has led to a system that assigns points, as shown in Table 1. The points are then interpreted as percentages of the whole, as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 1. POINTS ASSIGNED FOR REQUIRED COURSE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTS

Course Product or Activity	Points
Participation in 15 weeks of small-group discussion sessions	30
Leadership of a 2-week discussion of assigned readings	15
Communication with course instructor in response to lectures and grammar reading	30
Completion of quizzes for chapters in <i>The Student's Grammar</i> (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1990)	11
Paper 1 (on a grammar topic—due at midterm)	30
Paper 2 (on teaching that grammar—due on final examination date)	30
Total	146

Participation

Teacher learners are required to participate in small-group discussions on WebCT. They must post a minimum of 10 messages each week on at least 3 different days of that week. This requirement means that they must be active members of their groups and must participate in an ongoing academic discussion; no one can just log on on Sunday night, post 10 messages in a monologue, and disappear again for a week. I participate in the discussions as they go along, read the transcript at the end of each week, and assign 1 point for showing up but not having much to say and 2 points for showing up and making a substantial contribution to the discussion. The points are assigned on a weekly basis as a device for keeping teacher learners on track; my fear for the less organized among them is that being on the Web and not in direct contact with the instructor could mean that they would lose touch with the course.

Leadership of a Discussion

Leadership of a discussion by a teacher learner involves reading the assigned materials ahead of the rest of the group, devising discussion topics and tasks, posting those on WebCT for the group, and then helping the group through the discussion. This task was designed to give teacher learners responsibility for teaching course content and experience in leading academic discussions on the Web—not personal chat sessions but discussions of academic content. Each person in the course takes a leadership role for a 2-week segment of the course.

TABLE 2. LETTER GRADES ASSOCIATED WITH PARTICULAR POINT TOTALS

A	131–146
B	117–130
C	104–116
D	103 and below

Communication With Course Instructor

During the first presentation of the course on the Web, I realized that I missed, and many teacher learners also needed, more structured communication with me about the grammar content of the course. This type of communication occurs in traditional classes when teacher learners ask questions before, during, or after class about the content of the lecture or about course requirements. To make sure that this type of communication happens, I added the requirement that each teacher learner send me e-mail each week with at least one comment or question about the lecture, the reading in *The Students' Grammar* (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1990), or both. Some course participants are perfunctory in this assignment; others realize that they are able to engage me in discussions of the grammar content. Although I must read and answer 20 or so e-mail messages each week of the course, I value this part of the course for the ongoing individual communication that develops with members of the class.

Self-Knowledge Quizzes

To experiment with the WebCT system, I worked with a graduate student to create a series of multiple-choice quizzes based on the assigned chapters in *The Student's Grammar* (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1990). These quizzes are intended for self-knowledge, and the scores are not counted in the grade for the course. In the early versions of the course, the more diligent teacher learners took most of the quizzes, but the majority did not try them because this work was not included in the grading system. For the spring 2002 semester, I began to give points for doing the quizzes—not for the score made on a quiz but just for giving it a try. My concern is twofold: I want the teacher learners to take the time to quiz their understanding of the grammar content, and I want them to experience taking quizzes to think about testing grammar content on the Web and—just as importantly—about ways that feedback can be provided for learners who are taking such quizzes.

Papers

Rather than having a midterm exam, teacher learners produce a paper that synthesizes their reading on a particular topic in English grammar. In place of a final exam, teacher learners produce a paper that synthesizes their reading on teaching and learning aimed at that particular topic in English grammar; this paper must also include an interview with an experienced teacher of ESL/EFL. Typical topics include (a) questions (their formation and use in context), (b) past tense (verb forms that involve past tense and their use in context), (c) *that* (in its various uses), and (d) relative clauses (their formation and use in context).

◆ DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

English Grammar for ESL/EFL Teachers is distinctive in content and presentation. The content of the course weaves together descriptive grammar along with ever larger segments on discourse analysis from corpus studies. Teacher learners are encouraged to think beyond the word and sentence level to learn about grammar in use in particular contexts. Course readings, my lectures, and the requirements for the two papers move the participants to an awareness of a definition of grammar that

does not stop at the sentence level of analysis. The course content also includes a focus on how courses and lessons can best be planned to include grammar content, especially content that combines grammar and writing—or, better, writing that is supported by work with the appropriate English grammar for the type of discourse.

English Grammar for ESL/EFL Teachers exemplifies what specialists in the area call *distributed* rather than *distance* learning. The course is now *redistributed* in time and space, compared to its earlier version, which existed on a particular day of the week for a set time period in a particular classroom on the GSU campus. Although the course has many of the features that are expected in graduate courses (e.g., lectures, discussions, readings, papers), these features are realized in ways often quite different from their traditional forms. In particular, the Web has led to changes in the content and delivery of my lectures and to the organization of small-group discussions.

Lectures

In earlier versions of the course, before the current Web-based model, I included short lectures on the assigned topic that were followed by tasks done individually or in small groups to apply the content in various ways. For example, I might lecture on discourse cohesion and coherence; the teacher learners would then analyze discourse samples to learn more about the ways that words and sentences can be tied into unified wholes. I had many notes for these lectures, but I had never written them out into scripts.

For the WebCT-based course, I include on the Web weekly lectures about the content of the assigned reading on English grammar. The ultimate design was to give four to seven short lectures of 4–6 minutes in length each week. The Web site for the course gives teacher learners access to written and spoken versions of the lectures. I decided on this combination based on a conference session on e-mail communication with two teachers, one with limited vision and the other with limited hearing. The sight-impaired teacher needed to have Web-based presentations that he could hear, and he recommended recording audio files in RealAudio format as an easy way to create and publish audio material on the Web. The hearing-impaired teacher needed to have written text versions of anything that was spoken on the Web. By combining the two approaches, I knew that I could enrich the presentation for the teacher learners, giving them the opportunity to encounter the material in two ways while also giving them ideas about ways in which they might use the Web for instruction.

I also wanted to take advantage of the multimedia capacity of the Web to enhance the lectures. In addition to having audio and text versions of the lectures, I included Microsoft® PowerPoint slide presentations to provide the content of the reading in yet another format. The PowerPoint materials provide teacher learners with a guide for reading assigned materials that many of them find challenging. I had hoped that participants would be able to access these PowerPoint materials through the Web site; however, I quickly realized that the files are so large that participants could not reasonably be expected to download them at home. As a result, I now prepare a CD for each participant, which I distribute during the orientation sessions. The CD has the PowerPoint slides along with free software that the teacher learners need for the course (including the PowerPoint viewer).

The complete system for the lectures now includes (a) the written text for each lecture, (b) the RealAudio version of each lecture, and (c) a set of PowerPoint slides on the assigned reading in *The Student's Grammar of the English Language* (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1990).

Discussions

In the WebCT version of the course, teacher learners are divided into small groups during the initial orientation session and remain in these groups for the entire semester. With 15–21 participants in the course in a typical semester, the class generally has three or four small discussion groups. Each group attends only its own discussion, as would happen in a regular classroom setting. The groups are guaranteed that no visitors or other outsiders will be allowed into their discussion area. I am, however, a member of each of the groups. In the first week of the term, I demonstrate how topics can be provided for the group; one of the discussion topics is “how to have an academic discussion on the Web.” Another important initial topic is “how to build small-group cohesion on the Web,” which leads us to consider how to talk about academic topics, how to leave messages that are used for group maintenance purposes, and how to insure a reasonable balance between these two aspects of small-group interaction. After the first week, the groups are led by group members, who suggest topics for the discussion based on their analysis of the assigned readings. From this point, the groups generally take off in different directions, as people with different backgrounds and educations and temperaments interact over the content provided by the reading materials.

Small-group discussions on the Web give the instructor a powerful teaching tool and a new experience of small group-interactions. In a traditional classroom, I always found myself moving from group to group to help with questions and task completion. Generally, I spent more time with the groups having problems than with the groups having success with the tasks. Generally, I had only a fragmented sense of what was happening in any of the groups. With WebCT, I can visit all of the groups everyday; I know who is talking and who is not; I know when the topics are working and when they are not. Moreover, because the discussions are so public, I seldom have groups that opt out and decide to talk about something else. However, I spend more time with the groups than in a traditional setting because students post a minimum of 10 messages each week (i.e., 200 messages with 20 students in the class), and I also post a few.

Although my time with the groups has increased compared with the traditional classroom setting, I remain excited about the pedagogical advantages of this environment. I know more about what the groups are doing, and all members of the group participate. Furthermore, international teacher learners participate more than they did in the traditional setting; they tell me that they like having the opportunity to plan and edit their messages, and they feel less time pressure and more control over their English and the content of what they have to say. Shyer teacher learners tell me they, too, like having a class that is not dominated by a few extroverted participants who speak out before the more reserved participants have a chance to decide what they want to say.

The teacher learners who seem most disadvantaged by the Web's asynchronous setting are the truly extroverted people who get much of their energy from being with

and around other people. Teacher learners who enjoy intellectual and verbal domination in classes find that the Web offers them less opportunity for this aspect of their educational experience.

At the same time, it should be noted that the participants in the course generally know each other from other classes and have many opportunities for face-to-face interactions because we are all in the same city. Because the course does not involve distance learning, we do not have to deal with the problems that are associated with not having a sense of the real-time personalities of course participants.

◆ PRACTICAL IDEAS

On the basis of having taught a Web-based asynchronous course since 1999, I offer the following suggestions for other teachers who want to try this system.

Be Prepared to Help Teacher Learners With Technical Frustrations

Students often have different computer systems at home. Some computers will be more than adequate to handle the course; others will have older, slower modems that make using the course online time consuming and frustrating. I encourage course participants to come to the GSU campus to use the computers in the university's computer labs. Because the computer labs are open 24 hours a day, teacher learners have considerable control over when they participate in the course, even if they cannot do the work at home. In addition to the frustrations of finding a good connection to the Internet, the teacher learners and I have sometimes had problems caused by failures of the WebCT system at GSU. However, those failures are rare and must be accepted as part of working with complex machines maintained by human beings. Beyond the basic frustrations associated with trying to use slow telephone connections and with system failures, some teacher learners find learning how to use the various software systems an emotional as well as an intellectual challenge. I try to identify these students early in the course and invite them to meet with me for extra help on learning to be comfortable with the course and the WebCT environment.

Create Small Groups for Web-Based Discussion

The Web-based system has many advantages over face-to-face discussion: Everyone can participate, teacher learners have more time to think about what they want to say to enable them to keep up with the discussion, and a record of the discussion is always available. However, participants have to learn to accept the pace of e-mail discussions that do not take place in real time: A message is posted, and the replies can come hours, even days, later. The discussions are more thorough but slower paced than in a face-to-face exchange. Five or six discussants can learn to recognize each other's voices in the written communication. However, when the group becomes larger than seven participants, some voices get lost, and the thread of the discussion becomes more difficult to follow. Although small-group communication research (Beebe & Masterson, 1997) suggests that 13 people is the upper limit for effective small-group communication, my experience has been that, on the Web, the group needs to be much smaller.

Create a System to Prevent Teacher Learners From Getting Lost

Many teacher learners have a habit of depending on their teachers and the regular daily and weekly schedule of classes to keep them on track with required work. A Web-based course needs to be designed around sets of readily understandable tasks that have weekly deadlines. If such a course had only midterm and final exams, teacher learners could easily become lost along the way and not participate sufficiently in the course for success.

Set Requirements for Web Postings, and Grade Teacher Learners on Their Online Participation

I have observed less student participation in courses using Web-based discussion systems when participation is a voluntary rather than a required part of the course. I now require participants in English Grammar for ESL/EFL Teachers to post a minimum number of messages each week and stipulate that those messages be spread over at least 3 days of the week. In this way, teacher learners know what is expected; they understand that they will be graded on their participation, and this knowledge frees them from the fear that they are not doing enough. Some teacher learners write exactly the minimum required; others exceed the minimum in the discussion. A few need help in curbing their participation; they may write 30 messages while their classmates are only writing 10. Because the computer system allows instructors to keep an accurate record of participation, they can easily encourage everyone to participate in appropriate amounts.

Clarify the Kinds of Postings You Want Teacher Learners to Make

My expectation is that teacher learners will learn to have relatively informal academic discussions, engaging in much the same kinds of interactions on the Web as they would in face-to-face classroom discussions. They will discuss the content of the readings, although they are encouraged to make connections to other courses and other knowledge and experiences. Their discussions will involve a lot of turn taking as different people contribute; people can disagree as long as they are polite and explain the reasons for their disagreement; rarely does anyone take over and make a speech; turns are fairly short; and people can ask questions as well as make statements. Additionally, I encourage the members to include messages that will help create and maintain the group cohesion. Some colleagues view Web-based communication differently, requiring students to post polished writing that is more like a journal article than an academic discussion. Both levels of formality are appropriate and can be effective uses of the Web environment, but students need to know what is expected and how to go about achieving this type of communication.

Create a Grading System That Reflects the Course Design

Students take their understanding of what is important from the grading system: If a task is important, the teacher will give it a grade. Although we would prefer to have more self-motivated teacher learners, my experience with the Web is that students need rewards for task completion (and punishments for failure to complete tasks) on a regular basis. The tasks and the associated grading system that I have developed for this course are designed to help teacher learners stay on track and involved in the course.

Consider Having a Course Without Examinations or Other Tests

Security for exams is impossible to guarantee on the Web because students take examinations without the course instructor being present. I have been told that at schools with strong traditional student honor codes, such matters are not important. In most other settings, concerns about test security must be taken seriously. My decision has been to avoid the issue altogether by creating a course based on projects and tasks rather than on examinations. In my experience, teacher learners are not easily going to find a colleague to handle large projects for them, nor can they find substitutes to participate in online discussions, so cheating becomes difficult.

Establish a Support System to Assist Faculty Teaching Online Courses

First adopters will put up with all types of problems, frustrations, and near failures in their desire to make a new system work, but help from skilled staff provides support that can greatly reduce the demands on a faculty member's time and energy.

Recognize the Time Involved in Adapting a Course to the Web

For me, one of the benefits of moving a course onto the Web has been taking time to rethink a course that I have taught for a long time. This rethinking involves working in two directions at the same time to identify (a) the essential features of the course in terms of content, student-teacher interactions, and products, and (b) the features of the Web-based system that will be used for the course. I wanted a course like my other graduate courses, with lectures, discussions, small-group interactions, student-teacher interactions over the content, and written products that result from student research activities. I work within the WebCT environment, which gives me a particular set of Web-based tools for communication and content presentation. This learning of a new system and rethinking takes time as I learn from the experience of teaching the course on the Web.

Limit the Class Size

Web-based courses should have limited enrollments—probably no more than 20 students for courses that involve substantial amounts of teacher-student and student-student interaction. Early predictions about Web-based teaching hinted that teachers would be able to handle more students because there would not be limits on the size of the classroom. However, my experience has been the opposite. When a Web-based course is built around communication between the teacher and the student and in small groups in which the teacher participates, the time demands for the course are at least equal to, if not greater than, those of a regular traditional course.

◆ CONCLUSION

Colleagues often ask why I wanted to adapt a traditional classroom course to a Web-based course in an asynchronous design. The major reason is that, after teaching for about 30 years, I no longer believe that it is possible for a group of people to show up at the same place at the same time, ready to focus on anything, let alone English grammar. The attempt to have learning occur for all members of the group at a set time and location is undermined on a regular basis by the realities of everyday life,

human nature, and cultural differences among learners. Adult students lead complicated lives in which they balance families, jobs, and other concerns with their academic work. In addition, students have many different approaches to learning and to handling learning-related tasks. Many international students have needs that are not met in regular U.S. classroom settings, where classroom activities are based on different rules about participation, interaction, and the ultimate purposes of education. For linguistic and cultural reasons, many of the international students in U.S. graduate courses are disadvantaged by the traditional U.S. model. Indeed, many U.S. female students are disadvantaged by the model, too, with its tendency to emphasize more aggressive participation (e.g., verbal sparring and displaying of knowledge). I turned to the Web because it seemed to offer greater options and flexibility for dealing with these concerns about teaching and learning.

An asynchronous Web-based course does not meet at a particular time or physical location and thus has no limits in time. Students are free to study the course materials at times and places of their own choosing. The course gives them many different ways to approach course content; they even determine the order in which they combine reading, lecture, and discussion, and they have time to reflect before participating in a discussion.

The course also gives me more opportunities for individual interactions with students. I can easily see who is not participating in discussions; I can require weekly e-mail communication through which even the shyest students finally ask questions concerning their confusion about course content. I have expanded options for presenting content and now have interconnected lectures, readings, quizzes, and multimedia presentations of content. I can participate in all the small-group discussions and not miss anything that is happening as the groups engage in discussion tasks, something that is not physically possible in a traditional classroom.

Anyone who would like to learn more about the current course can do so by

1. visiting the course Web site (<http://webct.gsu.edu>)
2. logging on to "my WebCT" using the ID "guest_AL8460hpb" and the password "guest"
3. visiting all areas of the course, except the small-group discussions, which are open only to members of the particular groups

I would appreciate any feedback resulting from such visits, especially on possible changes in content, but also on ways to make the system easier to use and more effective for achieving the goals of the course.

◆ CONTRIBUTOR

Patricia Byrd is professor in the Department of Applied Linguistics and ESL at Georgia State University, in the United States, where she teaches graduate courses in English grammar and in materials design, development, and publication. As shown in this chapter, she is a first adopter who often experiments with new applications of computer technology to teaching and materials development.