

# FAITHS & PRACTICES: THREE PHASES OF EWS<sup>1</sup>

Earl Stevick

This paper is my summary of an ongoing series of conversations that I've found myself engaged in with individuals and groups ever since Jane Arnold's panel at the TESOL 1999 Convention in New York. An overall topic for those conversations might have been "Faith and Practice in Language Teaching." I intend this paper for distribution sometime after the close of another panel, one on *Faith, Values, and Language Teaching*, which has been organized by Tom Scovel and is to be presented at the TESOL 2001 Convention in St Louis.

My understanding of the ground rules for the St Louis panel was that each of the speakers would speak out of a particular faith tradition or values-structure, but that within the panel itself, no speaker would try to present his or her tradition or structure as a whole, or even explain it, defend it, or compare it with other faiths or structures. Instead, speakers were to summarize first their own versions of whatever they were representing, and second, they were to point out connections between specific articles of their faith or values, and specific features of their own practice as teachers. What I say here is not going to be a direct addition to the St Louis panel. It'll just be a bit of optional collateral reading. I will however stick to the same ground rules.

First I'd better clarify a few terms. As I'm going to use the word "practice" in this paper, my "practice" in any situation is simply how I usually act or react in that situation. "Faith" is a little more complex. It seems to me that how a person reacts to the changing situations of life is enabled, influenced and limited, though not totally determined, by all the various ideas and assumptions that that person holds. Here I'd like to use the word "faith" in a very generic sense. I'd like to say that an article of "faith" is simply one or another of the deepest of those guiding assumptions that a person works from. It may be on a spiritual topic, but it doesn't have to be. An ancient non-lexicographer once wrote that "Faith is the substance of things hoped for,

---

<sup>1</sup> Copies available by e-mail ([stevick@rockbridge.net](mailto:stevick@rockbridge.net)). Phone contacts are also welcome (540-463-3277).

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.1*

AFTERWORDS is an informal collection of short, relatively recent things I've written that bear on the spiritual aspect of teaching languages. I would enjoy hearing about occasions where they have been useful, but the individual papers may be reproduced free of charge as needed. [stevick@rockbridge.net](http://stevick@rockbridge.net) ©2002 by Earl W Stevick

and the evidence of things not seen” —which is to say that faith is what enables us to act as if something or other is true even though we can’t absolutely prove that it’s true. It’s what lets you walk out on the pond in the middle of winter even though you can’t prove that the ice is frozen thick enough to support your weight, for example. Some articles of faith are consciously arrived at and held, but others arise from less conscious sources. Many articles of faith are parts of what the holder of the article thinks of as “just plain common sense.”

As the months have gone by and one individual or one group after another has participated with me in this ongoing conversation, and as comments on an earlier draft of this paper have accumulated, it has seemed to me that I need a third term alongside “practice” and “faith.” That term is “experience,” which I intend in the, again, very loose and very everyday sense that “a person’s ‘experience’ is the sum of everything that that person has participated in or has at least observed.”

Both experience and practice are relatively overt. Faith is a mental construct, and so it is basically covert, though it can be put into words at least to some extent. Every instance of practice contributes to experience, and experience may be a model for practice. But both practice and experience often contribute to conclusions (Oops! “Conclusions” is a new word!) and previously-formed conclusions often guide practice. So I guess what I’m really trying to say is that it’s these deeper, less conscious, more powerful conclusions that I’m here calling “faith.”

The rest of this paper is going to consist of three firsthand examples of relationships among faith, practice and experience. The first example is taken from the beginning of my career, the second from about the middle, and the third will be about how I see things right now.

#### MY FIRST YEARS AS A LANGUAGE TEACHER: AUDIOLINGUALISM

I became a language teacher — EFL, of course — somewhat to my surprise and greatly to my delight, right after World War II. In those days, powerful shared experience in my country included tremendous euphoria and optimism, and confidence in “good old American know-how” — in the “way of life” that had brought us “our” victory and that had led to our emergence as the dominant power in the world, militarily of course, but now economically, culturally and linguistically as well. These were conspicuous ingre-

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.2*

AFTERWORDS is an informal collection of short, relatively recent things I’ve written that bear on the spiritual aspect of teaching languages. I would enjoy hearing about occasions where they have been useful, but the individual papers may be reproduced free of charge as needed. [stevick@rockbridge.net](mailto:stevick@rockbridge.net) ©2002 by Earl W Stevick

dients in our experience, therefore they were powerful shapers of our common sense — which is, as I said, an important source of faith.

Among the features of life in wartime that made a particularly deep and dramatic impression on us was the unusual degree of control over many areas of civilian life: over access to scarce goods and services, and over what you had to pay for them once you were allowed to buy them, for example. Those of us in uniform came away with the value of a number of other things impressed upon us: the value of discipline (i.e., immediate and unthinking obedience to stimuli originating in the sergeant's vocal cords), and the value also of doing things together and in unison (such as marching instead of walking). We also were made aware of the need to subordinate our own preferences (and today that would include "learning styles" and "Myers-Briggs profiles"!) to group norms. We discovered the concentrated use of physical energy, and the building of strength through painful but gainful use of muscles. Decisions about what was to be done, and how, and when and where were made at the top of the command chain and passed down for us to execute, and we learned not to ask *Why*-questions? We learned to identify one objective at a time, taking that objective first, and only then looking for the next objective. And of course we got used to doing everything "on the double."

Some other factors, though they didn't apply to the population at large, did turn out to have important effects on the field of postwar language teaching, at least in the United States. They arose from the sudden need to come up with not only a whole mountain of new language study materials — a whole mountain range, in fact — but also some unprecedented *source of* these materials — plus of course the personnel to serve as teachers. You see, overnight the United States found itself to be the most powerful nation on one side of a conflict that was much more on a "world" scale than WW I had been a quarter of a century earlier. As such, we had to be ready to take effective action in almost any part of the world on very short notice. "Taking effective action" might turn out to include personal living within a local economy and culture, dealing with counterpart officials in a local government; organizing and supervising local police; monitoring electronic communications, and so forth. Such work would have to be carried out by people who had the necessary job skills, and were also trustworthy, and this in effect meant military personnel who would be competent in one or another of these dozens and dozens of languages, many of which we had hardly heard of, and most of which were not taught in this country at all — or only in a few universities.

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.3*

AFTERWORDS is an informal collection of short, relatively recent things I've written that bear on the spiritual aspect of teaching languages. I would enjoy hearing about occasions where they have been useful, but the individual papers may be reproduced free of charge as needed. [stevick@rockbridge.net](mailto:stevick@rockbridge.net) ©2002 by Earl W Stevick

Moreover, the goals, schedules, and overall durations of university courses were, needless to say, drastically incompatible with the government's needs. Who could possibly whip together the necessary training methodology, not to mention the study materials for a set of training programs that were clearly going to be both extensive and intensive?

At this point, onto the scene come a group of scholars whose field of activity was not literature or phonology or historical linguistics, and whose usual habitat was not a library or a classroom. Instead, they had for some years been immersing themselves in the recording and analyzing of hundreds of languages spoken by only small numbers of people. Few of these languages had ever been reduced to writing, so anyone who wanted to do anything with them had to deal with them first of all in terms of the noises that came out of people's mouths as they reacted vocally to the analyst's actions. Structurally, the languages studied by the anthropological linguists differed widely among themselves, and in general were quite different from the languages that Westerners were accustomed to studying.

Second, for reasons we've just seen, the anthropological linguists often studied languages while they themselves were living within the cultures that used the languages. The wide and unending variety of religious/spiritual beliefs that they encountered under these circumstances was quite consistent with the abandonment of any supernatural assumptions of their own that the linguists might have started out with. Furthermore, behaviorism was widespread in the thinking of the day, and the highly respected leader of the anthropological linguists in those days, Leonard Bloomfield, was a strong exponent of that point of view. Materialistic behaviorism told us that we have only this one life on earth, and that in what we call "human learning" there is no "mind," but just an "organism" — a physical body with its muscles, nerves, and other tissues — surrounded by other organisms, all of them receiving and emitting a continual flow of physically-transmitted stimuli and responses.

For language teaching, the methodological counterpart of this unorganized collection of articles of faith was of course Audiolingualism.<sup>2</sup> I think we are all familiar enough with

---

<sup>2</sup> I am of course aware that the term "audiolingual" was coined much later than the years during which the anthropological linguists were producing their language courses for the Army. I am using the word here as a convenient label for the set of assumptions that underlay all of this tradition.

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.4*

that method so that I don't need to take time here to spell out the many correspondences between the postwar environment as I have described it, and the approach to language teaching that this environment spawned. The quotations in Figure 1 may serve as reminders of some of the factors I listed:

- “Language teaching is one branch of Applied Linguistics.”
- “A language is a set of habits involving the muscles of the speech organs.”
- “A language is a set of oral signals by means of which a social group cooperates.”
- “Accuracy before fluency.”
- “Don't just learn — overlearn!”

Let me point out some conclusions that the creators of Audiolingualism seemed to have drawn, consciously or unconsciously, from materialistic behaviorism. In this one and only life, some of the methodologists apparently concluded, there are two *things one can do with one's self*. One can advance oneself financially or professionally, or one can enjoy oneself — or of course one can try to do both. *The job of the teacher* was to prepare students for success in one or both of these directions. This was to be achieved mainly by guiding the students in forming new habits of ear (“audio-”) and tongue (“lingual”). *The materials for use* were externally supplied by teams of experts — experts in linguistics, cultural anthropology, and other relevant fields, assisted by a few non-professionals who were native speakers of the language in question. Such materials should be made as “student-proof” as possible. (In fact, some of the *illuminati* were occasionally heard, in moments of unguarded condescension, to mutter something about making things “teacher-proof.”) The teacher was principally just a guide through a maze that consisted of mimicry-memorization of dialogs, and mechanical practice of drills. *The relationship among the students* in a class of two or more was mainly one of competition, both for academic standing and for the time and attention of the teacher.

Before I go on to my second example of faith-practice relationships, let me say again that the cultural and historical factors I've listed did not form some single integrated whole, and so individuals were free to pick up whichever of these features they themselves resonated to, and to de-emphasize the rest. I myself, for example, was one of those who retained our belief in a God who created the universe but is not a part of it, and who is conscious of those facts, who has purposes and power, and so on. This contrasted with the belief of the Bloomfieldians, that there is no God and that there also is no “spirit,” or “soul” or anything like that. Some of us, however, including me, did buy rather heavily into the behavioristic learning theory of the audiolingualists. Similarly, in the example I am about to present, I ignored the originator's clear stance

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.5*

AFTERWORDS is an informal collection of short, relatively recent things I've written that bear on the spiritual aspect of teaching languages. I would enjoy hearing about occasions where they have been useful, but the individual papers may be reproduced free of charge as needed. [stevick@rockbridge.net](mailto:stevick@rockbridge.net) ©2002 by Earl W Stevick

against my basic theological beliefs, while at the same time I was trying to learn from him what he was discovering about how our learning equipment (from my point of view, our *created* learning equipment) operates.

## MID-CAREER: THE SILENT WAY

Let's move on now to my next example of faith and practice, which comes from about the middle of my career. Sometime around 1969 I came across an approach I had never heard of, called "The Silent Way," put forward by a man I had never heard of, whose name was Caleb Gattegno. In many respects though not in all, the Silent Way was the complete opposite of Audiolingualism. In fact, an appropriate nickname for Audiolingualism might have been "The Noisy Way."

### ***"Faith" and the Silent Way***

Not long before Gattegno died, I sent him a summary of his ideas as I understood them. His only comment was that though he would have hoped for a more creative response from me, I did seem to have the facts down right. On this basis, I venture to offer the following list of articles of the "faith" (again in the generic sense of that word) that I believe underlay the Silent Way:

1. MATERIALISM "Materialism" in philosophy is the belief that the universe is made up of nothing but matter, and that matter and its motions account for everything else, including what we in everyday language call "mind". Now Gattegno in person would have fitted no one's stereotype of a "materialist." But when, apparently building on Einstein's discovery about the  $e = mc^2$  relationship, Gattegno states that the only ultimate realities are time and energy, he has in effect declared himself a materialist.
2. THE "SELF" The second article of faith contrasts sharply with materialism. Although there are no ultimate realities except time and energy, there are some bits of energy that have special properties not found in the kinetic energy of an avalanche, or in the potential energy of a tankful of gasoline, or in an electrical circuit. Every human being has one tiny packet of this energy. The name for this packet is a "Self." The involvement of the Self with physical matter begins the moment it joins a fertilized human egg and sets out to build a body for itself.

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.6*

AFTERWORDS is an informal collection of short, relatively recent things I've written that bear on the spiritual aspect of teaching languages. I would enjoy hearing about occasions where they have been useful, but the individual papers may be reproduced free of charge as needed. [stevick@rockbridge.net](mailto:stevick@rockbridge.net) ©2002 by Earl W Stevick

3. **AWARENESS** Among its other remarkable characteristics, this little packet of special energy called the Self is able to make choices, to form awarenesses, and awarenesses of awareness, and also to store these awarenesses, and then to use its stored awarenesses in order to control other forms of energy around it, and to find ways of meeting new challenges.
4. **ADAPTIVE** Awarenesses are formed, developed and revised as parts of the Self's efforts to deal in a satisfactory way with whatever is not going as the Self would like. This may be something that comes from *outside*: for example, noticing that one is being misunderstood whenever one speaks a foreign language. But one of the great strengths of the Silent Way is that the learner may also see what she/he is doing *inside* that's aiding the learning process or that's interfering with it: something such as harboring a deep dislike for the speakers of the language, for example. Then, having seen what needs to be changed inside, the learner may select from present resources and devise internal changes that will make him/her better able to deal with the internal obstacle, and from there meet the external challenge more effectively.
5. **INDEPENDENCE** In responding to a new external challenge or other stimulus, the Self draws on its accumulated resources of awarenesses and other information.
6. **AUTONOMY** In meeting a new challenge, the Self usually has available to it a choice among two or more ways of using its stored resources. Gattegno gives the name "autonomy" to this choice-making.
7. **RESPONSIBILITY** The Self continues to try various combinations of resources until its interaction with a outside challenge finally becomes satisfactory.
8. **LEARNING** Each experience of dealing with outside challenges results in modification of the Self's existing inner resources. That's what "learning" is.
9. **SUBORDINATION** Learning in this sense can be accomplished only through *work* — through *internal* work, and internal work is *doable only by the Self*. Everything else, including teaching, must be subordinated to that learning process.
10. **TEACHING** A Silent Way teacher is constantly learning and relearning the students. That is to say, she/he tries to monitor where the students are in their internal development of whatever awarenesses they need for the subject matter of the course, and to indicate to them when and where they need to do a bit of additional internal work, and to provide new inputs which will nudge that internal work in the

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.7*

right direction. For example, the fact that “the place where additional work is needed is in the second syllable” is commonly transmitted by the teacher pointing to the second knuckle of her own finger. “Round your lips more” could be conveyed by the teacher silently rounding her own lips and pointing.

11. PERMANENCE OF SELF At the death of the body, the packet of energy that is the Self remains intact, and moves on to another human sperm-and-egg combination somewhere in the world.
12. PERMANENCE OF AWARENESSES As the Self makes this transfer, it carries with it whatever *awarenesses* it had accumulated in its previous life or lives. It does *not* however carry with it any *specific information* at all.
13. SOLITARY PILGRIM Thus the Self makes its way like a solitary pilgrim through an indefinitely long series of lives.
14. FULL HUMANITY The Self’s goal in this pilgrimage is to reach the next stage of evolution, which Gattegno called being “fully human.”

Let’s pause for a moment and compare the Audiolingual faith with Silent Way faith. Audiolingual faith, remember, was all about the external self and its conformity with the outer world. Now we find the Silent Way focusing on the inner Self and its creativity, and we watch it learning to do everything on the basis of criteria set for it and it alone by its unique experiences and awarenesses. In Audiolingualism, the materials are intended to be “one-size-fits-all”; in the Silent Way, individual selves and individual classes are so unique that permanent published materials would be inappropriate in principle. In the Silent Way, the learner is taught not only to speak French, but to be aware of awareness, and to become responsible for making autonomous choices among his or her own set of independent resources. Remember also that although the Silent Way had been in development for many years before 1960, it found wide acceptance in the 60s and 70s, during the great cultural upheaval of those times.

### *Some “practices” typical of the Silent Way*

The specific techniques that I refer to in the Audiolingual and Contemporary sections of this paper are familiar to most language teachers, but I recognize that the same is not true for the Silent Way. Here, then, is a brief description of just a few parts of the Silent Way that would seem novel to anyone who was observing it for the first time.

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.8*

AFTERWORDS is an informal collection of short, relatively recent things I’ve written that bear on the spiritual aspect of teaching languages. I would enjoy hearing about occasions where they have been useful, but the individual papers may be reproduced free of charge as needed. [stevick@rockbridge.net](mailto:stevick@rockbridge.net) ©2002 by Earl W Stevick

- The teacher is entirely or almost entirely silent most of the time, even when he or she is leading students to pronounce material that contains sounds they had never ever heard. Gattegno's success with the use of silence was extensive, it was often astonishing, and to me as a teacher who was learning from him, it was profoundly instructive. However — and this has surprised some people — he did not consider silence to be essential to his methodology. For Gattegno, the purpose of the silence was to force people back onto their own existing resources [cf. INDEPENDENCE, AUTONOMY]. Through the use of these resources, new information would be discovered, and awarenesses would be tested, modified and strengthened [LEARNING].
- Compare this with the usual “Repeat-after-me” technique of Audiolingualism and most other methods. Such a technique allows the student to fall back on his or her ability to mimic, and makes unnecessary the thorough observation and the responsible experimentation that the Silent Way allows for, and even demands. Gattegno saw the mimicry process as relatively superficial — as something that was unlikely to either generate new AWARENESSES or to profit from. them. [cf. SUBORDINATION]
- After being taught in this manner for a while, the learner notices (becomes AWARE of ) the physical acts of tongue, jaw, voice and so on that he or she has to perform before the teacher indicates that no further work is needed on this point [ADAPTIVE] which the learner recognizes as an “OK for now” signal . Still later, the student may notice that he or she is noticing pronunciation details, and later that he or she is noticing the fact of noticing noticing, and so on [AWARENESS OF AWARENESS]. Such a student quickly becomes aware of being able to use INDEPENDENCE and AUTONOMY on specific data, rather than having to constantly seek the approval of the teacher [RESPONSIBILITY] or ask the teacher for a new model to imitate, and this awareness is commonly followed by an awareness of reduction in anxiety. Resort to mimicry would short-circuit the learning process, and would lead only to very brief retention of any material treated in this way. [TEACHING]
- There is little if any choral work, particularly when the goal is improvement of pronunciation. After all, how could the teacher give appropriate feedback [TEACHING] to individuals under these circumstances [LEARNING]? On the other hand, individual learners [SOLITARY PILGRIM] do profit greatly from observing

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.9*

whatever interactions are taking place between the teacher and the other individuals in the class.

### *Outcomes of the Silent Way*

Let's turn now to the outcomes of Silent Way study. Linguistically, they are commonly outstanding. As for personal outcomes, in Gattegno's approach, the main thing to do with one's self is not just to advance it or just to enjoy it, as in the faith that underlay Audiolingualism. The goal is rather to *improve* one's self.

With regard to this goal, the world and the other people in the world — the class and the other people in the class — are not mere competitors as they were in Audiolingualism. In the Silent Way, they are in the last analysis more like mines, because from their behavior awareness-generating experiences may be extracted; they are the crucible in which awarenesses are formed; and they are the anvil on which the Self shapes and reshapes itself, but the deeper concerns of classmates, and their reactions as persons, play a peripheral role. It's therefore not surprising that Silent Way teachers have generally seemed to me to give relatively little attention to the interpersonal relationships among their learners.

In this last sentence I said "*seemed to me.*" Some of my friends who are expert users of the Silent Way take vigorous exception to that conclusion, and to what I said earlier about a "Solitary Pilgrim." They tell of Silent Way classes in which there was genuine concern for the other members of the class, warm mutual support, and a very strong and enduring *esprit de corps*. I have no doubts at all about the testimony of these colleagues. Their expertise on this subject vastly exceeds mine. Nevertheless, my experience did include a number of training programs a day or more in length *about* the Silent Way, conducted by Dr Gattegno; two 22-hour intensive weekends, in each of which I studied a language that was new to me, using the Silent Way. One of those classes was conducted by Dr Gattegno, the other by a thoroughly experienced native speaker who had a high reputation as a Silent Way teacher. I also observed a number of classes (some ongoing real classes, some demonstrations) conducted by members of the Educational Solutions staff.). As a Silent Way teacher myself, I also conducted a few beginning courses of 10 to 50 hours in length in Turkish or Swahili. My observation about the lack of attention to interpersonal relations was supported by all except perhaps the first of those experiences, which was an ongoing class in Spanish being taught by a relative newcomer to the Silent Way. Even though my experience with the Silent Way may have

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.10*

AFTERWORDS is an informal collection of short, relatively recent things I've written that bear on the spiritual aspect of teaching languages. I would enjoy hearing about occasions where they have been useful, but the individual papers may be reproduced free of charge as needed. [stevick@rockbridge.net](mailto:stevick@rockbridge.net) ©2002 by Earl W Stevick

been atypical, I'm going to retain it in this paper just as a further illustration of what I mean by a faith-practice relationship.<sup>3</sup>

## CONTEMPORARY: MY OWN PRESENT VERSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

I'm going to draw my third example of the faith-practice relationship from the present, that is, from how I see things at the end of my career. Let me begin with what is probably the most controversial aspect of my faith, which has to do with matters that lie both inside this world and beyond it. Where the Bloomfieldians who contributed so much to the outlook behind Audiolingualism saw one life and one life only per customer, and where Gattegno saw an indefinite series of lives, I believe that each of us has this one life, here in this world, but that this life will be followed by an eternity either very pleasant or very unpleasant, depending on two aspects of what has happened in this life. What happens in this life is therefore awfully important. One aspect of what happens in this life has to do with a person's relationship to God through Christ.

In this connection, there's a relevant story about the Apostle Paul when he was being transported in shackles to Rome for trial. On the way he had a hearing before a local king, and took the occasion to explain his faith. When the king asked Paul if he was trying to convert him, Paul is reported to have replied that he'd like not only the king, but everybody who was listening, to "become such as I am, except for these chains," and for "chains" I in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can substitute the numerous limitations and defects that I drag around with me.

So I agree with Paul here, but I'm not as bold as he was, and in a professional setting I'm even less bold. My own practice in a professional setting is to somehow identify myself as a Christian as soon as convenient, and to try not to discredit the name of Christ by my actions.

From a Christian point of view, the other side of what happens in this life is how a person interacts with other people, the most important aspect being *agape* -- unconditional, self-giving love. Community Language Learning gives us two method-specific examples of this kind of "love". The first is how in the earlier stages the knower (i.e., the teacher) voluntarily subjects him- or herself to the linguistic needs of the

---

<sup>3</sup> *E pur si muove!*

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.11*

AFTERWORDS is an informal collection of short, relatively recent things I've written that bear on the spiritual aspect of teaching languages. I would enjoy hearing about occasions where they have been useful, but the individual papers may be reproduced free of charge as needed. [stevick@rockbridge.net](mailto:stevick@rockbridge.net) ©2002 by Earl W Stevick

learners and also to their emotional needs. The other CLL example is that learners who reach what's called the fourth stage voluntarily show concern for the linguistic and emotional needs — and standards — of the knower. This kind of learner doesn't resent correction or try to avoid it, and is not discouraged by it, but welcomes it, and is also very much aware of the teacher as a person, not just as a special piece of equipment.

A more general, and in the long run a more important example of *agape* is not method-specific. It is the teacher who works long and hard for very little pay, just for the sake of the students. I hasten to add two points here, though: first, that this kind of love is found among other people as well as among Christians; and second, that the preciousness of the message that can be carried in this way must not be used by others to justify disregarding the socio-political status of the teacher, or to excuse unfair salaries and indecent working conditions. This raises the question Does the "self-giving" type of love then mean that one is supposed to accept such conditions? Well, of course without some kind of unpleasantness there is no self-giving. So there's no simple answer. I guess it's a matter of being very clear about the relationship between what is most important to *us*, and what really *is* most important, and about which kind of security we want in our lives.

Turning now to the practical side, the importance of relationships with other people, and of interactions with other people, certainly contributes to my interest in approaches that emphasize relationships and interactions, and that consider the outcomes in this area to be important right alongside subject-matter outcomes such as accuracy, fluency, or communicative competence. Obviously Christians don't have a monopoly on this kind of interest.

I personally try to act in ways that are consistent with Christ's teachings and with his example. I do this for two reasons, frankly: one is to increase the credibility of whatever I may say explicitly about my faith; and the other is to provide an example of Christian behavior that is at least local and contemporary, even though of course it's also very, very imperfect.

Let me go on now to some specifics of my faith that may be less controversial than what I've just been talking about. I believe the world (including us humans) was created by an intelligent and self-conscious God (though I don't pretend to know anything about the methods of the creative acts or about their duration).

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.12*

I believe, along with many non-Christians, that we have, built into us, some wonderful potentials, not all of which are known about or fully understood. I also share with many non-Christians the belief that in the organization and working of memory, the elements that have to do with purpose and emotion play a central role. Recognizing this fact may be very useful to us in devising techniques and in preparing materials.

Because I believe that human potentials are parts of God's creation, I haven't hesitated to explore some of them, without worrying too much about whether they were first noticed or explored by non-Christians — such things as meditative techniques, group dynamics, or the use of music, for example.

My belief in unrecognized or underexploited human potentials also contributes to my willingness to accept and even to encourage learner initiative within a language learning program. Here, too, we find no Christian monopoly.

I also believe, though, that there are built-in limitations on our potentials, both intellectually and morally. That is to say, I've been tremendously impressed by the energy, elation, and high-quality learning that can be generated by giving students freedom to design and conduct certain aspects of their own language study. At the same time, however, I've never been convinced that basic human ignorance, laziness, lack of concentration, and interpersonal tension ever fade completely away even under the best of circumstances. Sort of a non-sectarian counterpart of "indwelling sin," I suppose. This belief is related to my emphasis on maintaining teacher "control" alongside learner "initiative."

These beliefs have consequences for the question about the highest thing one can do with oneself: survive, succeed, or whatever. In my understanding of the Christian view, what is ultimately important is not self-preservation, not self-understanding, not self-advancement, not self-enjoyment, not self-knowledge, not self-actualization, and it's not even self-improvement or self-realization. It is self-giving. Again, Christians have no monopoly on self-giving, but self-giving does occupy a central place in Christian theory that I'm not sure it occupies in other faiths. In any case, I see my own motivation less in an ethical light than in a historical light. In a nutshell, it's (a) God having become a particular human being at a particular time and place; (b) me being thereby set free from what would otherwise have led to certain and permanent disaster; and (c) me for the rest of this life becoming more and more like what God wants me to be.

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.13*

AFTERWORDS is an informal collection of short, relatively recent things I've written that bear on the spiritual aspect of teaching languages. I would enjoy hearing about occasions where they have been useful, but the individual papers may be reproduced free of charge as needed. [stevick@rockbridge.net](mailto:stevick@rockbridge.net) ©2002 by Earl W Stevick

## SUMMARY

A language teacher who has read the preceding parts of this paper might well comment, “Yes, there are some interesting ideas here, but how do they apply to my work?” Well, I got to thinking about that too, so I’ve picked out at random three things we have to do in just about every language teaching situation: (1) selecting or creating materials, (2) reacting to students’ errors, and (3) leading students from hesitant, short-lived control of new material to long-lived, unthinking mastery of it. About each aspect I asked myself: “How did these three approaches (Audiolingual, Silent Way, and “Christian”) influence me? What did they say to me about this aspect of my teaching? How did they heighten my interest in, or deepen my appreciation of, various existing practices in the field?” Figure 2 contains the beginnings of my answers.

And it’s with the jotted notes of Figure 2 that I’m going to end this paper. In a way, it would have been more fun to close with a rhetorically polished paragraph that would have left readers or hearers with a bit of new information, illumination or inspiration, or at least would have left them with the feeling that a certain amount of information, illumination or inspiration had been made available. I’m going to close instead with an invitation: an invitation to sit down, alone or with a few good colleagues, and consider your own past, your own deepest assumptions, and your own ways as a teacher, and draw the empty boxes for your own Figure 2s. Then fill in the boxes, or at least begin to fill them in. Then stop. Put the project aside, and come back to it in a day or two.

Thank you!

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Bonnie Mennell, Paul Levasseur and Lou Spaventa for invaluable correspondence about earlier drafts of this paper, and Alice Omaggio Hadley, Joseph Poulshock, Tom Scovel, and Zoltan Dörnyei for their helpful comments.

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.14*

AFTERWORDS is an informal collection of short, relatively recent things I’ve written that bear on the spiritual aspect of teaching languages. I would enjoy hearing about occasions where they have been useful, but the individual papers may be reproduced free of charge as needed. [stevick@rockbridge.net](mailto:stevick@rockbridge.net) ©2002 by Earl W Stevick

[For the benefit of anyone who has the tape but not the printed version of this paper, here's my Figure 2. It was just too bulky to read aloud as part of the paper itself. EWS]

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.15*

AFTERWORDS is an informal collection of short, relatively recent things I've written that bear on the spiritual aspect of teaching languages. I would enjoy hearing about occasions where they have been useful, but the individual papers may be reproduced free of charge as needed. [stevick@rockbridge.net](mailto:stevick@rockbridge.net) ©2002 by Earl W Stevick

“Language teaching is one branch of Applied Linguistics.”

“A language is a set of habits involving the muscles of the speech organs.”

“A language is a set of oral signals by means of which a social group cooperates.”

“You have learned a foreign language when, within a small vocabulary, you have mastered the phonological contrasts and made the major structural devices matters of automatic habit.”

“New habits are formed, and old ones are broken, by operant conditioning — by eliciting in any way that is convenient a response (a bit of muscular activity) and giving each response some kind of immediate feedback, either positive or negative.”

“Accuracy before fluency.”

*Figure 1*  
*Reminders of Audiolingualism*

“Don’t just learn — overlearn!”

“Try to build up speed as well as accuracy in performance of structure drills.”

“Hearing before speaking, speaking before reading, reading before writing.”

“Introduction of meaning too early can have the bad effect of activating habits that are parts of the learner’s native language.”

“Treatment of new linguistic points should follow the general sequence Mimicry — Manipulation — Meaningful Use.” Activities should be carefully controlled so that students don’t fall into errors and thus receive positive feedback for unwanted behavior.”

“The student who is [to be regarded as excellent] is never the one who expresses originality in the language, but the one who reproduces the models of the language which have been given.”

“A classroom ... is... a situation in which 20 to 30 youthful human beings face in the same direction with one adult facing them. ... Their behavior must remain under the guidance and control of that adult ”

“The acquisition of non-thoughtful responses is the very core of successful language learning.”

*Stevick RE: Scovel Panel at TESOL 2001. p.16*

AFTERWORDS is an informal collection of short, relatively recent things I've written that bear on the spiritual aspect of teaching languages. I would enjoy hearing about occasions where they have been useful, but the individual papers may be reproduced free of charge as needed. [stevick@rockbridge.net](mailto:stevick@rockbridge.net) ©2002 by Earl W Stevick

## CREATE/SELECT MATERIALS

<p>AUDIOLINGUALIS M</p> <p>“Faith”</p> <p>“Practice”</p>	<p>The experts know best, so follow them.</p> <p>Use or if necessary create materials embodying linguistically-sound methods, with vocabulary relevant to trainees’ prospective needs.</p>
<p>SILENT WAY</p> <p>“Faith”</p> <p>“Practice”</p>	<p>Just as every learner is unique in the order and speed of developing the needed awarenesses, so every class is also unique.</p> <p>Permanent materials transferable from one class to another are not feasible. Teacher create materials as the course goes on, taking into account all they have learned about the present students.</p>
<p>EWS 2001</p> <p>“Faith”</p> <p>“Practice”</p>	<p>Personal interaction is ubiquitous in Christian theory. Thus Christians are told how to treat one another; God is portrayed as constantly active, especially in the Old Testament. Theologians even talk about communication taking place within the Trinity.</p> <p>Use student-generated materials &amp; personal information to some extent either as main lesson material or in supplementary activities, but only where this can be done without leaving students insecure about either the language or what they are supposed to be doing with it.</p>

*Figure 2a*  
*Faiths/Practices Summary*

## RESPOND TO STUDENT ERRORS

AUDIOLINGUALIS M	Learner is an organism that responds to stimuli, including stimuli that indicate acceptability or unacceptability of its previous responses.
“Faith”	
“Practice”	Give positively or negatively reinforcing stimuli as briefly and as quickly as possible, especially when the student has made an error of any kind. Be sure student responds to reinforcement by improved or perfect new production.
<hr/>	
SILENT WAY	What people call “errors” are valuable hints about the present state of their awarenesses needed for the task with which the teacher is challenging them at the moment.
“Faith”	
“Practice”	The teacher should take the time needed to devise a next challenge that helps the student’s effort to create the appropriate response out of materials already in his/her head.
<hr/>	
EWS 2001	It would not be right to mislead students about their accuracy in using the language, but this is one more situation in which learners can observe such values as “speaking the truth in love.” Concern for person as well as for accuracy.
“Faith”	
“Practice”	More important than presence or absence of the correction itself is the nonverbal message that accompanies it. Convey interest and support, not disapproval or impatience. Or let students correct one another.

*Figure 2b*  
*Faiths/Practices Summary*

## FROM TEMPORARY TO PERMANENT CONTROL

<p>AUDIOLINGUALIS M</p> <p>“Faith”</p> <p>“Practice”</p>	<p>Fluency of production depends on the strength of the underlying habits.</p> <p>Arrange for plenty of practice, some of it purely mechanical and against the clock, to further strengthen habits. Avoid giving students puzzles, or tasks in which they are likely to produce errors.</p>
<p>SILENT WAY</p> <p>“Faith”</p> <p>“Practice”</p>	<p>Even after students have developed the awarenesses necessary for a word, sound or structure, further practice may be necessary.</p> <p>Arrange for further practice in which attention is focused on meaning as well as on form.</p>
<p>EWS 2001</p> <p>“Faith”</p> <p>“Practice”</p>	<p>Our created equipment for learning language includes storage facilities in which the learner’s emotions and purposes play a crucial role.</p> <p>Let students gain initial temporary control of new material in activities that allow them to think about linguistic form if they need to. Then incorporate the new words or structures into activities in which real people are doing real things with real people.</p>

*Figure 2c*  
*Faiths/Practices Summary*