

ESL students find experience rewarding

Demand high for tutors

by Hafidha Acuay
Staff Writer

English as a Second Language Awareness Week, which was held last week, didn't offer parties or festivals to mark the occasion, but it's important for people to know that it can make life for a non-English speaker easier.

The demand for ESL tutors is high. Ayde' York, who has taught English for ten years and is the ESL volunteer tutor coordinator at Clackamas, said, "I have nine tutors on campus and six or seven off campus. I have at least a dozen students that I haven't been able to place yet."

People sign up as ESL tutors for many reasons.

"Some people do it because they're interested in other cultures and they want to become more culturally diverse in their thinking. Some people want to help people they see struggling in their classes. We get a lot of retired people who want to help their community," said Molly Williams, the college's only full-time ESL instructor. She went on to say that some tutors are learning the language of the person they teach, others want to make friends with people from another culture, and many people desire to become teachers and want to know what to expect.

Brent King, a Clackamas student who recently began tutoring a woman from Vietnam, explained

why he became interested in ESL.

"I work at a supermarket in Molalla and we have a lot of Spanish people who come in. I thought if someone taught them English, they wouldn't have such a hard time. I wanted to get involved, do my fair share, I guess," King said.

Another tutor, Cindy Bakke, is majoring in Applied Linguistics at Clackamas. She intends on becoming a professional ESL instructor.

There are also many reasons why people attempt to learn English.

"A large majority want employment skills," explained Williams. "Some just want to be able to communicate with Americans." Many also want to be able to be more active in the lives of their children by helping them with schoolwork and attending PTA meetings. "A lot of them are isolated," said Williams, because of their inability to speak English.

It is for this reason that ESL is not taught in the way foreign language classes are. Instead of being grammar-based, it is life-skills based. ESL is fashioned after the way children learn to speak their first language: they listen for a full year, then speak, then read, then write.

You get "a lot of reward after just one session" because you're helping people survive, Williams said of her tutor-training classes.

To be an ESL tutor, a person doesn't need experience or the language of the person whom they teach. "You just need to know English," Williams said. And "to be able to talk one-on-one with the students."

This is very important because, as Bakke said, "A lot of times, a student is really apprehensive about speaking English in front of a big group of people. But when you can teach them one-on-one, they can relax."

Anxiousness is not the only obstacle in a tutoring situation. Bakke, who works with a Chinese woman, says pronunciation is the biggest problem she must deal with.

King, who found tutoring harder than he expected, said, "There are times when she (his student) has no idea what I'm saying." It's difficult because she has trouble with words and phrases that Americans don't think twice about, he added.

As far as the relationship between the tutor and student is concerned, York hasn't had many problems. "So far, I haven't had any complaints except sometimes people's personalities don't click." If that happens, she arranges them with new people.

However, if someone doesn't want to tutor one-on-one with a person, "volunteers can tutor here and at night classes in Canby High and Clackamas High School. Tutors can serve as conversation



Photo by Anjanette Booth

Molly Williams is the college's only full time ESL instructor.

partners," Williams said.

She went on to describe the students. "In our day program we have about 60 students ... they're from all over: Mexico, Iran, Japan, Jordan, Switzerland, Brazil, Peru, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Romania, Russia and India. In our night program we serve 150 to 200 students per term. And they're from all over the globe."

It is important to remember that though the non-English speakers are officially the "students,"

the tutors are, too.

"I've learned a lot about the Chinese culture," Bakke said. Other benefits she noted were the mental challenge of figuring out how to teach English in a way that makes it interesting, and also "the friendship that I struck up with her -- it's a great friendship."

To find out more about being an ESL volunteer tutor, contact York at ext. 2717.

Tutoring offers financial, educational opportunities

Nicole Turley
Staff Writer

The college's Study Skills Center, now located in the Dye Learning Center, has been offering free tutoring for struggling students since 1971.

"It's the largest and the longest running student retention program at the college," said Judy Peabody, who has been the tutoring coordinator since 1972.

This tutorial program is aimed at aiding students who struggle in a subject. The paid tutors are either students from the college who excel in the subject they wish to tutor, or individuals who have an associates degree or higher in the subject. Assigned tutors

will become independent learners," Peabody said.

She reported that the majority of students request tutoring in the following subjects: math, science, writing, study skills and accounting. However, unlike the tutoring offered at the math lab in Streeter Hall, the tutoring in the Skills Center is directed at students with disabilities and those who use English as their second language.

In order to receive tutoring through the Skills Center, students must meet the three following criteria. First, the student must be consistently attending the class he or she is requesting help in. "Tutoring does not take the place

above criteria is referred to the Study Skills Center by the instructor. The financial status of the student is assessed. Peabody then selects a tutor for the student. The tutor meets with the student and the two begin to set and achieve their academic goals.

The peer/para-tutors are usually recruited by their instructor and referred to Peabody. The tutors are required to have a 3.0 GPA or higher and at least an A or B in the subject they tutor. Those individuals who qualify undergo an interviewing process and are selected. The people who are chosen to be peer tutors earn \$6.83 an hour and the paraprofessional tutors earn a starting wage

"It's the largest and the longest running student retention program at the college."

--Judy Peabody

meet with students for a couple of hours each week on a one-to-one basis. The goal of this program, according to Peabody, is to transform the struggling student into one who has a firm handle on the topic.

"We hope to tutor ourselves out of a job and that the students

of the teacher," Peabody said.

Second, the student must be appropriately placed in the class. This means having the correct placement scores to be taking the course.

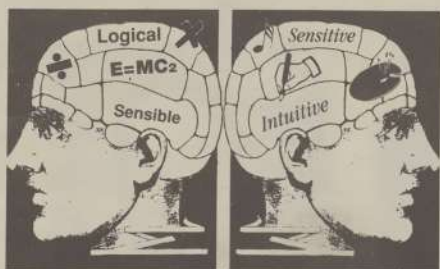
Third, the student must have the instructor's approval.

A student who meets the

of \$8.48 an hour.

Overall, tutors and students benefit from the program. The tutor earns money while brushing up on his studies and the student becomes an independent learner.

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