A Defence of Simplification
by I. S. P. Nation and Jean Paul Deweerdt

This article discusses the appropriate use of simplified readers in the ELT classroom. Critics have
argued that such texts prevent language learners from developing important reading strategies,
such as the ability to guess the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary from context. Nation and Deweerdt point
out that the exclusive use of graded readers in language classes may indeed lead to
this. However, a balanced language course that provides both fluency practice with simplified texts
and focused language work with unmodified texts is the most effective way to develop reading
skills. To prevent learners from constantly referring to dictionaries as they read, 98% of the words
in the text should be familiar to them, according to research cited by the authors. In practical
terms, texts chosen to develop learner reading fluency should contain no more than one unknown
word every five lines. The authors have applied this formula to simplified and original versions of
the novel Dracula in order to determine the appropriateness of each version for various types of
reading practice.

Building Community and Posting Projects:
Creating “Student Pages” in Web-Based and Web-Enhanced Courses
by Laura G. McGee

Language students who have access to the Internet are increasingly developing an interest in
designing their own Web pages. Language teachers who also have access to the Internet can take
advantage of that interest by having their students combine foreign language study and Web pages.
This article describes a project designed by a teacher of German as a foreign language as part of a
German Culture and Civilization course she taught entirely on-line. To familiarize students with
on-line interaction related to their course, she initially established a threaded discussion board
inside a password-protected site where students could discuss reading assignments. They were then
asked to design their own Web pages in German and post them on the site. They introduced them-
selves and presented a research project on some aspect of German culture. The article describes
some of the projects that students completed. It also recommends a useful Web site on evaluating
Internet research sources (http://www.virtualsalt.com/evalu8it.htm) that students can use to eval-
uate the appropriateness and usefulness of Web sites related to their topics.

Realism and Imagination in the Teaching of English
by Anthea Fraser Gupta

“We forget that countries do not speak languages—people do” (p. 365). This is one of many argu-
ments used by Fraser Gupta to demonstrate that all speakers of the English language, no matter
where they live or how they learned the language, are part of “English linguistic culture.” She
points out that this culture allows for the acceptance of more than one form of English as a norm
and that new words are incorporated more readily into English than into other languages. Even
with this acceptance of diversity, there are wide areas of agreement among speakers of English as
to what constitutes Standard English. For example, norms for written Standard English, given
allowances for variations in lexis and orthography, are shared all over the world. Spoken Standard
English, however, allows for wider variation in lexis and phonology, in direct contrast to the lin-
guistic cultures of other widely spoken languages, such as French. There is plenty of food for
thought in this article for anyone interested in language and language varieties.