

**Course Development Project**  
**Part II: Instructional Materials Selection Report**  
**Richard McDorman**

*Person Interviewed:* Cynthia, an ESL instructor and teacher trainer who works at the same language institute that I do. A summary of the interview and the points I found most interesting are provided below.

Cynthia works at a private language institute in Miami, Florida that focuses on intensive English programs for adult learners. She candidly stated that the majority of her students have enrolled in the program for the student visa it provides, with perhaps one third of the students genuinely interested in learning English; these facts make selecting and adapting instructional materials a challenge, since the overall level of learner motivation is low. Cynthia has taught mostly intermediate and advanced students from Latin America, with a small number of students from East Asia as well. She noted that the typical teacher in this instructional context is a native English-speaking female from North America with either a degree in linguistics, TESOL or language education; or a degree in another field with a TESOL/TEFL/TESL certificate.

Because the school has a mandatory curriculum that requires the use of proprietary course materials that Cynthia and many other instructors find to be of less-than-ideal quality, adapting the existing curricular materials to her students' needs and selecting additional supplementary materials are particularly important in her teaching context. Overall, Cynthia is generally unsatisfied with the standard course materials used at the school (two major complaints were that the materials are too cartoonish and outdated) and has found it difficult to find high-quality commercial textbooks that follow the school's prescribed teaching methodology (the direct method). She pointed out that the school's administration has been generally helpful in procuring supplementary materials, with cost and availability being the two main factors that

affect whether the materials she recommends are purchased by the school, and that the school encourages instructors to use whatever additional materials they find appropriate (materials that teachers select and purchase on their own do not require approval by the school's administration). In order to overcome these practical barriers, Cynthia frequently researches and brings to class low-cost realia, language games (such as *Scrabble* and *Scattergories*) and authentic materials, including newspapers, magazines and video clips. She also tries to use primary sources whenever possible; one example she gave was the *Substance Control Act of 1970*, copies of which she printed out and brought to class after a student asked about drug use and the punishment of drug offenders in the United States.