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Kathleen M. Bailey

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# Language Teacher Supervision

A Case-Based Approach

*Kathleen M. Bailey*

Graduate School of Languages and Educational Linguistics  
Monterey Institute of International Studies



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To

Richard K. McMillan

(1951–2001)

First brother.

First friend.

First person I ever thought I supervised.

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## Preface

This book is about language teacher supervision – a profession that many teachers enter almost by accident. Teachers can be promoted into supervisory positions for many reasons: they are excellent teachers, they have experience, they have “people skills,” they are seen as loyal to the administration, they have seniority, and so on. Seldom are teachers made supervisors because they have had specific professional preparation for the role.

Sometimes teacher supervision feels like a tug-of-war, a power struggle between the supervisor and the supervisee. At other times, supervision can be a very rewarding profession, full of teamwork. As I look back upon my own career, it appears that I have been working between the tug-of-war and the teamwork for more than 30 years.

This book is a combination literature review and casebook. It is not a memoir, although some of my experiences are woven into it. My first supervisory job was in Korea in the summer of 1973. I was hired to teach and coordinate a remedial reading component of an education program for American soldiers. The only requirement for teaching in this program was a bachelor's degree in any field. With my teaching credential and limited experience, I was seen as one of the best-prepared reading teachers in the region, so I was asked to be a supervising teacher for the program. A motley assortment of people taught these remedial reading classes, most with no preparation and all with no support except the textbooks and whatever advice I could give them. Some teachers were book-bound, droning on and on, telling the students to turn to the next page, complete the exercise, raise their hands when they were done. When I gave these teachers feedback, some complained about my lack of skills or training as a supervisor, just as I complained about their lack of skills or training as reading teachers.

In August 1976, I completed my master's degree at UCLA. My thesis was a small experiment about observation systems in language teacher education. Then, one month after I finished my degree, I was hired as the coordinator of the ESL program at UCLA. I found myself observing teachers (many who were more experienced than I), giving them feedback, and writing evaluations. Anxiety permeated my days, but gradually I developed a modicum of professionalism as a supervisor, although it was a slow and painful process.

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I completed my doctoral coursework and started teaching in the new master's degree program in TESOL at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in September 1981. In five years, the department grew to a full-time faculty of five, plus some adjunct professors. I became department chair and was expected to observe and evaluate professors whose skills and knowledge bases were different from mine. Thanks to their professionalism and cooperative spirit, there were no supervisory crises.

In September 1988, I became the director of the intensive English program at the Monterey Institute. For two years, during times of declining enrollment and tight budgets, I tried to keep the program alive. Watching the ESL teachers work with the students, I was constantly reminded of how many creative ways there are to accomplish instructional goals. The classroom observations and evaluations directly affected decisions as to which teachers would receive contracts during the next session, so it was very important for me to do a good job.

At the Monterey Institute, we began offering a Certificate in Language Program Administration in September 1993. For this program, a 30-hour seminar I had been teaching on language teacher education and supervision was split into two courses. At that point, I realized that about 70 percent of the former course had been on teacher education and only about 30 percent addressed teacher supervision. So I started reading, combing the literature for information about language teacher supervision. Such literature was very limited, and I turned to the work on supervision in business and industry as well as in general education. For six years, I taught the supervision course from a compilation of photocopied articles and not-quite-appropriate textbooks that were borrowed from other disciplines. A sense of coherence in language teacher supervision continued to elude me.

In September 1999, in an attempt to impose some order on the chaos, I began to write a manuscript on language teacher supervision. This book – a combination literature review and casebook – is the result. The cases came easily, born of experiences (mine, my colleagues', my MA students'). However, reviewing the literature was a daunting task because the books and articles about supervision come from such diverse fields. The literature includes research and opinion pieces from general education, psychotherapy, foreign language education, business and industry, and social work.

Now that the manuscript is done, a real, bound book, I hope you will enjoy and benefit from the results of this work. Perhaps for you, gaining knowledge about supervision and developing skills as a professional language teacher supervisor will be more purposeful and straightforward than the largely haphazard endeavor it has been for me and many others like me.

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The graduate students in the Monterey Institute's seminar on language teacher supervision helped me refine the ideas presented in this book. I especially want to thank the members of the fall semester 2000 class, who read and discussed the draft cases with me. The students in the fall semester 2001 class read the entire book in draft form. Various iterations of the revised manuscript were used by the students in fall semesters of 2002, 2003, and 2004.

In the Monterey Institute library, Zooey Lober patiently processed hundreds of interlibrary loan requests, with assistance from Joan Ryan and Jennifer Waterson.

The writing of this book was supported by the Mark Award for Faculty Development, a grant from Joseph and Sheila Mark, who have helped many Monterey Institute professors over the years. I gratefully acknowledge both their financial assistance and their moral support.

The text as it emerged was word processed by my incredibly capable student helpers: Angela Dadak, Steven Hales, Sarah Springer, Bethany Alling, and Britt Johnson. Britt's key role as my editorial assistant was made possible by the Marks' generous donation. Her responsibilities during the time we worked on this volume ranged from word processing to library and Web-based research, to pointing out problems of clarity in the text and keeping me sane. When Britt graduated, Sarah Springer continued, with grace, patience, and skill. Then Melanie Anderson and Jessica Massie came back from their Peace Corps assignments (in Russia and Guinea, respectively) to help with the final manuscript preparation.

Toward the end of the revision process, three anonymous reviewers provided detailed suggestions for improving the manuscript. While I have

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not incorporated all their suggestions, I hope that each of them will recognize evidence of their ideas in these chapters. I expect that all three are excellent supervisors, since their feedback was clear and supportive, striking a fine balance between criticism and encouragement. At Cambridge University Press, the book was guided into print by Angela Castro, Kayo Taguchi, and Kathleen Corley.

The work of many scholars, teachers, and teacher educators has shaped this book. In particular, the publications of Ruth Wajnryb, Michael Wallace, Jerry Gebhard, and Karen Johnson have influenced my thinking considerably. Reading the work of Donald Freeman, David Nunan, Bob Oprandy, and Leo van Lier, and talking directly with these authors, has been both challenging and fruitful.

And, as always, Les endured patiently while photocopied articles, sketchy figures, and books about language teacher supervision littered our home and our lives. I'm sorry you couldn't wait until it was done, sweetheart. The dining room table is cleared off now.