

COMMUNICATION

With speech lessons, international priests take new tone

By Jeff Miller

Special to The Texas Catholic

In an office-complex conference room on Midway Road, Father Jose Pazheveetil of St. Gabriel the Archangel in McKinney was working on the “jump up, step down” pattern of American English intonation.

“I’m *ver-y* happy to meet you,” Father Pazheveetil repeated with his instructor, Melody Ball. “I’ll

call him on the telephone ... I’m *go-ing* out of town next week.”

And, during the hour-long class, he confided that some parishioners at St. Gabriel told him after a recent Mass that they’re understanding his sermons “more and more.”

Father Pazheveetil is one of two new parochial vicars from India in the Dallas diocese who are working to make their speech better understood by parishioners. He and

Father Thomas Pamplani of Holy Spirit in Duncanville are currently taking 13 weekly classes at Global English Training, or G.E.T.

The diocese has been a corporate client of G.E.T. almost since Karen Yates opened the doors four years ago. The company works on accent reduction, business ESL, media interview training and overall presentation skills. Its list of past and present clients includes American Airlines, Southern Methodist University, EDS and the Dallas Mavericks (remember D.J. Mbenga?).

Yates said the accent class resembles speech therapy. The emphasis is on eliminating the natural filter that comes from the home language. The many languages spoken in India, for instance, are spoken in a staccato fashion with what Yates called flat intonation.

“In the first three or four weeks, they begin to hear English differently,” Yates said.

Father Pazheveetil, 42, knows nine languages, often picking them up from scratch as a missionary. He also learned English as a young schoolboy.

The class is challenging, he said with a smile, but “I can enjoy anything, no? I am a missionary, and I am a flexible person.”

Father Pamplani of Holy Spirit said his participation is voluntary



TTC Photo/Jenna Teter

Father Jose Pazheveetil gets a thumbs up from G.E.T. instructor Melody Ball at Global English Training in Addison.

but was also suggested to him.

“When you’re in a parish like this, we have good people from different continents, different nations coming from different language backgrounds,” said Father Pamplani, 57. “We have Mass and confession and anointment. I should be very clear. So I have to pick up the local dialect.”

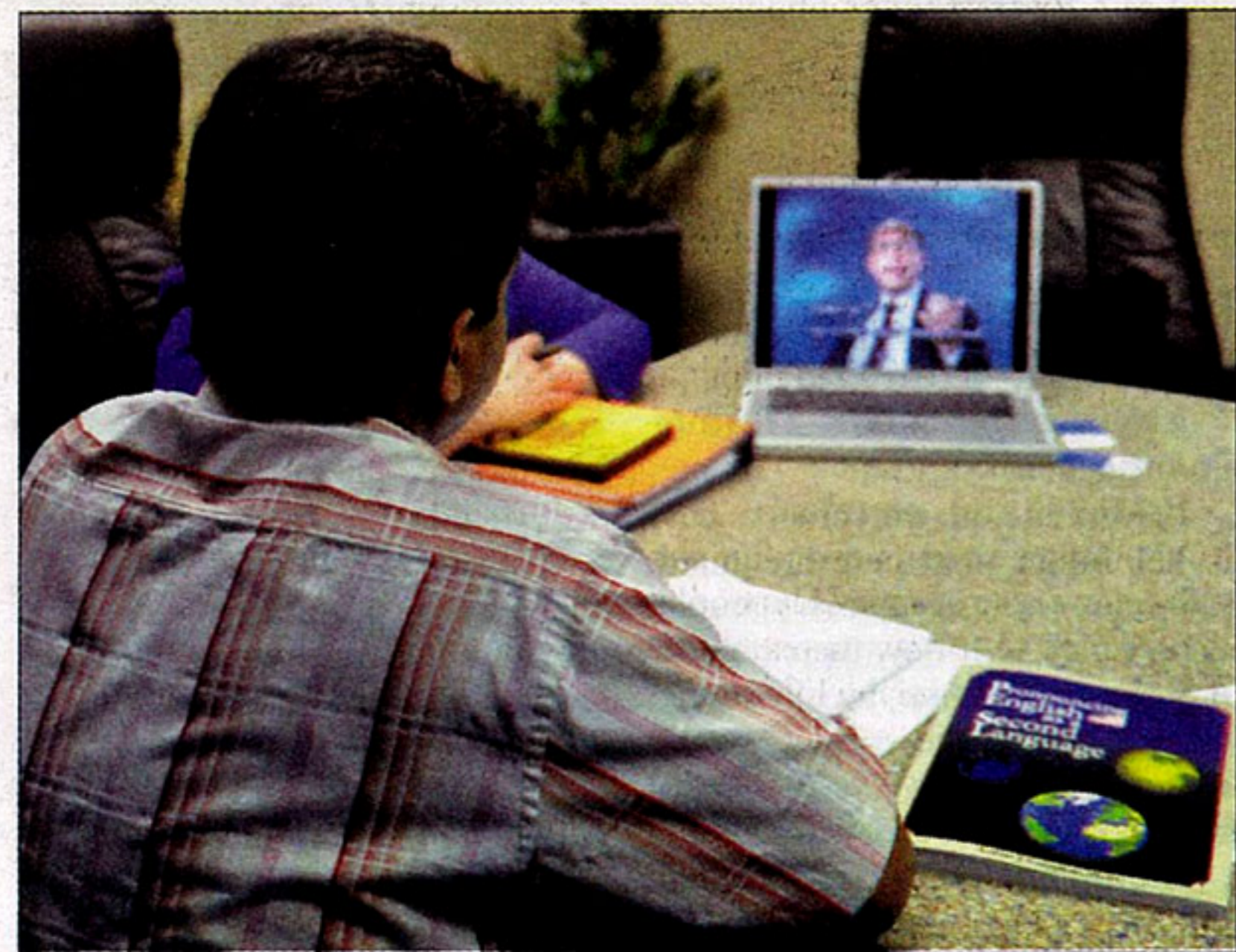
Each student also works at home with a CD-ROM for 30-60 minutes.

Father Pazheveetil said he might

have dropped the class early on if not for the working bond that he established with Ball: “She catches the heart of the student.”

Said Ball: “The people that I work with are amazing. I feel very honored to be able to help them so they can participate fully in their new life.”

Jeff Miller of DeSoto is a regular contributor to The Texas Catholic.



TTC Photo/Jenna Teter

Father Jose Pazheveetil, parochial vicar at St. Gabriel Church in McKinney, watches a DVD on English pronunciation and dialect at an Global English Training class March 10.