Time for Science Fair
by Judie Haynes

Piercing a Wall of Silence
by Orsolya Molnár

Art Institution Web Sites for English Teaching
by Marlene Friis

Comic Life
Reviewed by Joy Egbert

Confronting Issues of Race and Class in the ESL Classroom
by Raquel C. Sanchez

TESOL Goes to Capitol Hill
Network with and learn from more than 6,500 of your peers from 100 countries. More than 700 sessions provide tips, ideas, reflections, and research to help you help the students in your classrooms.

Preregistration begins December 1, 2006.

For more information

TESOL Conference Services Department
700 South Washington Street, Suite 200
Alexandria, Virginia 22314 USA
Tel 703-836-0774 Fax 703-836-7864
certifications@tesol.org
www.tesol.org
A Science Fair Handbook
To help students complete a successful science fair project, break the project down into a series of manageable chunks, suggests Sandy Lautz.

Recharge, Reduce, Reconnect, Recycle
The good news: there are solutions to problems related to teacher burnout. Read Dorothy Zemach’s suggestions here.

Confronting Issues of Race and Class in the ESL Classroom
Raquel C. Sanchez offers useful resources on sociocultural issues that U.S. K–12 teachers may confront in the ESL classroom.

Class Projects with Comic Life
Dana Persson-Zora shares several projects for students using the software Comic Life.

Grammatically Speaking
Richard Firsten explains the grammar of *Wanted* posters and the origin of the rule against using postposed prepositions, and challenges you with a new Brain Teaser.
The ET team is always glad to hear from members of TESOL about what they would like to see in Essential Teacher. Thanks to your feedback, ET has been constantly evolving since its inception three years ago.

As part of that evolution, the Portal section is undergoing a significant change. The section has broadened to become a portal of discovery through experimentation in the classroom. Portal is now a place for sharing stories of classroom-based experiences and research that do not necessarily include issues related to technology in teaching. The expanded description of Portal says that it “seeks to share experiences that occur in the classroom when unexpected learning takes place as a result of teaching or learning exploration.” If you have tried a variation in your teaching that worked, or risked using new techniques or technologies in your classroom, we’d like to hear from you. Send your article to the Portal editor, Mercedes Rossetti (mercedesrossetti@yahoo.com).

This issue contains many articles about encouraging more active student participation in the classroom. Authors describe ways to help students accept more responsibility for their own learning through the use of projects, props, and pedagogical experimentation.

- **Communities of Practice:** Judie Haynes (Circle Time) gives teachers a clear sense of the excitement that content-based projects can generate in the language classroom. Jim Hughes (Home Room) then bursts this bubble of learning excitement: instead of doing projects that fascinate learners, teachers may need to spend more time dealing with standards assessments and bubble sheets. Debbie Zacarian (The Road Taken) takes you along on the painful journey one learner and his immigrant family had to endure to secure health insurance and receive medical treatment. Ke Xu (Multilingual Momentum) shows you how publishing student work can transform learning and learners. Andy Curtis (In-Service) offers advice on how to engage in professional development without spending too much time or money. Dorothy Zemach (From A to Z) describes teacher burnout and (in Compleat Links) offers some suggestions for avoiding it.
Out of the Box: Disturbed by the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in her native New Orleans, Julie Whitlow presses teachers to confront issues of race and class evident in that tragedy. While new to teaching, Orsolya Molnár devises a novel way to help her students open up in a writing class. Jennifer Graham observes deliberate acts of nonparticipation by learners and searches for explanations that may help you react effectively. Fang Ying works to find the sparks of authenticity in writing tasks that can motivate students in China to want to write more in English.

Portal: Greg Kessler shows how to easily record digital audio files to share with students and create interactive materials. Joel Bloch and Cathryn Crosby hold up blogging in courses as an example of virtual democracy in action. Marlene Friis highlights some of the features of museum and art gallery Web sites that you can adapt for classes. Carolyn Samuel illustrates how her switch from VHS to digital recordings of student presentations encouraged students to do more self-study and feel more invested in the assessment process.

Home and Other Pages: Marilyn Kupetz reviews a new English style manual that raises issues of concern to TESOL members. Francisco Gomes de Matos explains how a new book by Ronald Carter fills a gap in the literature regarding the concept of linguistic creativity. The MERLOT university consortium Web site is introduced by Carla Meskill. Christine Meloni reviews a video course called The Story of Human Language, and Joy Egbert explains how to use the software Comic Life to create professional-looking projects simply.

Compleat Links: Don’t forget to check out all of the online extras for this issue. First, Sandy Lautz leads you through the potential trials and tribulations of science fair projects. Dorothy Zemach follows up on her column about teacher burnout with a number of practical suggestions on how to avoid it. Raquel Sanchez suggests ways you can prepare yourself to deal with the highly charged social issues of race, ethnicity, class, and gender in lessons. Richard Firsten explains the grammar of Wanted posters and the origin of the rule against using postposed prepositions. Go online and try his new Brain Teaser.
What observation
How can we help teachers become reflective practitioners?
What are the main characteristics of constructive feedback?
What can feedback be considered effective?

**Essential Teacher** (ISSN 1545-6501) is published four times a year by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL).

For submission guidelines, see [http://www.tesol.org/](http://www.tesol.org/). Send correspondence to et@tesol.org or

**Essential Teacher**
TESOL
700 South Washington Street, Suite 200
Alexandria, Virginia 22314 USA

**Essential Teacher** is copyrighted to TESOL. All requests for permission to reprint should be made through Copyright Clearance Center [http://www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com)

Names of teachers and students are pseudonyms or are used with permission.

Cover: Photos of Sarah Moon (Moon Sung-Yi), Herbert Shin (Shin Hyun Ho), Julia Kim, and Harry Shin (Shin Hyun Wook), Cherry Hill School, River Edge, New Jersey, USA, used with permission. Screen shot from Comic Life reprinted with permission of Plasq ([http://www.plasq.com/](http://www.plasq.com/)).

---

**Member Services**

Please direct all membership queries to TESOL Membership Department
700 South Washington Street, Suite 200
Alexandria, Virginia 22314 USA
or members@tesol.org

Current issues are a benefit of membership in TESOL. Requests for back issues of previous volume years, as they become available, should be made to publications@tesol.org

TESOL’s mission is to ensure excellence in English language teaching to speakers of other languages.

---

**Officers and Board of Directors 2006–2007**

**Directors**

- **Liu D. Kamhi Stein**
  California State University Los Angeles, CA, USA

- **Joyce Kling**
  Copenhagen Business School Frederiksberg, Denmark

- **Penny McKay**
  Queensland University of Technology Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

- **Suchada Nimmanmit**
  Chulalongkorn University Language Institute Bangkok, Thailand

- **Charles S. Amorosino, Jr**
  Executive Director/CEO Alexandria, VA, USA

**Editors**

- **Tim Stewart**
  Kumamoto University
  Kumamoto, Japan

- **Shannon Sauro**
  University of Pennsylvania
  Philadelphia, PA, USA

- **Christine Meloni**
  George Washington University
  Washington, DC, USA

- **Phil Quirke**
  Abu Dhabi Men’s College
  Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

- **Mercedes Rossetti**
  Programas Educativos en Multimedia, SA de CV
  Toluca, Mexico

**Columnists**

- **Andy Curtis**
  Queen’s University School of English
  Kingston, Ontario, Canada

- **Richard Firsten**
  Miami–Dade County Public Schools
  Miami, FL, USA

- **Judie Haynes**
  River Edge Public Schools
  River Edge, NJ, USA

- **Jim Hughes**
  West Contra Costa Unified School District
  Richmond, CA, USA

- **Ke Xu**
  Borough of Manhattan Community College
  City University of New York New York City, NY, USA

- **Debbie Zacarian**
  Center for English Language Education
  Hampshire Education Collaborative
  Northampton, MA, USA

- **Dorothy Zemach**
  Cambridge University Press
  Eugene, OR, USA

**Staff Editor**

- **Ellen Garshick**
  Alexandria, VA, USA

**Advertising**

- **Cindy Flynn**
  Alexandria, VA, USA
  703-518-2524
cflynn@tesol.org

**Printing**

- **United Litho, Inc.**
  Ashburn, VA, USA
Advocacy and Professional Development: 
Key Issues in TESOL’s Strategic Plan

For full articles on TESOL’s Advocacy Day and the new PreK–12 English Language Proficiency Standards, see Association News, p. 54.

Among TESOL’s responsibilities to its members is educating them on important advocacy issues worldwide and stimulating interchange among members and policy makers on these key issues. To meet this responsibility, TESOL’s strategic plan includes public policy and understanding among its goals.

As a clear sign of its commitment to both advocacy and education, TESOL sponsored its first Advocacy Day. On June 21, 2006, twenty-two TESOL members representing nineteen U.S.-based affiliates met in Washington, DC. This event, the first of its kind for TESOL, featured a day of issues briefings and workshops, capped by members visiting congressional offices on Capitol Hill.

In addition to learning about key issues, such as adult education and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, attendees had the chance to role-play presenting an issue to a Capitol Hill representative. Armed with talking points and a fresh perspective, the participants were able to educate various representatives on critical issues confronting the ESL profession.

From my perspective as TESOL president, what made this activity so rewarding were the connections that the participants made. It reinforced for me the notion that TESOL is a community of diverse professionals: each person had a unique perspective to contribute to this beautiful tapestry. The evening dinner brought everyone together to reflect on the day’s learning and talk about next steps.

Another of TESOL’s strategic goals—standards—focuses on providing guidelines to help preK–12 teachers succeed in teaching ESL. The new PreK–12 English Language Proficiency Standards is a good example of the professional knowledge TESOL makes available to its members.

PreK–12 English Language Proficiency Standards shows a high level of sophistication and moves beyond English language communication for social and interactive purposes. The new standards embrace the importance of academic success in mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies. In addition, this publication integrates multiple levels of information in user-friendly matrices organized by grade level cluster, domain of learning, and level of proficiency.

The new standards, which were developed by and for TESOL professionals, will increase TESOL’s visibility among practitioners and administrators in the United States. As more U.S. school districts adopt the standards, TESOL will take a step toward fulfilling its ongoing mission: To ensure excellence in English language teaching to speakers of other languages worldwide.

Enjoy this issue of Essential Teacher!

Jun Liu
President, 2006–07
This event helps English language learners and their families become part of the school community. All of the classes in the school visit the fair during the day, and participants come back in the evening to view projects with their parents. The fifth- and sixth-grade students were enthusiastic about their participation. “I really liked how my board turned out, and it was cool to watch my flowers change color,” sighed Sarah. Helen loved conducting her experiment, during which she asked classmates to test different kinds of hand lotions. “It was really fun,” she exclaimed. “I felt like the teacher.”

The benefits of having English language learners participate in a science fair are numerous. This project is an excellent opportunity to teach students the scientific method and help them acquire content-area vocabulary. They develop a positive attitude toward science. They can practice the nonfiction writing skills previously taught to them. In fact, the scientific method provides a natural graphic organizer for their writing.

Students also practice research skills and gain experience with hands-on learning.

Participating in a science fair also has affective benefits. It helps students build self-confidence and offers them authentic reasons to interact with classmates. They engage with a real audience for their work when the whole school community views the projects.

For all of these reasons, several years ago I made the science fair project part of my ESL curriculum. The English language learners choose their topics and complete their projects during my ESL lessons.

One of the most difficult tasks for me is helping students pick a topic. I find that I need to consult continuously with the science teachers. But topic selection provides me with an easy way to differentiate instruction. I encourage more advanced-level students to choose more difficult experiments. They are also required to summarize the research that led to their hypothesis.
Here are some of the criteria I use for topic selection.

Is the topic uncomplicated? In elementary school, the goal of the science fair is to teach the scientific method. The subject of the project is of secondary importance. Students are encouraged to choose from a wide range of science topics. I encourage my students to pick a straightforward one.

Is the topic at an appropriate grade and English language level for the student? Before students finalize a topic, they must find research that they can read and understand. Much of the relevant material on the Internet is written at a high school or university level, so finding research that is suitable for the younger students I teach is a real challenge. An experiment that looks interesting to a student might involve a concept that is too difficult for the student to comprehend. For example, I have found that many students want to choose topics involving the density of liquids but do not have the background in science to understand the concept.

Does the experiment involve a testable question? Having a testable question is a requirement set by the science teachers. I usually keep successful experiments from previous years as models. Examples of testable questions are “What brand of water tastes best?” “How does water travel through a plant to the leaves?” “What brand of battery lasts the longest?” Projects such as volcano models do not provide testable questions and are therefore not allowed as science fair projects.

Students research their questions in books and on the Internet and then form a hypothesis. Question formation teaches students to focus their project. Students must also be able to put their findings into chart or table form.

Do students have enough time to complete the experiment? This question is especially important in experiments with plants. If students want to show which liquid helps a plant grow best, there must be enough time for a plant to grow. If they are showing how sunlight affects the growth of plants, there must be sufficient time for the plant to be exposed to the sunlight.

Can the experiment be conducted in school? Is there enough space in the ESL classroom to keep the materials for several weeks? For a variety of reasons, students complete their experiments in ESL class. I’ve found that some parents may not have the language to understand the requirements or to give the necessary help. They may not have a digital camera to take pictures of the procedure or a computer to research and word-process the work.

Can students easily find the materials necessary to complete the experiment? How expensive will the materials be? Some materials, such as glass jars and bottles of different shapes, are becoming more difficult to find. For example, I have had difficulty finding suitable glass jars for growing sugar crystals, as many large, wide-necked bottles are made of plastic now. Experiments involving batteries can be expensive. For these reasons, I always send home a list of materials for parents to approve.

Does the experiment involve a visual example or a product that can be shown at the fair? Students with limited English can prepare a board and take pictures of the steps in their experiments. I find, however, that they can explain their project best if they have something concrete to show. Although the science teachers at my school do not require this, projects with visual examples are more meaningful to beginning- and intermediate-level English language learners.

I begin the science fair unit by introducing the vocabulary needed as I model a simple experiment for the group. During the demonstration, students learn and practice the language of the scientific method, including hypothesis, materials, constant, variables, and procedure. Students then apply their knowledge of the scientific method to their own experiments.

During the weeks leading up to the science fair, my classroom is chaotic. Plants and containers with sugar crystals line the windowsills. White flowers in glasses of colored water turn a variety of colors. Display boards are propped on every available surface, and paper bags filled with materials spill off chairs. I am generally frenetic as I guide students toward project completion, but their enthusiasm as they proudly present their work makes it all worthwhile.
“My sister still has hers,” said Gisela. “That was three years ago!” I exclaimed. “It’s held up that long?” She looked puzzled. “We got strong wires to hold it to the ceiling.”

I explained that *held up* also meant the whale hadn’t fallen apart. “Vicente,” I said, “I’d love to make whales.” “Then let’s do it.”

Oh, if only it were so simple! Public school teachers in my state had lost what little control they had over the curriculum, especially in schools such as mine that were not measuring up on the California Standards Test. We were one of the schools designated *program-improvement*, a euphemism for failing. Of 290 instructional minutes per day, third-grade teachers were required to teach 180 minutes of literacy, 60 minutes of math, 30 minutes of English language development, and 20 minutes of physical education, which equaled—you guessed it!—290 minutes. We taught science, health, safety, social studies, art, and music during literacy, we were told, by our use of the language arts adoption. When was there time for whales?

My first thought (I tend to begin with the ridiculous) was to institute whale sightings. Whenever a whale came up during a lesson in any content area, the students and I would break for whales, a pun based on a popular bumper sticker declaring *I brake for whales*. We would disperse into our various teams for twenty minutes of whale work.

I quickly had second thoughts. Sightings would become frequent. “The word *what* reminds me of a whale, Mr. Hughes, because it begins with *wh*.” “Teacher, it says ocean. That’s where whales live.” “Whale sighting!” the children would scream at each opportunity.
Also, an edict from the superintendent’s cabinet stipulated that under no circumstances was morning literacy to be interrupted, except in cases of fire, flood, earthquake, or terrorist attack (or at the pleasure of the site administrator). If the principal, a district official, or a literacy consultant walked in, what would I say?

Good fortune struck. In the scripted adoption’s first unit, one on friendship, the teacher read-aloud was *Amos & Boris* (Steig 1971). Amos was a mouse, but Boris was a whale!

Even so, how could I sneak in such an enormous project? A sperm whale’s actual length divided by ten equaled six feet. The children had to stuff its two poster-paper sides with wads of newspaper while they stapled it together. Then they had to paint it. Twenty students couldn’t work on one whale; they’d need to make four or five. As a follow-up activity to a read-aloud, it would take too much time because we teachers had to follow a pacing schedule. Besides, we were not supposed to deviate from the script.

I valued my whale unit, especially for English language learners, because such project-based learning required that children use language to plan and negotiate as well as to comprehend and express content knowledge. The concepts and vocabulary had wide social and academic applications.

“What kind of whale is Boris?” I asked the students.

“A killer?” suggested Isbeth.

I showed a picture of a killer whale.

“Boris, he’s just a regular whale,” said Maurice.

“There are many types of whales,” I said, showing the white beluga and giant blue. “I don’t think one of them is called regular. We need to do some investigating.”

At recess Maurice and Vicente searched my pictures and discovered that Boris was a sperm whale. “Can we make him?” asked Vicente.

The year before, my students had built whales after the spring standards tests. This year, however, we would be giving the last unit exam during the final week of school. To enforce compliance, the Literacy Department had ordered that all test results be sent to it. The intention was to make teachers use every minute to teach reading relentlessly—the district motto.

“Maybe we could make him and other kinds during math,” I said.

“Math?”

“Building whales involves calculating proportions. A fifty-foot humpback would be five feet long. You want to learn about that?”

“Sure!”

Proportion, however, was a minor part of third-grade math and was not assessed on the California Standards Test, whose results had become the lifeblood of our existence, though most of us wanted a transfusion.

A unit on conservation in the English language development (ELD) program provided an opening. I knew that it might be my last chance for flexible and creative ELD because a standards-based adoption had been approved for the next year, and English Language Services was being subsumed under the Literacy Department, likely producing an ELD pacing schedule, district assessments, and monitoring. Although I had to group English learners separately, work primarily with them, and assign independent and collaborative activities for the other students, the whole class managed thirty minutes a day of speaking, listening, reading, and writing about whales. Over several weeks, the children memorized and recited a whale chant, listened to humpbacks’ singing, wrote haiku, and constructed five whales that we hung from the ceiling.

“Whales don’t fly,” said Maurice.

“Pretend we’re underwater,” I said, but immediately regretted I had as child after child dropped to the floor, feigning drowning.

On the last day of school, each construction group drew lots to see which lucky person would get to keep its whale. Sarn Sio won Boris, the six-foot sperm. He slung him over his shoulder and headed home. Later that afternoon, I drove out of the parking lot onto 12th Street, and there in the middle of the road was Boris, broken in half. Sarn Sio had run into trouble with schoolmates, or the whale had succumbed to skeletal weakness. I braked for the whale, aware that I might be the only person ever to have really done so. I stuffed Boris into my ’71 Volkswagen and drove him to a recycling shop. I hoped he would return next year but feared he would reincarnate as standards assessments and bubble sheets.

**Reference**

As time went on, Juan's teeth continued to bother him terribly. His parents calculated that it would take them several months to save the money they believed they needed to care for their son's dental problems. With their housing, food, and clothing expenses, they knew they did not have money to pay for medical or dental care, and they struggled to figure out ways to help their son. Hoping that efforts at school would be a distraction from his pain, they told Juan to concentrate on his studies. They also told him not to complain about his teeth to his teachers. They believed that it was important for Juan to show his teachers respect by paying attention to them and devoting all of his energies to his schoolwork. They could not see a solution for their son beyond working to accumulate enough funds for the dental care he needed.

Heeding his parents' wishes, Juan went to school planning to attend to his schoolwork and pay as little attention as he could to his painful teeth. One day during class, however, he experienced a sudden shooting pain and grabbed his mouth in agony. His teacher saw that Juan was in pain and brought him to the school nurse. The nurse contacted the school's bilingual outreach worker to help Juan access the dental care he was eligible for.

For Juan to see a dentist, his family would have to complete a series of forms. The bilingual outreach worker told Juan that she would be happy to explain the process to him and his family and help them complete the forms. When she found out that Juan's family did not have a telephone and that his parents worked in the same fast-food restaurant, she asked Juan if she could go to his home, after school, to speak with his parents.
That evening, she went to Juan's home. Within a few short minutes, she had explained how the family could secure insurance payments for their son's dental and medical needs. Juan's parents would have to travel to a hospital in a nearby city and complete the necessary forms. Juan's father was uncertain about the process: he feared that taking time away from work for this would cost him his job, and, having no car or driver's license, he could not drive to the city.

Thankfully, a few days later, the outreach worker drove Juan's father to the hospital and helped him complete the forms. When the forms were approved, the family received a health card. Using the card, the outreach worker made an appointment for Juan to see the dentist. But how could Juan's family take him to the dentist? His father had already taken time from work to complete the health insurance forms. He again feared losing his job, and again faced his lack of transportation. In addition, the only dentist who accepted the health coverage that they were allocated was in a neighboring city fifteen miles from Juan's home.

Several more days elapsed. Even though the outreach worker was in touch with Juan throughout this time, he did not receive the treatment he needed because his parents were too ashamed to ask the bilingual outreach worker or anyone else for assistance. Finally, the bilingual outreach worker drove to his parents' workplace, obtained their permission to drive Juan to the dentist, and then brought him to his appointment.

By that time, Juan had been in agony for two weeks, his schoolwork had suffered greatly, and he had no energy for much more than trying to cope with the pain. When he arrived at his first dental appointment, he learned that the three teeth needed to be removed. He also learned that this dentist did not remove teeth. And the specialist he would need to see would not be available to see him for a few days.

In the end, the outreach worker drove Juan to the specialist. At the end of his first month in school, Juan had the three teeth removed and was finally pain free and ready to learn. A month later, the outreach worker took him to the dentist to begin a series of appointments for a dental bridge that would replace his extracted teeth.

The experience of Juan and his family is a common one in my community. While the town has many social service agencies, English language learners who cannot communicate in English, who are new to the community, and who are living in poverty have a difficult time navigating the services that are available. While being an “essential teacher” involves being responsive to students’ learning needs, the realities of their health care, housing, and other core life needs can have a deep impact in the classroom and, therefore, cannot be ignored.

English language learners like Juan and his family may have a difficult time navigating the social services available to them.
Since April, one of my ESL classes has been writing a book for new immigrants in New York City. The project was inspired by students’ complaints about the frustration they had experienced in trying to help newly arrived relatives. Since so many immigrants need help, the students and I decided to do something about it: write a book titled *Living in New York City*, a project that the students were immediately enthusiastic about. The class elected a five-member panel, including a managing editor and four section editors, to plan the book and implement the plan. At the first meeting, we decided that the book should include three parts: “Surviving in New York City,” “Living in New York City,” and “Working in New York City.” The deadline we set was to finish the book by the end of 2007.

Then the work began. What does a new immigrant need to learn on arrival in order to survive in this city? First, small groups brainstormed, then the whole class decided on the learning tasks to include in the book. The ones we agreed on included those that taught a new immigrant to read street signs, ask directions, ask for help, and report emergencies; read price tags and ask for prices; and call the building superintendent to fix a gas or sink leak, among others. The students grouped the learning tasks roughly into four categories: health/emergencies, housing/food, shopping/banking, and getting around town. Each category was managed by one team, led by one of the four section editors. The managing editor’s job was to coordinate the overall operation of the project.

The next step was to collect materials. Students brought into the classroom almost everything a new immigrant might need to read to survive in New York City: maps, Yellow Pages, registration forms, bank deposit and withdrawal slips, restaurant menus, medical labels, catalogues, driving directions, letters from schools and insurance companies, telephone bills,
utility bills, subway and bus service notices, apartment lease and rental ads, help-wanted ads, job descriptions, instruction manuals, parking tickets, court summons, parcel service pickup notices, and so on.

Then came the third step: evaluating all the materials the students had collected. The students met twice a week to go through everything they had gathered in order to select suitable material for the book. I gave them a checklist to use in deciding whether an item was worth keeping. Was the content relevant to the book? Was the language used clear and easy to follow? Were the vocabulary and grammar structures used simple and easy enough for beginners to understand? Was the picture or photo of good quality? Did it contain any inappropriate content that might cause racial or other controversies?

The fourth step was to compose the text, which included two parts: situational dialogues and cultural tips introducing the targeted aspects of life in New York City or providing a minicontext in which a conversation took place. Each team met to discuss and decide which topics to include and how many dialogues and introductory passages were needed. To make sure what they wrote was as authentic as possible, some students made several visits to places where the targeted dialogue might take place. Some even audio- or videotaped actual conversations.

As the first drafts were completed, pairs of students brought each one to the team meeting and asked other pairs for revision suggestions. Then the pairs made the necessary revisions and produced a second draft, which was again peer reviewed. They also showed the drafts to family members, relatives, friends, and colleagues for comment. Further revision followed.

At this point, to expand their vision, I recommended that the students look at some ESL textbook series that were popular among new immigrants, such as Prentice Hall's ExpressWays, Pearson ESL's Side by Side, and Cambridge University Press's Let's Talk, so that they could see how these textbooks were designed and written. Students seemed invested in what they were doing and started to pay closer attention to both the content and the form of the language, including spelling, subject-verb agreement, idiomatic usage, punctuation and capitalization, and even the page format, font, line spacing, and alignment.

What I have learned from the book project is that writing involves having something to say and someone to say it to (Reilly and Reilly 2005). The genuine need to communicate forms the heart and soul of the writing process, and, as teachers, we shouldn't forget that this is true for language learners, too.

Immigrants come to schools in their new country with a wealth of experience, knowledge, and ideas. I know now that, instead of waiting for writing skills to mature, I should tap students' potential, challenge them, and help them generate ideas and language. Then they can acquire and refine, through constant natural, purposeful practice, all the writing skills and techniques they need to become successful writers. Next, I can even dare them to take the giant step from reader to author, from surviving to thriving.

Reference
In-Service Learning about Your Teaching by Andy Curtis

In my March column, I weighed the whys (or wise) and why nots (or knots) of professional development against each other and found that the reasons to engage outweighed those not to. In June, I encouraged you to see your English language lessons as works of art, as a way of looking differently at your classroom. Now I would like to move from the more general to the more specific and present a project designed to help those of you who teach in resource-scarce environments engage in professional development with limited time and minimal cost.

Earlier this year, I was fortunate to be invited back for a second time to facilitate three days of workshops on professional development with the largest binational centre in Latin America, the Instituto Cultural Peruano Norteamericano, located in Lima, Peru, which works with more than 37,000 students and more than 400 EFL teachers. For ten hours over three days, I worked with 35 English language teacher supervisors who asked many challenging questions on professional development. The teacher supervisors were asked to e-mail me ahead of time the questions they wanted me to address, making this a rare and wonderful opportunity to create a series of activities that could be completed in one hour per week, with minimal additional resources. Some of the Peruvian teacher supervisors also asked about activities that could be carried out solo, that is, with little or no involvement by other teachers. As many English language teachers, in Peru and elsewhere, are peripatetic, moving among a number of part-time positions, it is difficult for them to spend time together working on their professional development.

Online resources were one way of addressing these conflicting demands without adding to already-too-full teaching and travel schedules. This raises the issue of access, especially in relation to the discussion of those communities that have Internet access.
versus those that do not. According to the Computer Industry Almanac (2006), the number of people with Internet access in 2005 was nearly 1.1 billion, which the Almanac estimates will rise to 1.8 billion in just four years (2010). These figures are supported by Internet World Stats (2006), which estimates that the global growth in Internet access was more than 180 percent between 2000 and 2005.

Assuming, then, that Internet access will continue to grow, I read and reviewed more than one hundred online articles on a wide range of aspects related to language teacher professional development. From these freely available, Web-based articles, I chose my top twelve. All of the articles are from established and recognized sources, such as English Teaching Forum, The Internet TESL Journal, and CAL Digest. The articles cover a wide time period, from 1994 to 2006, with most articles published from 2001 onwards. However, the older articles contain as much useful information as the newer ones, as all of the articles discuss fundamental principles and practices that apply over time.

The articles were carefully selected to present as international a perspective as possible, with the writers of the twelve articles based in ten different countries. The articles vary in length, but most are between five and ten pages, so they can be read in relatively little time, with the shortest articles being just four pages long. The articles are all practically focused, though they were selected partly because they clearly connect theory and practice. However, reading and understanding are not the same thing, as any reading teacher will tell you, and as questions are one of the most effective ways of getting someone’s attention in any language, I developed a series of questions for each article.

Each of the twelve articles was accompanied by five main questions: one prereading focus question and four postreading discussion questions.

How can we engage our teachers in an ongoing process of professional development?

How can we help teachers become reflective practitioners?

What are the main characteristics of constructive feedback?

What observation techniques have you found effective?

The teacher supervisors e-mailed me questions ahead of time, making this a rare opportunity to tailor the workshops to the questions, concerns, and needs of a particular group.

However, there were many follow-up questions and a number of small tasks, making a total of nearly one hundred questions and tasks. The prereading focus question was usually based on the overall theme of the paper or on something in the introduction to the paper, and the last postreading discussion question was usually based on something in the conclusion to the paper, to encourage the teachers to read the whole paper rather than just selectively reading for the answers to the questions. In addition to the five main questions, there were two general questions connecting content and context that were asked with every article:

- What ideas or approaches in this article are especially relevant to what you do in your school?
- What ideas or approaches in this article would not work in your school, and why not?

Your English language teaching and learning organization, or your group of teachers, can compile a set of titles that relate to your particular interests and issues, together with questions to be discussed after (or before, or before and after) reading articles. If it is difficult to conduct the discussion face-to-face, you can set up an online discussion board or communicate by e-mail.

Just as all approaches to language teaching have drawbacks as well as opportunities, so it is with all approaches to language teacher professional development. However, the advantages of this kind of approach are that you do not need to buy or borrow expensive professional development textbooks, you have the freedom to read when you have the time, and you are using an approach that is probably familiar to you: prereading questions, reading, and postreading discussion. Approaches to professional development that are based on what you do with your students every day in class generally are very successful, as this kind of familiarity can help position you in the role of the learner, in this case, learning about your own teaching.

References


To explain why she became a teacher, Amanda said, “Because I love being in the classroom. I just love helping people.” And she does. Amanda is always there for her students, even outside scheduled office hours. Students have her e-mail address and home telephone number, and they know she responds on weekends. She’s saved every class photo, every gift, and even projects and papers from former students. She’s there for the program and her colleagues, too. She never misses a faculty meeting and volunteers for projects and committees. She’s at every placement and testing session; she’s even been known to get up at 5:00 a.m. to bake gingerbread for posttest grading sessions.

Zoe, on the other hand, sees her students in class and during office hours, but her office door is closed at other times. Her home telephone number is unlisted, and she doesn’t answer e-mails on weekends. Student photos are emptied into the trash at the end of each term, and gifts are discarded at thrift stores. Zoe serves on committees when required, though she insists on e-mail communications instead of meetings whenever possible. She doesn’t bake anything for required meetings but might pick up something at the store.

How did I know one of these teachers was suffering from burnout? She started crying unexpectedly at faculty meetings, escalated to weeping in the halls, and finally quit teaching altogether, whereas Zoe is happily continuing in her sixteenth year of ESL teaching, popular with both students and colleagues.

Psychologist Herbert Freudenberger first coined the term burnout in his 1974 book, *Burnout: The High Cost of High Achievement*, defining it as a state of physical and emotional depletion resulting from conditions of work. Long laundry lists of burnout symptoms can be found all over the Internet: fatigue or exhaustion; decreased motivation and efficiency; anxiety and depression; headaches; insomnia; a sense of helplessness, hopelessness, or worthlessness; a sense of unending stress; and so on. Victims of burnout may either leave the profession or,
worse, endure for years, suffering mental, emotional, and physical damage.

In ESL, burnout is triggered by the work of teaching, poor job conditions, or both. This column discusses burnout from work; I’ll talk about burnout from job conditions in my December column.

Teaching leads to burnout because

- It attracts personalities drawn to burnout.
- Most teachers work in isolation.
- The classroom interaction can be emotionally draining.
- There are physical demands.
- There is often a lack of emotional support from colleagues and supervisors.

The Indiana University East’s Beginning Teacher Mentor Program describes two main burnout-prone personality types. The overly conscientious type is moral and dedicated, with a strong desire to help. However, excessive empathy and overly high self-expectations lead this person to give too much to others, often to compensate for hidden feelings of inadequacy. The guilt-motivated type feels overly responsible for other people and feels the need to continuously give in order to make up for something. Both types deny their own feelings, have a strong need for approval, need to feel indispensable, and have trouble setting appropriate limits and expectations. They may also feel that they are the only ones capable of doing the work properly and may substitute work for elements missing in their personal lives.

Unfortunately, the classroom is a poor place to meet these needs. Most teachers teach alone and for the most part unnoticed. In many U.S. institutions, the ESL programs themselves are isolated on the fringes of campus and given the oldest offices and the smallest classrooms. People don’t think of teaching as an isolating profession because, after all, there are classrooms full of students. However, students are not peers or friends. Teachers may like students and be friendly to them—but they are not friends. However, in a situation where students may be the only people teachers interact with over the course of several days, they risk seeing students as people from whom to seek approval, support, and friendship.

The nature of classroom interaction can lead to a blurring of the boundaries of healthy student-teacher relationships. Teachers in English-speaking countries may be the only resource students have, so they find themselves helping students with matters other than English. They hear about students’ traffic tickets, their visa troubles, their roommate problems, their parents’ pressure to start taking “real” classes next term, or their worry that they’ll have to go home and join the army. These are things the economics professor doesn’t hear about. For teachers in non-English-speaking countries, students may be the only people they meet for months with whom they can communicate. To practice English and communication, teachers participate in discussions of moral and ethical issues, values, and life experiences. But teachers need to maintain their roles in the classroom. A teacher supports and encourages, but also corrects and assesses. You can’t give your friend a C.

People also don’t think of teaching as a physically demanding activity, and most teachers I know haven’t built up large muscles from hefting books. But I know plenty of teachers with weight problems—they’re underweight from skipping meals, or they’re overweight from overloading on sugary or fatty foods to keep their energy and moods perpetually up for the classroom stage. Poor eating and sleeping habits lead to more health problems. Simply put, a physically demanding job is not just one that makes you sweat, but one that stresses your body.

What reward do teachers get for coping with this stress? When salaries and working conditions are not rewarding, they need at least verbal recognition and praise. However, many programs aren’t configured to allow that. Supervisors and colleagues are more alert to problems. Popular teachers who handle challenges well may be “rewarded” with larger classes and more of them, while less successful ones get release time for other projects. Thus, less able teachers ironically may get more support and career development opportunities; more capable teachers must seek out professional growth opportunities on their own, while still teaching a full load.

Most teachers are probably more Amanda than Zoe. But there are solutions to burnout from work. For mine, see “Recharge, Reduce, Reconnect, Recycle,” in the Essential Teacher section of TESOL’s Web site (http://www.tesol.edu/).

Reference

The tragedy of Hurricane Katrina, which roared across the Gulf Coast of the United States on August 29, 2005, brought out the best in many people. But it also exposed the worst in some, and it has made me reconsider my role as an ESL teacher in grappling with racial, economic, and social inequities.

The images that the world saw on TV from New Orleans after the hurricane confirmed the unheralded reality of slavery, segregation, and a lack of equal opportunity for the nation’s poorest citizens, most of them African American. One image that summed up the desperation that so many experienced was that of an elderly black man stranded on his roof, a crudely made sign held high with a straightforward request: HELP ME.

Unlike this man, members of my white, middle-class family in New Orleans were able to evacuate before the storm. They had a car, cash, and credit cards. Although my childhood home sat under seven feet of water for two weeks and my seventy-seven-year-old mother was left homeless, with a lifetime of memories left to rot, my relatives had friends within driving distance able to accommodate them indefinitely while they waited for life to return to New Orleans.

Stereotypes and Innuendo
My decision to rethink my responsibility to deal with issues of racial, economic, and social inequity in my teaching came to me after the initial shock of the tragedy had passed, when I began
Introducing the “Other”

If genuine dialogue and understanding are to occur across racial, ethnic, and class boundaries, teachers of language, culture, and content must address issues of race and class in the United States. Doing so may be the most complex task of our time. It is accepted sociology that friendship with an individual who is different will lead to greater empathy toward and acceptance of those who are different. People who count people from ethnic, religious, racial, and cultural communities different from theirs as colleagues or friends have a much better chance of viewing those communities favorably. We as teachers cannot control the social networks of students outside the classroom, however, so our task is limited to what we can accomplish within the confines of the curriculum.

Across the United States, the most visible minority culture and the one perhaps the most distorted by media portrayal is that of the African American diaspora. Among the ESL college students I teach, the main sources of information about African Americans are rap music, movies, and sports. And although these images have garnered a large amount of prestige in pop culture, they unfortunately reinforce the image of the lazy and violent black man for young immigrants and international students. In other regions, other groups may be similarly marginalized and stereotyped based on different demographics. In the southwestern United States, for example, Native Americans and Hispanics are undoubtedly the designated “others” due to competing cultural and economic forces.

The complex problem that U.S. society faces is neither new nor easily solved. The mainstream ESL materials I have worked with make it easy to ignore these topics. However, I believe that ESL teachers must begin to dispel the myth that racial and ethnic inequities are a result of the so-called laziness of a particular racial or cultural group and promote the idea that they have been created by deeply ingrained historical, social, and political factors.

Create Teachable, Defining Moments

Here are some ways you might address issues associated with racial and economic inequality in the United States. You can start with the reality of pervasive and long-term poverty in the United States, and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina is as good a place to start as any. You can use this tragedy to create moments that are not only teachable but defining.

Start with the Facts

Images often speak louder than words. Show students news clips of African Americans stranded on rooftops, in the squalor of the Louisiana Superdome, and in temporary shelters. Have students write about what they witness and then explore why the majority of those who were stranded were African American.
To this end, you might have the students consult Katz’s (2005) detailed analysis of the statistics on poverty and demographics in pre-Katrina New Orleans, which shows how segregated New Orleans had become; the median household income for African Americans was half of that of the white population. ESL students at any level can use these startling statistics to make simple charts and graphs that they can explain to each other.

Move Backward in Time
For most college-age students, the U.S. Civil Rights movement of the 1960s might as well be ancient history, and the era of slavery, which officially ended in 1865, was so long ago that these young people perceive it as being insignificant and irrelevant to the twenty-first-century United States.

The plight of urban schools, however, is relevant to high school and college-age students in the United States. You might have students read Kozol’s (2005) excellent “Still Separate, Still Unequal,” which is a gripping account of how the difficulties of urban public school students begin in preschool. ESL students can easily research the percentage of African Americans in the army, on death row, and in prisons. They can document the number of African Americans who are accepted by elite universities and who go to college. They can research how many representatives and senators in the U.S. Congress belong to minority groups and compare the percentages with the minority group’s representation in the population at large.

When students understand the current realities, then go on to explore the underlying reasons. The Jim Crow segregation laws of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court decision Plessy v. Ferguson (which established the legality of separate-but-equal facilities for different races), and the legacy of slavery then become more salient and meaningful.

Go Local
Take advantage of local and campus events that bring to life the experience of historically disadvantaged populations. Encourage students to attend relevant art exhibits, theater performances, lectures, and films. Invite campus or community leaders to class lead a discussion or present a personal perspective. You might also have students visit local schools.

Take on the Tough Issues
Don’t be afraid to discuss and grapple with issues of race and class or to have students do some self-examination. Ask some hard questions: Why have their families succeeded while historically impoverished communities have not? Who helped the students and their parents when they arrived in the United States? Where do they get the money for their education? Have family members helped out? What did their parents inherit from their grandparents? What will they inherit?

Then go on to questions like these: What is the typical U.S. immigrant success story? Who came to the United States by choice, and who came over in chains? Who has the Statue of Liberty historically welcomed? The answers to some of these questions may spark a different level of understanding.

Be Patient
Making a perceptible shift in attitude is a long, slow process. One class or one unit may not result in much change, but making racial and economic disparity and discrimination part of your curriculum will be a start. Do not give up if the conversation breaks down. Instead, continue the dialogue on these issues, and look for creative ways to make societal inequities salient to your students.

Taking Meaning from Tragedy
My experience in trying out these suggestions with my students proves that it is difficult to change attitudes. An eighteen-year-old Polish immigrant wrote, “If people are willing to work hard, they can be successful. African Americans, because they have not been true immigrants, do not have that idea of working for a better life.” A Brazilian whose parents clean houses and hotel rooms ended up rejecting the American dream as fantasy.

“Educators, especially those on the front lines of influence with newcomers to the United States, must begin to address the issue of race and economic disparity much more carefully in class.”
I thought that if everybody worked hard like the immigrants that they can be successful. My family is not afraid of hard work and we are having a better life here. But African Americans have never had access to equal education, health care, or employment. Their struggle has been different and it has been harder for them to achieve their goals than Europeans and now Latinos.

Ingrained attitudes, stereotypes, and fallacies are hard to dispel, but grappling with difficult themes prepares students for real-world dialogue. Every young mind that begins to understand the vast inequities that exist in a society has the potential to become an informed person who will speak the truth with passion.

References


Julie Whitlow is an associate professor in the English Department and co-coordinator of the MA program in teaching ESL at Salem State College, in the United States.

---

Ask Alliant About Education

Earn your Doctorate, Master's, or Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

Alliant Programs Offer:

- Small classes with a multinational student body
- Expert, caring faculty and staff
- Focus on innovative instructional strategies and applied linguistics and research
- World-renowned practitioners and researchers

Now offering an Online Master’s Degree. Call today!

1-866-U-ALLIANT • www.alliant.edu/gsoe
As a freshly graduated language instructor in Hungary, I was thrilled to land a job as a supplemental teacher at one of the most prestigious high schools in Budapest. When I opened the door on my first day, I found the students chattering and laughing like any other eleven- or twelve-year-old children. On hearing the grating of the door, they scattered like a group of frightened birds and sat down at their desks.

Then came the silence—the silence that for two weeks I simply could not break no matter how hard I tried. These children did not even vaguely resemble the ones the headmistress had described as “talkative, sociable, and very, very intelligent.” From our first English lesson, they just sat there together, confining themselves to a basic level of communication. They answered my questions and sometimes asked very politely for help with the homework, but they said nothing more. They greeted me when I arrived and said good-bye when they left the room as they were required to do, but generally they showed no interest in my person, comments, or advice.

Was I the Problem?
The students felt the same about my course content, the learning of personal letter writing. They learned the rules and wrote the letters I asked them to write. However, they did so simply by using their intellect and failed to employ any of their creativity. They handed in well-written pieces with no grammatical mistakes, but the letters looked like pages copied out of a textbook with the topic and the words changed: repetitions of the same schema thirteen times.

They separated themselves from me and built a wall between us in the classroom as well as in our verbal communication. It was a wall that I could not break or climb despite trying everything from little icebreakers at the end of each lesson to games incorporated into my lesson plans. Sometimes, usually in the middle of an amusing game, I felt that something was happening: a smile, a gesture, or a sparkle of curiosity in a pair of eyes created the illusion that nothing was wrong. Nevertheless, by the end of the activity, the students always returned to their usual pattern.
At the end of two weeks of stalemate, I called a former roommate from the university who was a practicing psychologist. She listened to my endless list of problems carefully and patiently, and when I eventually ran out of breath, she simply asked, “Have you ever asked them if they have a problem with you?” Of course, I had not. I had been far too concerned about my failure as a teacher and my inability to arouse and keep my students’ attention to do so. However, after recognizing this basic mistake, I still could not imagine what I could do. All I knew was that I could not stand in front of my group and say, “Hey, kids! Just tell me what your problems are with me.” Fortunately, my friend asked me a second question: “Why don’t you try to solve this problem while sticking to your syllabus?”

Of course, I had not. I had been far too concerned about my failure as a teacher and my inability to arouse and keep my students’ attention to do so. However, after recognizing this basic mistake, I still could not imagine what I could do. All I knew was that I could not stand in front of my group and say, “Hey, kids! Just tell me what your problems are with me.” Fortunately, my friend asked me a second question: “Why don’t you try to solve this problem while sticking to your syllabus?”

Jo Is Born
That statement marked the starting point of a joint effort to save my reputation as a teacher. The following Saturday evening, Jo was born. She was a rather simple creature made of a cardboard shoebox wrapped in colorful paper. She had huge black eyes and a big smile, and she waved her papier-mâché hands joyfully.

Her most important feature was a slit in the middle of her belly. She was a little ridiculous, a little awkward, and very far from perfect, but we were absolutely satisfied with her and unspeakably curious about how successfully she would complete her mission.

On Monday morning, when the class was supposed to take a quiz, Jo and I stepped over the threshold of the classroom hand in hand. She was so conspicuous that the students could not resist staring at her with wide-open eyes. For the first time in my short career as a professional teacher of English, I heard a murmur of excitement in the classroom. My seemingly indifferent pupils started to show signs of interest.

As if nothing unusual had happened, I greeted the students, distributed the quiz sheets, and went back to stand near Jo. After waiting for a few moments (just to enjoy the awakening excitement), I turned to the students and said, “Today I have someone to introduce you to. Her name is Jo, and she is our new postmistress. From this day on, it will be her responsibility to collect your assignments, the first of which you are going to write today. Please write a letter to Jo and tell her what you think of our English lessons and what your opinions about me are. Be as honest as you can. You do not have to sign your letters, but you may use an imaginary name. When you have finished, fold the letters up and post them into Jo. After completing your task, you are all allowed to leave.”

Letters to Jo
As the students started working on their letters, they seemed rather at a loss to understand my intention. Then they gradually became more excited. Dictionaries appeared on the desks, and I could see that the students were trying hard to explain what they had on their minds.

Reading those thirteen letters was an absolute joy for me. For the first time, the students and I had begun to communicate. Some of the letters had
more grammatical mistakes than the students’ other assignments, but I could see the effort behind every single word as they tried to ensure that their meaning reached me. With Jo as a mediator, they began to address me as a human being and not just as their teacher. They allowed me to see how I intruded into the private sphere that they had shared with their former teacher for years and that they had not been ready to open up to me at the beginning of the school year.

After the appearance of Jo in our classroom, the students and I spent two and a half marvelous months together. Our little postmistress sat on my desk with a constant smile on her face. We agreed that if anyone had any problem with me or the lesson, he or she could either tell me directly or write a letter (in English, of course) and give it to Jo. I was very surprised to find that the students were actually using this communication path. What is more, Jo did not go out of fashion after my commission as a supplementary teacher ended. I left her with the students, and they took care of her and even today treat her as an old friend.

Finding a Way to Listen
Hunter (1984) wrote, “Teaching is an applied science derived from research in human learning and human behavior: an applied science that utilizes the findings of psychology, neurology, sociology, and anthropology” (p. 4). I feel fortunate that somebody made me recognize the truth of this statement: we as teachers are not only required to construct and follow a syllabus, but must find a voice for effective, two-way communication between the children sitting in the classroom and the adult standing by the teacher’s desk.
That is why we teachers are there: not only to be listened to but also to show that we can listen. We must be willing to be determined psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists at the same time in the classroom, and—what is even more important—we have to be proud that we have learned to take this responsibility. I am grateful that this happened to me at the beginning of my professional career with the help of Jo and, of course, the children who taught me how to listen.

References

Orsolya Molnár is a teacher of English language and literature and is working on her second MA degree in Budapest, Hungary.
Advance your career. Increase your salary.

You can do it!

Are you ready to advance your career? Want to earn re-licensure points and become eligible for lane changes leading to salary increases? Need to become NCLB compliant? You can do it—with a master's degree or endorsement in English Language Learning (ELL) from the nation’s most affordable, accredited and flexible teachers college. Because WGU is competency-based, your prior education and experience can shorten your time to graduation. And because WGU is non-profit, your tuition is about half as much as other accredited online universities. Best of all, you can start as early as next month!

ESL/ELL Programs:
- M.A. - English Language Learning (PK-12)
- Endorsement Prep Program in ELL (PK-12)

Teacher licensure programs also available

LEARN MORE, SPEAK WITH A WGU ENROLLMENT COUNSELOR TODAY TOLL-FREE AT:

1.800.914.9956

OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:

www.wgu.edu/et

SCHOLARSHIPS & FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE!
Although I try to encourage students to participate in group discussions because the production of output helps them notice gaps in knowledge (Swain 1985), it is easier to theorize about participation than to put that theory into practice. I have often felt frustrated about students’ lack of participation and have assumed that those who do not take part are either shy or have not prepared adequately. While observing an ESL immersion class in 2003, though, I quickly realized that these assumptions were not always correct.

To my surprise, the fifteen intermediate-level South Korean students in the college immersion ESL class I observed over a four-week period (as part of a larger case study on the relationship among gender, identity, and participation) reported different reasons for not participating. Their reasons were related to factors such as these: perceived threats to identity, feelings of powerlessness, and insufficient background knowledge. Based on student and teacher comments I noted during lessons, I concluded that, to increase participation, I needed to be sensitive to multiple identities and to offer classroom activities that foster student ownership of those activities.

Refusing to Participate?

For one class, the teacher had assigned a selection from the students’ ESL reading book, a chapter from Twain’s (1885/1981) Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. On the day that the students were to discuss the chapter, the teacher asked questions, but all of the students remained silent. The teacher asked follow-up questions. When the students failed to respond, the teacher became frustrated and assumed the worst: that the students had not finished their reading. Angry and dismayed, she dismissed them early, warning students that they needed to complete the assigned reading in order to receive a passing grade.

After the teacher left, two students approached me and began discussing what had just occurred. Even though she had read the assignment, said one female student, she had not participated because she felt that the reading selection was for children. She had deliberately not answered the teacher’s questions in order to show that she disapproved of the reading material. She told me that the teacher’s assigning that chapter signaled disrespect for the students and made her feel inferior. Both students wanted to read age-appropriate material that incorporated aspects of Korean culture, not just U.S. culture.

The Issue Is Identity

My in-class observation and follow-up conversation with students caused me to rethink the relationship between participation and identity. Identity (defined by Norton 2000 as multiple, contradictory, and changing over time) played a pivotal role in this misunderstanding, a misunderstanding confirmed by the teacher following the classroom incident.
The Students Feel Invisible

I believe that the classroom interaction above affected the participants’ identities as students and as South Koreans. First, the students thought that the reading selection was meant for children. This misunderstanding about the appropriateness of the material led them to assert that the teacher defined their culture as strange, backward, and—most important—childlike. This feeling of otherness or alienation was exacerbated by the fact that the reading focused on U.S. culture. The students felt disconnected from the material, which made them feel that they and their cultures were invisible and therefore unimportant.

One student later confirmed that the students had begun to believe that the teacher thought of them as illegitimate learners, which threatened their identities. This sense of being marginalized can negatively affect how language learners engage with one another and the material (Pavlenko 2003). To protect their identities, the students resisted by withdrawing from participation (see Norton 2000).

Build Ownership, Build Participation

Giving students some control over lessons may foster feelings of ownership and agency, which may lead to greater participation. This was true of the students I observed in my larger qualitative study; those who felt empowered began to believe that they had the ability to affect change and had a right to speak. Encouraging students to read texts that have some meaning for their own lives also promotes participation: when students see themselves in the hopes and struggles that others have experienced, they may become more invested in the process of reading (Raphael, Kehus, and Damphousse 2001).

How could the teacher have avoided the appearance that she was insensitive to the students’ ethnic identities? Adequate background knowledge about the text might have helped the students understand its importance in U.S. literature and culture. Students might have responded better if they had known that learners of all ages in the United States read *Huckleberry Finn*. The teacher could also have drawn upon the complex cultural themes, pointing out that the book deals with racism, prejudice, and slavery and, specifically, pointing out how Twain confronts these issues. With the main concepts explained, the teacher could have asked students to relate personal experiences when they or someone they know had been discriminated against based on their ethnicity or gender.

Another way to approach student ownership is to organize reading class as a book club. The teacher and students decide on a theme for the reading class together, and the teacher then creates a list of books that are appropriate for the theme and the students’ reading level. From this list, the students vote on which texts will be the assigned course readings. Having students participate in choosing the readings encourages ownership, and students will be more invested in reading the assigned text and in participating in subsequent class discussions.
Build Agency and Ownership

- Start a book club in which students choose a genre and then select books from a reading list.

- Brainstorm items for classroom discussion with the students (Raphael, Kehus, and Damphousse 2001).

Build Background Knowledge

- Besides the usual prereading activities (Carrell, Devine, and Eskey 1988), introduce additional ones such as role plays, in which students can imagine themselves in situations similar to those experienced by the characters in the literature.

Acknowledge Identities

- In postreading discussions, ask students to relate their experiences to those of the characters in the literature. If they can identify with the character, they may be able to imagine a new identity for themselves and think differently about their place in the world.

- Ask students to keep journals in which they relate their personal experiences to the characters and plot of reading selections.
Ask the Right Questions
Before assuming that students do not participate because of a lack of preparation, I now always ask myself these questions: How can I encourage students to feel a sense of agency so that they invest in learning and feel empowered to speak? How can I relate content knowledge in a meaningful way? How can I help students explore their identities in a meaningful way in the classroom?

I have come up with several ways to address these questions through the way I structure and conduct my classes (see the box). I am now more aware that I must continually strive to be sensitive to what my student experience outside the classroom, realizing that these experiences are not static and that they may hinder or promote participation in the classroom.

References


Jennifer Graham is a recent graduate of the doctoral program in applied linguistics at the University of Memphis, in the United States.
As a Chinese EFL teacher, I faced a problem common to many of my colleagues: how could I motivate students to write autonomously, especially with an audience in mind? Most EFL learners I have worked with in China consider writing in English a headache. They simply write on a given topic and then submit their work to teachers, with little willingness or desire. Teachers often have difficulty handling writing classes since the class revolves around the introduction of writing techniques, which does not attract students’ interest.

Fosnot (1996) claims that learning means establishing connections to past experiences or present concerns. Accepting this view of learning would mean that an important part of writing instruction is helping students relate what they are writing to some aspect of their lives. However, in conventional writing classrooms at Chinese universities, most topics fail to build such links; no wonder students lose interest.

To inspire my students to approach writing with enthusiasm, I hit upon the idea of basing their writing on problem solving. I make sure that the topics reflect the personal experiences and issues of the students, who are second-year English majors at Yang Zhou University.

**Solving Society’s Problems**

Every week I inspire the students to define a real-life problem and guide them to write a composition to solve it. For example, a prevalent problem among young Chinese is compulsive Internet use (David 1999). Once, after discussing Internet addiction with my students, I asked them to brainstorm in small groups and write down one way to wean people from addictive computer use. I provided a few questions to guide their discussion, such as “How do we prevent young people from becoming addicted to the Internet?”, “How do we help them exercise self-control on the Internet?”, and “How do we teach them to be masters rather than slaves of the Internet?”

All the students put forward advice in their essays. I was impressed that one used an analogy to make her point:

One effective way is to “think before you leap.” It’s just like doing shopping. If you have no idea what to buy, you hang around in the street or at the supermarket, stopping from time to time to take a look at or buy whatever catches your eyes. However, if you make a list before shopping, you will buy what you want directly, avoiding a waste of time and money. As a result, we’d better think before searching on the Internet . . . We should be the controller of the Internet rather than be controlled by it.

Afterward, the student shared the solution with her classmates through peer editing and published her work on the course Web page.

Another real-life problem-solving topic arose from one of the students’ journals. The student, who worked as a tutor of a fifteen-year-old boy, was astonished to
learn of the boy’s heavy load of schoolwork. The burden mostly came from the boy’s father, who judged his son only by his schoolwork and believed that forcing him to study was the only way to help him succeed.

When I presented this situation to the class as an educational problem, it aroused the students’ attention because they themselves were victims of the exam-oriented education system in China. They each wrote a letter (in English) to the boy’s father in an attempt to persuade him to relieve his son of the burdensome schoolwork and to raise his awareness of quality-oriented education. Some of the letters were particularly passionate:

A burden is to people what a shell is to a snail. A heavy burden works against what people engage in. Please don’t impose your will on your kid. Don’t expect too much of him. . . . High mark can’t stand for knowledge and rich knowledge can’t stand for excellent ability. . . . One day he will take over the mission that life gives him.

In fact, the letters caused a stir among faculty members as well as students because they highlighted an issue for education in China at all levels (to read the letters, see http://greentrees.8800.org/yzu/).

**Working Out Their Own Problems**

I have found that when writing instruction revolves around problem solving, it is more likely to motivate learners. Educators and psychologists agree that learners learn best when they carry out meaningful tasks and solve meaningful problems in an environment that reflects their own personal interests (Collins, Brown, and Newman 1989). Journals offer students a channel for expressing concerns and troubles in all aspects of their lives. Each week, I read the journals very carefully, and, with the permission of student writers, I share entries dealing with problems that seem most relevant to the class.

The problem of lack of confidence is a case in point. One student wrote that, because of a relatively heavy workload and poor performance on exams, she had lost confidence and was even thinking of giving up studying English. I discussed the problem with the students in class, omitting the writer’s name so the student would not lose face in front of her peers. When I asked the students how many of them suffered from similar anxiety, everyone raised a hand. Students eagerly worked out solutions to the self-confidence problem. Among the solutions, the problem sufferer found the following suggestions the most instructive:

Whatever difficulties you have met and will meet, you should have courage to face any challenges, expected and unexpected. You might start with something that attracts you first and then extend your interest to other subjects . . . . Hard work is essential. If you cannot do as well as your classmates, just devote a little more time to the task. Gradually you will make more progress . . . .

Subsequent journal entries and classroom observations showed that the student seemed to have more confidence in her learning strategies after reading her classmates’ feedback.

**Real-Life Problems, Real Communication**

The most beneficial aspect of using problem solving in writing instruction is the communication it fosters among classmates. The traditional Chinese classroom setup, in which student desks are arranged in straight rows, deters discussion and interaction. However, the students’ desire to communicate can overcome this roadblock.

By exchanging points of view, students broaden their horizons and improve their insights. In this way, they learn how to organize their perspectives into logical order. They are writing not just to develop language skills but, more importantly, to effectively express their ideas. As one student noted, “We always have a sense of achievement when our solutions are accepted by our classmates. We learn to be considerate and thoughtful.”

Compared with conventional competitive and individualistic writing experiences, I have found that writing instruction that is based on problem solving is effective in establishing a rapport among students and helping them organize their ideas.
Looking for solutions to problems has made the students more sensitive to what they read. Instead of being a burden, reading material becomes a resource.

As the Chinese saying goes, “When everybody adds fuel, the flame rises high.” In the problem-solving process, language becomes a tool by which students solve practical problems together.

Reading in Search of Solutions
Looking for solutions to the problems they discuss and write about in class has made the students more sensitive to what they read. Instead of being a burden, reading material becomes a resource.

For instance, the campus English newspaper, 21st Century, carries three advice columns edited by U.S. teachers: Just Ask, which deals with problems on life issues; Clearing It Up, on language problems; and Love Troubles. The students in my class collect the weekly newspaper and imitate the way in which the U.S. teachers ingeniously suggest ways to solve problems—not only the language but also the patterns of essay development, such as exemplification, classification, cause and effect, and comparison and contrast. The students regard imitation of these authentic sources as more effective than the learning of rigid rules.

Students also seek out reading material on their own, which may mean that they are more likely to connect what they find to their internal schemata (Jonassen, Peck, and Wilson 1999). One book students often refer to is Survey of Chinese College Students (Hu et al. 2005), which records in detail the problems of millions of Chinese university students in such areas as the relationships between students and parents, the national College English Test, and young couples living off campus. The students use the book as a reference for constructing their own problem statements. They also access information through Internet search engines and the library’s online catalogues.

Making the Jump from Passive to Active
As the Chinese saying goes, “When everybody adds fuel, the flame rises high.” In the problem-solving process, language becomes a tool by which students solve practical problems together. Writing about solving problems gives the students a chance to use
language for authentic communication and enhances their ability to think creatively. By writing purposefully and meaningfully, students shake off feelings of passivity and become actively engaged in learning.

As one student wrote, “We are no longer worried about having nothing to write about because the problem is so close to our life. When I have the problem at hand, I think about what I would do if I were in the same position. In doing so, I am becoming more and more interested in writing.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Fang Ying is a teacher of English in the School of Foreign Languages at Yang Zhou University, in China.*

---

**ESOL Tests and Testing**

Stoynoff and Chapelle introduce teachers and administrators to the PRINCIPLES, METHODS, and VOCABULARY of language assessment.

Twenty-one experienced ESOL test reviewers consider how to evaluate tests and testing manuals, and they discuss test purpose and method. Practitioners learn how advances in measurement theory and language testing research have changed the assessment landscape.

The sequence approximates how teachers and administrators might evaluate a standardized test.

Stephen Stoynoff and Carol A. Chapelle

ISBN 193118516-6 Order #166
$24.95 (member $19.95)

Preview the overview chapter and two sample tests at http://www.tesol.org: Books: Assessment

Order online at http://www.tesol.org/
What Is Podcasting?
Podcasting is a method of publishing files on the Internet and allowing users to subscribe to and automatically have those files downloaded to their computers. In effect, it is a form of audio or video broadcasting that allows you to create your own radio station.

Not technically limited to the World Wide Web, the portion of the Internet that is viewed by Web browsers such as Mozilla, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Netscape, and AOL Explorer, podcasts can be accessed in varied ways, including peer-to-peer software, file transfer protocol software, and conferencing software. Furthermore, users can automatically transfer or update podcasts to MP3 players, such as the Apple iPod. Many traditional news outlets are quite active in podcasting, but many nontraditional sources of information available also broadcast authentic and meaningful content. Podcasting has recently begun to specifically address the needs and interests of the TESOL community (see Podcasting Resources on p. 37).

Finding Podcasts
Nearly every media company has some sort of podcast today (see Podcasting Resources for some
examples). A comprehensive collection of podcasts can be accessed via Apple’s iTunes Music Store (http://www.apple.com/itunes/podcasts/), categorized by areas of interest.

Once you identify a podcast of interest, you can subscribe to it through a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed, which will deliver the podcast directly to your computer for downloading to your portable player. RSS allows you to schedule automatic downloading or updating of podcasts, Weblogs, and news sites. When used with programs such as Apple’s iTunes, RSS allows you to make many recordings available to students with minimal effort.

**Getting Started in Recording and Podcasting**

As a trainer in computer-assisted language learning, I have helped a number of teachers learn to record and exchange and even start their own podcasts. They have found that using these materials is easy and rewarding if they have the proper equipment.

**Make Your Own Audio Files**

Creating your own digital audio is actually a lot easier than you might expect. You will need a computer with a microphone as well as recording software. A quality headset and speakers will greatly improve the experience. Among the free recording programs available, Audacity (see http://audacity.sourceforge.net/) is one of the best available. It is very easy to use and mimics the conventional controls of a cassette recorder.

Once you have recorded or downloaded files and saved them in MP3 format, you can transfer them to the Internet for students to utilize. If you have access to a server through your school or your personal Internet service provider (ISP), the entire process will cost you nothing. Many people have such access without knowing it; contact your ISP support staff or school technology support staff to find out.

**Make Your Own Podcasts**

You and the students you teach can easily create your own podcasts. As the technology becomes more common, more programs for podcasting are becoming available.
Podcasting-Based Lessons

At my university, my colleagues and I have been using iPods in our classes for almost two years. So far, the students have reported that they find it much easier and more comfortable to do aural/oral activities from their apartments or with their iPods than in the traditional audio lab (which we still offer as an option). Thus, many of them spend more time engaged in assigned activities and often go beyond the minimum requirements of an assignment.

Another bonus is that the recordings the students make sound more natural than they would if recorded in the traditional lab, where students often whisper or otherwise speak in a manner that demonstrates the self-conscious nature of being in a room with many other people who could be eavesdropping. My hope is that this increased comfort and ease translates into greater success with language.

Peer Review via Podcasting

Now that many MP3 players are equipped with microphones, students can interact with a podcast by recording responses, reactions, and comments. They may even want to begin their own podcasts.

Once you and your students begin using this technology, you may want to have students engage in peer-response activities using podcasting. This approach may increase the amount of communication relative to face-to-face interaction, and it alleviates the overwhelming load of grading that you might have to do otherwise. Peer review can also contribute to a better ability to self-evaluate, an ability that empowers students. You may still find it useful to assess student recordings based on a checklist of goals.

Multimedia Readings, Videos, and More

By utilizing interactive quiz-building tools such as those included in most course management systems (CMSs), or the popular software Hot Potatoes (see http://hotpot.uvic.ca/), I frequently integrate audio recordings into multimedia materials. The resulting materials might include readings, videos, audio, drag-and-drop matching exercises, crossword puzzles, and other media. For a great example of such materials that use online movie trailers as the content, see English Trailers (http://english-trailers.com/).

Audio Sharing

In addition to podcasting, my colleagues and I rely on the sharing of digital audio files. We exchange prerecorded, teacher-recorded, and student-recorded audio files through e-mail, over an intranet, and through a CMS. We use both the Moodle (see http://moodle.org/) and Blackboard (see http://www.blackboard.com/) CMSs to share these files and maintain a variety of interaction. The use of a CMS also allows students and teachers to exchange files as a single component of a more global interaction. Students can attach the files to forums to augment their written text. They can transcribe their recordings in a forum. They can even take other students’ audio recordings and edit them to insert their own responses, thus creating a cohesive dialogue. These dialogues can be used as classroom material or even collected for research.

With the ability to collect recordings on a DVD, CD, file server, or other storage device, there is virtually no limit to the amount of content that you can ultimately archive. The ability to exchange audio recordings easily and quickly from any location allows you to plan more creative peer-response activities and have more frequent (and varied) interaction with students. In the international teaching associate classes at my university, for example, students record themselves and exchange files with classmates and the teacher through Moodle.

Some of our classes have utilized a shared library of songs on a local file server that automatically updates the material on the students’ iPods each time they are plugged into any computer in our building. Each class can have its own playlist, which can be updated as necessary from any computer on the network. This automaticity eliminates many of the problems that may occur with portable devices. We can be assured that students have the required listening files.
In my experience, teachers and students have responded positively to the integration of digital audio materials into English learning. Students like the flexibility and variety of podcasting. They also seem to be willing to engage in more English practice using these technologies than they did using a traditional audio lab.

Once you get started in podcasting, you may find it so exciting that you need to share. Similarly, you may find that your students create materials that are so interesting that others must see them. If this is the case, visit the collaborative collection of ESL podcasts at Easy Online RSS Reader for English as a Second Language (ESL) Podcasts (http://a4esl.org/p/), browse the offerings there, and post your own.

Greg Kessler, a recent chair of TESOL’s Computer-Assisted Language Learning Interest Section and currently president-elect of OhioTESOL, teaches linguistics and ESL at Ohio University, in the United States.
Blogging seems a natural tool to use in the composition classroom. Blogs can give writers an almost infinite amount of space to write, helping them develop fluency and extend their concept of audience beyond the classroom. By adding links to other Web sites, bloggers can consider what other information their audience might want. In some cases, they can add images to complement their texts. Interestingly, blogging also seems to foster a greater sense of authorship than do other forms of hypertext (Blood 2000) and therefore may be more suitable for addressing the kinds of problems students have with expressing their opinions. For these reasons, we introduced blogging into the lowest level of our three U.S. university-level ESL composition courses.

The success of blogging in creating online discussions on both personal and political topics (see “Blogging, the Virtual Soapbox,” Essential Teacher, September 2005) also made it a good fit for our classes. Blogging has helped create what Gillmor (2004) calls extreme democracy and, in English teaching, allows students to share their voices with the world (see “In Blogging, the Benefits of Exposure Are Worth the Risk,” Essential Teacher, September 2005). Compared with setting up other forms of computer-mediated discourse, blogs can be a simpler and sometimes cheaper way to have students discuss and publish their ideas online while allowing them to explore various aspects of online writing.

The Course
The ten-week, postadmission composition classes we teach are usually composed of a mix of international students and immigrants, mainly from Africa. The students have a wide range of literacy skills in both their home language and in English, with some highly literate in their first language and some not. The course asked for two kinds of writing: classroom-based assignments, which included summaries, a synthesis paper, and an argument paper, and the blogs. The classroom-based assignments were graded in the traditional way, but students only needed to post a blog to receive credit.

For this course, students were asked to read and write extensively on one topic: plagiarism. Each classroom assignment dealt with different aspects of what constitutes plagiarism and how it should be dealt with. We set up a class blog that we and the students could contribute to. The students were asked to post their opinions about their readings, their experiences with plagiarism, and their own experiences related to living in Ohio, where our university is located. In addition, we asked them to respond in various ways to what their classmates had written.
Three Types of Goals

Our six goals for using blogging in this course fell into three categories: communicative, academic, and technological.

Just Talk

Our communicative goals were to have students write using a variety of discourses, both informal and academic, and discuss aspects of their lives with classmates. These goals are based on one of the most popular uses for blogging: just talking about your life. An important aspect of beginning any discussion is for the participants to get to know each other. The class blog was a good way for students to introduce themselves while sharing common experiences and problems. For us, the blogs offered insights into the lives of students that we could not always see in the classroom. In this example, a Korean woman, who spoke little during class time, wrote passionately about her frustrations with native English speakers.

One day, I went to a cafeteria to have something. I ordered hot wrap and it was one of my favorites at there. The wrap is similar to burrito, but inside stuff is a little different. Any way, a few minutes later, I got mine and went through a register. The register was a guy, and he asked me whether it is a veggie wrap or meat wrap. I answered, “This is meat wrap.” As soon as I replied, he laughed at me for a while!!! I was so embarrassed, and asked him whether something was wrong . . . .

Students seemed to be able to write more and generate more ideas in their blogs than in their classroom-based assignments, perhaps because they did not have to worry about grammar and spelling. Unlike our practice with the classroom assignments, we did not correct errors, allowing the students to write as much as they could. While some teachers might object to not correcting the grammar errors, we believed that by freeing students from worrying about their errors, we could encourage them to write more using the types of literacies with which they felt most comfortable (see Ferris 2004).

Cultivate the Writing Process

The second group of goals related to how we could use the blogs to help students develop their classroom assignments: we wanted students to generate ideas for writing assignments; discuss, argue, and negotiate their opinions about issues relating to plagiarism; and create texts for classmates to use as critique or support of their own views.

Composition theory has begun to recognize that the invention process, by which writers generate ideas for their papers, does not simply occur in the prewriting stage but continues throughout the writing process. Blogging allows the students to collaborate on this process of generation at any time they want to. For example, the students were asked to write an argumentative paper on whether teachers should use Turnitin (http://www.turnitin.com/), a Web-based plagiarism detection system, to check student work for plagiarism. While drafting their essays, students were asked to blog about whether they thought using the program was a good idea. One student wrote, some people believe that it is a good stuff for teachers because to use turnitin.com, teachers can save hours and hours of time searching through the internet looking for pages. moreover, they believe that it promotes originality in students work, improve students writing and research skills encourage collaborative learning. even if some people believe that there are some benefits using this site, however, i believe that it is not necessary at the school because the teachers using the “turnitin.com” is not fair and it might ignore the confidence between students and teachers.

The student could use the ideas generated in the blog for his argumentative paper on how the school should deal with plagiarism. Because we had previously found that students wrote more critically online than in their print assignments, we encouraged them to cut, paste, and revise what they had written in their blogs for use in their classroom assignments.
One of the most interesting goals was for students to think of these blogs as texts to complement what they read in class. Because blogs seem to give the writer a stronger sense of authorship (blog readers usually search blogs by author, not by subject), we encouraged the students to incorporate their classmates’ blogs into their papers as data and sources, in the same way they used the texts they had been assigned to read. In this example, the students had been asked to write about their experiences with plagiarism.

Before I came to the United States, I had some experiences about plagiarism because I used to write a paper using internet sources when I was a university student at Korea. Whenever I wrote a paper, I used to cut and pasted some words without citation same as ***. Obviously, it was wrong. However, I did not realize what plagiarism exactly was at that time because I had never caught what I did and studied about that. Moreover, I had never thought how serious a problem it is.

In the follow-up synthesis paper, the students could compare their classmates’ experiences with plagiarism with the experiences of the students in the articles they had read. In their argumentative paper, they were asked to use their classmates’ blogs either to support their own claims or to critique the claims of their classmates. We did this not only to create more interactivity among the students in the blogs but also to help them think about themselves and their classmates as experts in the area of plagiarism, just as they considered published writers experts. Our hope was that the blogs would help deal with some of the causes of plagiarism.

Learn How to Blog
Our technological goal was perhaps the most abstract: to help students learn how to blog. It is hard to predict how important blogging will become as a form of literacy, but only by using blogs can students understand the potential of blogging and

On the class blog, the students posted their opinions about their readings, their experiences with plagiarism, and their experiences related to living in Ohio.

One day, I went to a cafeteria to have something. I ordered hot wrap and it was one of my favorites at there. The wrap is similar to burrito, but inside stuff is a little different. Any way, a few minutes later, I got mine and went through a register. The register was a guy, and he asked me whether it is a veggie wrap or meat wrap. I answered, “This is meat wrap.” As soon as I replied, he laughed at me for a while!!! I was so embarrassed, and asked him whether something was wrong . . . .
the differences between blogging and traditional forms of print literacy. Blogs can be taught as an easy form of Web page design to help students understand the concepts of hypertextuality, such as the power of linking between Web sites, as well as the visual nature of texts.

Blogs also have their own distinctive ways of creating social networks. One of the most exciting aspects of blogging is how blogs can be aggregated. Blogs can be set up to send out feeds that notify readers of new postings. Web sites such as Bloglines (http://www.bloglines.com/) can gather these feeds so readers can easily access new postings from their favorite bloggers. As the Internet expands as a space for participation and the sharing of information, blogging can help students become aware of the potential of these concepts for changing how they communicate.

Coping with the Limitations
Not all of the students we teach have enjoyed blogging, particularly if they see it only as extra work. However, many have recognized its usefulness for their writing. As one student put it, blogging was an extra burden, but “this burden made us keep writing in English with comfortable feelings.” While we were pleased in general with the blogs, we realize that often the hype surrounding a technology obscures the fact that no technology can do everything a teacher wants it to do. For example, we found that blogging was not always as effective as other technologies, such as e-mail discussion lists, in creating interactivity.

Sometimes, teachers can overcome such limitations by changing how a technology is implemented. For example, we attempted to increase interaction through a variety of different assignments. Asking students to cite their classmates’ blogs in their texts was one way. Another way was to have students post a blog in response to one their classmate had written or to use the comment feature of blogs to respond. Having to modify the way we used blogging in order to achieve our goals is a useful reminder that the use of no technology is predetermined; it can always be adapted to achieve different results.

Only One of Many New Literacy Forms
Despite its limitations, blogging can be an exciting classroom tool and writing environment. Blogging itself is changing rapidly: the explosion of interest in podcasts (see “A Multimedia Lab on Your Desktop” in this issue), which can be seen as oral blogs, as well as video blogs can help you better understand the new relationships among oral, written, and visual forms of literacy that are developing online. For more information on getting started with blogging in ESL/EFL, see Crosby and Bloch (n.d.).

References


Joel Bloch teaches ESL composition at The Ohio State University, in the United States, and is writing a book on technology in the second language composition classroom. Cathryn Crosby is a doctoral candidate in foreign language education at The Ohio State University.
As the general pedagogical benefits of using Web sites, most teachers would cite the virtues of language and content authenticity, interactivity, and the fostering of learner autonomy. The broad educational mandate of art institutions has resulted in some of the most interactive, varied, and pedagogically sound Web sites online. This article highlights some of the features of these comprehensive Web sites, which lend themselves ideally to English language learning.

In the context of ESL teaching, it is significant that many museum collections boast works from around the globe, often reflecting the cosmopolitan and ethnically and geographically diverse character of the people in the cities in which they are located. Consequently, students can readily identify with these international works and their histories, and you can easily tailor content to the interests and the cultural schemata of the learners. Best of all, while the class is benefiting pedagogically from these sophisticated interactive Web sites, you and your students are spared the often prohibitively high admission fees.

**Content for All Learners**

Aside from the cultural accessibility of the art on many museum Web sites (see Recommended Art Institution Web Sites for some examples), the language has been specifically tailored to a lay audience. Speech is usually fairly clear, and ideas are well exemplified through anecdotes and images. For example, attention-grabbing tidbits are sprinkled throughout samples from the online audioguides of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in an effort to keep the listener attuned. Programs for families or children incorporate pauses between sentences and use high-frequency vocabulary as well as sound effects to illustrate points.

In other words, lower level or less confident English language learners can benefit from art institution sites with material originally designed for younger native-English-speaking audiences. As a former student, writing about the MoMA audio program Modern Kids (see [http://www.moma.org/visit_moma/audio.html](http://www.moma.org/visit_moma/audio.html)) explains,

> I thought it’s very good for kids but also for me too. Because the explanation had soundtrack and emotion, so it seemed like I was listening to some movie and made me would like to follow them. . . The one thing was, it was not too hard to understand and it was very good listening practice for me.

The museum Web sites also cater to different age groups. The MoMA, for example, has the more interview-based Red Studio ([http://redstudio.moma.org/](http://redstudio.moma.org/)) for teens, and Destination: Modern Art ([http://www.moma.org/destination/](http://www.moma.org/destination/)) for children, with plenty of illustrations, high-frequency vocabulary, and a slower rate of speech. Both sites include read-along transcripts. You can thus recycle content material at different levels, allowing students to upgrade when they feel ready to take on a more challenging description of the same artwork.
Different Formats, Different Skills
The interactive and differing formats lend themselves ideally to the recycling of content, including vocabulary, both of which are crucial to eventual language acquisition (Nation 2005). In navigating art institution Web sites, learners have the opportunity to access similar information in different ways. The advantage of this is that learners can choose to focus on particular skills, such as listening or reading, and on subskills within those categories, such as listening for the main idea or listening for details. If a listening task is too difficult, learners can choose to read an accompanying transcript in order to facilitate comprehension.

Once students have deciphered the main idea, they can move on to other listening and speaking skills, such as listening for and practicing pronunciation of key words or focusing on suprasegmental features, such as intonation, sentence stress, tone of voice, or thought grouping.

Adapting the Material
I deal with authentic material for the classroom in two principal ways. The first is to find material that is ideally suited to the learners’ needs and proficiency levels. The other is to control the material through the modification of tasks. The latter, which is standard pedagogical practice, is exemplified by the common technique of helping students negotiate difficult texts by assigning tasks that are relatively easy to accomplish, such as reading for gist or reading for a specific piece of information. Likewise, students can do more difficult tasks, such as transcribing and analyzing, with easier texts or as extension exercises with a familiar text.

Picasso and Prepositions
This controlling of material through differentiation of tasks works well with one of my favorite online audio programs, the MoMA’s Visual Descriptions (http://www.moma.org/visit_moma/audio.html). This program includes oral descriptions of works in the museum’s collection to help visitors with visual impairments appreciate significant works of art.

Native English speakers as well as English language learners who have listened to the description of Pablo Picasso’s Les Demoiselles d’Avignon recorded for the visually impaired all concur with my own observation: the description is an eye-opener. Objects that viewers may have previously glossed over or simply not seen appear as if from nowhere, thus validating the widely accepted claim that the viewing experience is enhanced with the help of texts external to the work in question (Barrett 2003; Sayre 2002; Tucker 2002).

Being very detailed and concise, these descriptions are useful to English language learners and ideally suited to language work with basic descriptive processes. I have gleaned many successful lessons from this feature. Especially successful ones have focused on prepositions of location and sentence structure, including the fronting of prepositional phrases. The language learner also has the enormous benefit of being able to look at the image being...
described. After fill-in-the-preposition exercises, I sometimes have students listen to another description and draw the image based solely on what they hear. Or I have students bring in an image of their choice to describe in class while their classmates listen and draw the image.

Is the Style Descriptive or Interpretive?
I have also used the MoMA’s Visual Descriptions for teaching higher level classes or academic English. Students who are just entering an academic program may have little experience with analytic or critical writing, and they may write a paper that merely describes when they are supposed to analyze.

By contrasting the pure description of a painting in Visual Descriptions with the interpretive description of the same painting in Modern Voices, the MoMA’s audioguide, students immediately recognize the differing purposes and styles of each description and become more aware of the need to alternate between the two in their writing. You can encourage an architecture student, for example, to use the purely descriptive form to help the reader visualize the project being described before switching to the more analytical and interpretive style exemplified in Modern Voices in order to contextualize the project within architecture theory.

Tapping the Interactivity
Many art institution Web sites get high marks for interactivity, which is an important aspect of motivated learning. Interactivity gives the user some control over three key features: content, in terms of what interests them thematically; language level and length of texts, in terms of whether the text is written for a child, an adolescent, a lay adult, or an expert adult; and format, be it stand-alone text, text accompanied by graphics, audio only, audio with transcript, video, video with captions, or video with sound.

The MoMA Web site takes interactivity to an especially high level. You can request a full electronic transcript of the museum’s audioguide from the education department, saving you a lot of background preparation: a blissful 150 pages worth of transcription has been done for you. Students can listen to the audioguide on school or personal computers, or you can download any segment onto your computer individually as an MP3 file and then burn it onto a CD to play in class if you do not have access to computers at school. This feature also allows you to customize your playlist. The MoMA Web site will also take you—or even better, your tech-savvy, Apple-iPod-wielding students—through the steps of creating their own audioguide.

Unlike many radio programs, such as the otherwise excellent “Design for the Real World” feature on Public Radio International’s Studio 360 (see http://www.studio360.org/arch.real.html), the pacing and enunciation of the speakers in the audioguide is conducive to English language learning. Most audio segments are also complemented by text, images, interviews, and other media.

Mini-TOEFL Art Lecture
If you teach preparatory classes for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), for example, you can easily incorporate high-interest listening lectures from the MoMA online audioguide. Recently, I had my preacademic class do a task related to a
MoMA exhibition devoted to Pixar Animation Studio, the company behind computer-generated animation blockbuster films such as Toy Story (Lasseter 1995), Finding Nemo (Stanton and Unkrich 2005), and The Incredibles (Bird 2004). As we were focusing on the design elements in The Incredibles, I assigned those segments of the exhibit’s online audio program/guide that specifically referred to the film. The students listened to their assigned segments online and, after listening to and discussing the segments, small groups of students came up with TOEFL-style questions (and four multiple-choice answers) specific to that segment. I then collected and reviewed their questions for accuracy. After downloading the relevant audio segments and burning them onto a CD, I created a mini-TOEFL listening test based on their contributions and gave it to the students.

Social Issues, Content, and Pronunciation Practice

The raison d’être of the arts is often argued to be its chronicling of social issues. Art history can thus be a great source of material when you need a hook to a lesson. Issues of class, gender, love, social upheaval, human drama, and race relations form the content of much art.

This content is explained and presented in a beguiling manner on art institution Web sites. The Whitney Museum of American Art (http://www.whitney.org/), for example, hosts its American Voices Audio Tour online. I’ve used images from this chronological history of twentieth-century American art as introductory or concluding commentaries on specific eras in American history. Each image is accompanied by a transcript of the audio description, allowing students to read along as they listen. I’ve also used this material to reinforce other content-related lessons while having students work on pronunciation issues, such as intonation, the pronunciation of regular verbs in the simple past (/t/, /d/, or /Id/), and the morpheme s (/z/, /s/, or /IZ/).

Multimedia Texts with a Pedagogical Mandate

Art institution Web sites can help you take advantage of some of the inherent characteristics of Web-based learning, such as easy and affordable access to current authentic material. Furthermore, these sites are driven by a pedagogical mandate and offer multimedia texts that cater to a variety of different language abilities and interests and that you can easily exploit to the English language learner’s advantage.

References


Marlene Friis is an instructor in the intensive English program at Pratt Institute, in the United States.
Teachers have often used VHS technology to record students’ presentations in class for later assessment. This videotaping allows teachers to view students’ work for grading, allows students to assess themselves, and allows students to imitate models (Quigley and Nyquist 1992). However, I discovered that the majority of the graduate-level second language learners I teach had stopped watching the VHS tapes I had recorded of their oral communication tasks. The technology had become outmoded, and the students did not have VHS players. I had to find a technology solution that students could easily access.

The ability to do self-assessment is an important skill for second language students because it allows them to continue practicing and improving on their own even after a course has ended. It also affords students a sense of ownership over the assessment of their work as they can determine how well they have met criteria for an assignment. This is in keeping with the current theory that language learning should place a greater emphasis on student responsibility and learner-centered curricula (e.g., Nunan 1998). In fact, in a learner-centred curriculum, students are encouraged to take a more active role in assessment (Bachman 2000).

From a pedagogical perspective, then, if students were not watching their videos, the value of recording their class presentations was called into question. My solution was to film with a digital camera and burn the recordings onto a CD in class.

Push, Plug, and Play

The equipment for filming and burning consists of a cart with a monitor, a digital camera, and a video compact disc (VCD) burner/player (which looks much like a VHS or DVD player), all powered by one plug. My colleagues and I have given this recording system the pet name PPP (push, plug, and play) because of the three easy steps for using it: push the cart into class, plug it in, press play. Each student brings a blank CD to class. As the students present, I film them with the digital camera. The monitor allows me to sit and watch the presentation without having to squint through the camera viewfinder during filming. (I take copious notes while I watch the presentations in case technology fails—which has happened, albeit rarely.) When a student finishes a presentation, I burn the recording onto the CD with the press of a button on the VCD burner/player. The burning process takes about three minutes for a five- to ten-minute presentation.

Since the VCD burner creates files in MPEG format (a file containing a six-minute video is about 130 megabytes in size), students can view their videos on any computer that has either VLC Media Player (see http://www.videolan.org/vlc/) or Windows Media Player (see http://www.microsoft.com mediaplayer/). Alternatively, they can watch the videos on DVD players that support VCD technology.
What Are My Expectations?

My purpose in switching to an up-to-date technology was to improve the pedagogical use of the videos. I wanted students to have easy access to their videos so they could do self-assessment with a view to developing an awareness of how to improve their communication performance. With the technology solution in place, I now had to ensure that students had explicit criteria against which to assess themselves. It is the ability to “isolate specific behaviours” (Quigley and Nyquist 1992, 327) that can lead students to address and improve their performance. Therefore, the criteria had to afford students a clear understanding of my expectations of their work.

Because criteria must be tied to what is taught and learned in the course, I use different criteria for different presentation assignments (see the next section for an example). We go over the criteria in class when each assignment is introduced and practiced. In addition, I include the criteria in a self-assessment checklist that is posted on the course Web site.

Expectations for the presentation assignments are also supported by model student presentations available for viewing at the course Web site. The models in the box above, which meet all or almost all the criteria for the assignment, were solicited from students who took the course previously. Because the graduate students I teach present on topics related to their field of research, I choose models from a variety of disciplines so that students get a broad view of appropriate content.

The Self-Assessment

The students assess their oral presentation according to eight to ten criteria dealing with structure and delivery (see p. 48 for an excerpt from one assessment sheet). Next to each criterion on the self-assessment sheet is an “Evidence” column, where students write notes about the content they delivered to meet the requirement. In the third column, “Time,” students write the time on the video recording when each requirement is met. (As an alternative to writing, students can download the self-assessment sheet and type their notes in a word-processing program.)

In addition to assessing how well they meet the content criteria, students monitor the length of the presentation and fill in the start and end times on the assessment sheet (see the sample).

The time constraint (for example, five to six minutes) is critical for the graduate students I work with, as they are practicing to become effective oral presenters of their research, particularly at conferences. Rate of speech is also assessed, and the time constraint helps students control their pace. Since controlling the rate of speech takes a lot of practice, I encourage students to audio record their presentations and time themselves before presenting in class.

Model self-assessments, paired with the model student videos, are also available at the course Web site. Students can watch a video online and follow the material in the evidence column in the model to see clearly how to complete their own self-assessments.
### Self-Assessment Sheet

**Presentation start time:** 0:15  
**Presentation end time:** 6:03

- One mark will be deducted for exceeding the time limit.
- One mark will be deducted for not speaking for the minimum time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gestures (2 marks; 1 mark each)</td>
<td>1. “Two” — Raised two fingers on one hand to refer to the number of points</td>
<td>0:56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. “Three” — Raised three fingers one after another while enumerating adjectives to describe the people in question</td>
<td>1:55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. “None” — palms facing downward</td>
<td>2:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. “My opinion” — hand on chest</td>
<td>3:24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse markers (2 marks)</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>0:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>0:24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Let me begin</td>
<td>0:51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are two kinds of</td>
<td>1:08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The first type is</td>
<td>1:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The second type is</td>
<td>1:48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In other words</td>
<td>3:36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To reiterate</td>
<td>4:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In conclusion</td>
<td>5:39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension checks (1 mark)</td>
<td>Are there any questions?</td>
<td>2:36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One is mandatory.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scan and wait 5 seconds.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students submit both the CD and the completed self-assessment sheet to me for viewing. I comment as appropriate on what the student has noted, add comments of my own, and assign a grade. Students also have the option of holding an individual conference with me to discuss the feedback.

**Scepticism, Disbelief . . . Then Relief**

Students’ reactions to having explicit criteria often border on scepticism and disbelief. A frequent comment is along these lines: “If you tell us exactly what to do and so far in advance, we can prepare and all get a perfect grade.” This reaction is likely a reflection of the type of assessment students are familiar with in gatekeeping courses, where the more knowledgeable students are separated on a bell curve from the less knowledgeable ones. I find that students are not accustomed to being assessed on their ability to perform a skill. The goal, in fact, is for all the students to get a perfect score. A match between learning objectives and student production is sound pedagogy.

A reaction that follows the scepticism is relief. From student comments, I know that the model materials reduce their anxiety about what they have to produce to succeed in the course. Seeing their peers in action creates realistic and manageable expectations for them. Furthermore, this reduced anxiety (i.e., the lowered affective filter; Krashen 1981) should have a positive effect on language learning. For the students I teach, who are all second language learners, the oral presentation is a vehicle for exercising the pronunciation skills they have learned in the course in tandem with the presentation skills. Reduced anxiety generally enhances the quality of their English speech.

Reaction to the new digital video medium has also been positive. At the end of every semester, students can pick up their CDs at my office. Most students do, which indicates that they want their videos and feedback for re-viewing.

**An Efficient, Fair Assessment Method**

Burning presentation videos to CD and having students assess their own performance is efficient for me and advantageous for student learning. First, self-assessment reduces opportunities for grading disputes. If a student cannot identify a certain criterion in his or her own presentation, I cannot be expected to do so, either. Second, grading is less time-consuming because students share the task.

Moreover, videos on CD allow me to meet a pedagogical need: students can play an active role in assessing their oral communication, which affords them the opportunity to develop self-study strategies that may lead to independent improvement. For a course in oral communication, the accessibility of digital technology revitalizes the process of taping and assessing students’ oral work.

Ultimately, the best service you can render students is to help them develop the ability to continue learning without you. You can involve students in assessing their learning through awareness-raising tasks facilitated by an accessible technology. The task objectives must closely correspond to what students can realistically produce, and support in the form of peer-generated models can reinforce realistic expectations and promote student success.

**References**


Carolyn Samuel is a lecturer in the English and French Language Centre of the Faculty of Arts at McGill University, in Canada.

Portal is edited by Mercedes Rossetti (mercedesrossetti@yahoo.com). See http://www.tesol.org/ for submission guidelines.
Penetrating and bracing might describe the elements of Weiss’s own English style. His “guide to writing correspondence, reports, technical documents, and Internet pages for a global audience” is much more than even the book’s lengthy subtitle suggests. Weiss offers advice and poses questions about reducing linguistic burden, the ethics of cultural accommodation, writing for translation, working in varied media, and other facets of using English to communicate with multilingual speakers.

His advice appears as fifty-seven tactics ranging from the conceptual (e.g., “Avoid Business Jargon and Fashionable Business Terms”) to the sensible (e.g., “Break Apart Long Paragraphs”) to the surprising (e.g., “Use Hyphens Aggressively”). The questions following each cluster of tactics are neither prescriptive nor rhetorical: “In most social situations, who should adapt to whom: the host or the guest?”; “Do you find yourself skimming nearly everything you read? What might prevent you from skimming?” Weiss’ ideas, examples, and open-ended queries promote imaginative engagement with issues that affect every professional wordsmith. They also reassure anyone who’s ever been faced with impenetrable prose that it’s the writer, not the reader, who’s responsible for that initial attempt to communicate clearly.

Marilyn Kupetz is a technical writer and editor for a public interest corporation in Virginia, in the United States.

In the early 1960s, U.S. linguist Chomsky (1965) drew attention to “the creative aspect of language use” (p. v). Yet the key concept of linguistic creativity has only been minimally dealt with in the specialized literature of linguistics. To fill this conspicuous gap, British applied linguist Carter has written this volume sharing his experience and expertise on the creativity of users of spoken English.

Topics covered by Carter include linguistic approaches to creativity; creativity and patterns of talk; and creativity, language, and social context.

The last chapter features a brief but enlightening section on creativity of usage in the language classroom.

Carter’s book offers much to language educators. Revealing insights on conversational samples shed new light on the use of creative language. A look at recent handbooks for TESOL professionals shows that the creativity of English language learners does not yet have a significant place in the literature. Carter has therefore provided the profession with a most inspiring and needed source to bring the study of students’ creative uses of English into focus. After reading his book, ESOL teachers will start looking for the visibility of the verb create and the adjective creative in materials and programs. This book is a must for your personal and institutional libraries.

Reference

Francisco Gomes de Matos, an applied linguist, is president of the board of the Brazil America Association, a binational center in Recife.
Do you wish you could send your students to a free Web site to practice pronunciation, grammar, and listening? Or do you need vetted content-area materials? Type “merlot.org” into your browser and sample high-quality learning materials.

MERLOT is a free and open searchable repository of materials generated by educators around the globe. The site offers excellent peer-reviewed English language learning materials (click on World Languages, then ESL) as well as a bounty of native speaker resources in all disciplines (e.g., biology, mathematics, history). There are also collections of materials for the areas of teacher education and teaching with technology.

Founded in 1997, MERLOT is a consortium of twenty-five universities in the United States and Canada that jointly maintain a free and open resource of multimedia resources on the Internet. The MERLOT site is designed primarily for faculty and students in higher education, although a great deal of material is appropriate for high school and even middle school instruction. With the aim of supporting quality instruction, MERLOT provides access to materials that have been reviewed by experts.

The World Languages Editorial Board has reviewed more than 300 of the learning materials in its collection of well over 1,000 sites. Some of the most recent additions to the collection include faculty-generated podcasts for individual student and in-class instructional use. If you face content-area needs, MERLOT can also serve as a resource for a wide range of adaptable content-area materials.

In addition to accessing and contributing instructional materials, you can join the MERLOT community by contributing your own opinions about a learning object (Member Comments) and submit your own ideas for learning assignments using materials on the site. As a member, you will also receive a periodic newsletter, The Grapevine, and be alerted to upcoming MERLOT conferences. Finally, MERLOT publishes the Journal of Online Learning and Teaching (JOLT), an excellent online journal that contains a range of articles on teaching and learning with technology.

In short, MERLOT offers you a one-stop venue for powerful online materials, resources, and community.

Carla Meskill is associate professor of educational theory and practice at the State University of New York at Albany, in the United States, and coeditor of the MERLOT World Languages collection.

The Story of Human Language.
Taught by John McWhorter.

The Story of Human Language is an outstanding course. McWhorter is dynamic and engaging, and his thirty-six lectures of thirty-minutes each are substantial but easy to understand. He begins by explaining what language is and when it began. He discusses language change, talks of assimilation, consonant weakening, and vowel weakening; describes the process of grammaticalization, in which content words become grammatical words; and explains changes in word meanings. Examples are given in English and in a variety of other languages.

Additional lectures cover such topics as language families, dialects, pidgins, creoles, Black English, and language death. In this way, the course provides TESOL professionals with new insights into the English language while describing other languages and contrasting them with English.

Although these lectures are quite expensive (ranging from about US$50 for audiotapes to about US$100 for DVDs), the publisher holds sales several times a year. Also see The Teaching Company’s other excellent offerings for English teachers, such as Seth Lerer’s History of the English Language.

Christine Meloni teaches ESL at Northern Virginia Community College, in the United States.
Software Thumbnails


Comic Life is one of the most enjoyable and possibly most useful recent software tools to hit the market. Not only that, it’s one of the easiest, least expensive, and most powerful tools to use. Running on Macintosh OS 10.3 and above, this software allows users (students or teachers) to create stories, movie posters, photo albums, cards, advertisements, and more. Through Comic Life, users can import photos and graphics from any number of sources and turn them into creative, thoughtful projects. For bilingual and multicultural classes, the newest version of the software also comes with features in six languages.

The process is simple: to start a project, the user chooses a ready-made comic page template and then drags graphics to each of the frames on the page. The graphics are automatically formatted to fit the shape and size of the frame. The user can then add speech balloons, comic lettering, and text.

There are many uses for this software in the ESL/EFL classroom. Some examples follow.

Sequencing: Teachers or students can make comics with the standard square frames, print the page, and then cut the frames apart. Other students can put the frames in order and explain the order they chose.

Vocabulary learning and practice: To make vocabulary learning more interesting and relevant, students can use personal spelling and vocabulary words to create an ongoing story.

Differentiation: Teachers and learners can produce comic strips with other learners in mind. For example, a set of comics can address different takes on the same topic, use different focus vocabulary, or be accompanied by postreading questions at different levels.

Multimodal reading support: Users can provide panels of photos or other graphics to accompany any text. These graphics give students additional clues to the text’s meaning.

Summary writing: Students can turn a reading text into a comic or a narrative text into speech. These short writing tasks do not require as much language as a traditional summary but require students to distill language and connect it with graphics in explicit ways. This might be an effective and very different way for teachers to assess student comprehension.

Humor: Students can create a comic that is humorous to them and then test its giggle-quotient on others.

Comic Life has many of the same features as other desktop publishing programs, but its format and ease of use make it motivating to learn. You can download a free thirty-day trial version of the software from http://plasq.com/.

Joy Egbert is associate professor of ESL and technology and coordinator of the ESL Program at Washington State University, Pullman, in the United States.
Get TOEFL® Practice Online for Your Students

TOEFL Practice Online – the key to success on the TOEFL® iBT.

TOEFL Practice Online offers exclusive ETS test materials and is the ONLY Web site that
- Simulates the real TOEFL iBT testing experience
- Lets students practice all four skills measured on the TOEFL iBT
- Helps students prepare for test day
- Gives INSTANT scores and performance feedback for Reading, Listening and Writing; Speaking section scored by ETS certified raters within five days (instant Speaking scores coming in late 2006)

To learn more visit www.ets.org/toeflpractice100.html
or e-mail ELL@ets.org

Listening. Learning. Leading.

Copyright © 2006 by Educational Testing Service. All rights reserved. ETS, the ETS logo and TOEFL are registered trademarks of Educational Testing Service. 2357
TESOL Goes to Capitol Hill

On June 21, 2006, twenty-two TESOL members representing nineteen U.S.-based affiliates met in Washington, DC, for TESOL Advocacy Day 2006. This event, the first of its kind for TESOL, featured a day of issue briefings and workshops, capped by members visiting congressional offices on Capitol Hill. The goal of Advocacy Day was not only to lobby on key issues for TESOL, but also to provide an interactive learning experience for affiliate representatives focused on elements of advocacy. By the end of the day, TESOL members had visited more than forty representatives and senators.

U.S.-based affiliates were invited at the beginning of the year to nominate a representative for one of twenty slots for the event. Nominees were selected based on various criteria, including membership in TESOL and level of leadership in the affiliate. In addition, nominees were asked to identify their congressional delegation and to commit to doing some preparatory work in advance of TESOL Advocacy Day.

With guidance from TESOL, participants set up their own individual meetings with their congressional representatives. Participants received talking points and background briefings on the topics they would be addressing so that they could begin to familiarize themselves with the key issues in advance. To help make their congressional meetings more effective, participants were encouraged to find examples from their own programs to illustrate the talking points.

TESOL Advocacy Day commenced with a welcome from TESOL President Jun Liu. The participants were also joined by President-Elect Sandy Briggs and by TESOL Board member Brock Brady. The morning workshop was led by John Segota, TESOL's advocacy and communications manager, and included panel briefings on the issues of No Child Left Behind, adult education and the Workforce Investment Act, and student visas. Representatives from organizations such as the Alliance for Excellent Education, the American Association of Intensive English Programs, the National Coalition for Literacy, and NAFSA: Association for International Educators all provided updates on these issues and how organizations were addressing them.

Following these briefings, an interactive workshop was held on how to have an effective meeting with one's congressional representative. This workshop was led by Ellin Nolan and Ellen Fern of Washington Partners, LLC, who serve as TESOL's legislative consultants. Participants were provided key information to prepare for their meetings and given the opportunity to role-play. The purpose of the briefings and the workshop was to help the participants practice and prepare for their meeting on Capitol Hill that afternoon. “The morning briefing provided the substance that made my afternoon meetings succinct and to the point,” said Margaret Silver, who represented MidAmerica TESOL (MIDTESOL). “This has been an invaluable experience that I will recommend to the MIDTESOL affiliate.”

The afternoon was set aside for individual meetings with members of Congress. Participants were required to set up two individual meetings, though some took the initiative to set up three. Although
most participants met with key congressional staff, some had the opportunity to meet with their members of Congress directly. Those who did not get a chance to meet directly with their representatives were not disappointed; members of Congress depend on their staff, so in speaking to the appropriate aide, participants knew they had the ear of the representative.

Over dinner at the end of the day, all the participants shared their experiences and what they had learned. All of the participants agreed that, overall, this event was a very positive experience for them and for TESOL.

“I learned an incredible amount. I feel empowered to get in touch more readily with national and local politicians on issues that are important to me,” said Andrea Poulos, who represented Minnesota TESOL. “I feel like I can honestly urge others to contact politicians because I’ve seen that it matters.”

Donna Allen, who represented Intermountain TESOL (I-TESOL), agreed: “At first I wasn’t sure if this was going to be worth the expense to my affiliate, but it absolutely was worth it. I learned a great deal and hopefully enlightened the Utah and Idaho legislative delegations.” All participants were provided with materials to take back to their affiliates about the event, including information sheets on the issues and grassroots advocacy tips. In addition, the participants agreed to share the experience with their affiliates through their affiliate newsletters and Web sites.

More information about TESOL Advocacy Day, including additional photos and videos of the event, is available on the TESOL Web site. If you are interested in learning more about your congressional representatives and the legislative issues TESOL is tracking, go to the TESOL U.S. Advocacy Action Center at http://capwiz.com/tesol/.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TESOL Advocacy Day 2006 Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donna Allen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brock Brady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandy Briggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Endo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verniece Goode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgette Ioup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl Leeve Huffman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineza Kubeca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun Liu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea Poulos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate Reynolds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlene Ruble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie Saindon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Samawicz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jory Samkoff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry Shearer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shalom Tazewell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Travis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noelle Vance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Weasenforth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy Wilson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New PreK–12 English Language Proficiency Standards

Using TESOL's 1997 landmark publication Pre-K–12 ESL Standards as a building block, a team of prominent TESOL professionals has developed the new PreK–12 English Language Proficiency Standards (subtitled An Augmentation of the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment Consortium (WIDA) English Language Proficiency Standards). The new standards provide a conceptual framework and sample performance outcomes to help educators who design, conduct, and oversee instruction and assessment for English language learners (ELLs).

Whereas the 1997 Pre-K–12 ESL Standards focused on using English to succeed across academic content areas, the 2006 revised standards are linked to individual content areas. The five standards target language in social/intercultural interactions, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.
These standards augment the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards developed by the multistate World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment Consortium and incorporate academic content standards from TESOL, National Council of Teachers of English, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, International Reading Association, National Research Council, and the National Council for Social Studies. The diagram below illustrates the blending of standards in the development of TESOL’s English Language Proficiency Standards.

The 2006 standards acknowledge the social and intercultural aspects of language development by using students’ native languages and cultures as the foundation for developing academic English language proficiency. The standards have been structured to synchronize with recent U.S. federal legislation.

For each standard, the 2006 volume presents sample performance indicators in user-friendly matrices organized

- by grade-level cluster: PreK–K, 1–3, 4–5, 6–8, and 9–12.
- by language domain: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- by proficiency level: starting, emerging, developing, expanding, and bridging.

The matrices reflect the interaction of the five language proficiency levels with each language domain. The following sample matrix shows possible performance outcomes for Standard 3 (mathematics) at Grade-Level Cluster 1–3 for the reading domain at each of the five proficiency levels.

---

**PreK–12 English Language Proficiency Standards: An Augmentation of the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment Consortium (WIDA) English Language Proficiency Standards**

**Standard 1:** English language learners communicate for social, intercultural, and instructional purposes within the school setting.

**Standard 2:** English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of language arts.

**Standard 3:** English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of mathematics.

**Standard 4:** English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of science.

**Standard 5:** English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of social studies.
In addition to the matrices, the 2006 standards outline specific ways to implement the standards by planning instruction and assessment, transforming the elements of a sample performance indicator, and collaborating with other educators. Detailed appendixes list source documents, articles on related topics, and curriculum documents by U.S. state.

To find out more about the PreK–12 English Language Proficiency Standards, and to purchase a copy, visit TESOL’s home page (http://www.tesol.org/), and click on Product Catalog.

TESOL Board Approves Two New Position Statements, Member Resolution
At its recent meeting, the TESOL Board of Directors approved two new position statements. The statements, addressing immigration reform in the United States and principles for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act are available online.

In addition, the TESOL Board approved the Member Resolution in Support of Professional Development Credit for Part-Time, Adjunct, and Contingent Faculty, which was approved at the Annual Business Meeting at the 2006 TESOL Convention. The language from the resolution has been amended to TESOL’s Position Paper on Equitable Treatment for Part-Time, Adjunct, and Contingent Faculty. The revised position statement is available online.

2006 Symposia
The TESOL Symposium on Words Matter: The Importance of Vocabulary on English Teaching and Learning took place March 27 at Dubai Men’s College, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The featured speakers were Tom Cobb, Montreal, Canada; Michael McCarthy, Nottingham, United Kingdom; and Ron Carter, Nottingham, United Kingdom. David Palfreyman, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, provided closing remarks.

The TESOL Symposium on English Teacher Development in EFL Contexts will take place November 10 at Shantou University, in Guangdong Province, China.

For more information, contact edprograms@tesol.org.
2006 Online Courses and Seminars

Learn about online professional development opportunities through TESOL, including the Principles and Practices of Online Teaching Certificate Program and TESOL virtual seminars. TESOL virtual seminars focus on key issues in ESL and EFL. Bring together colleagues at your school or organization for a live Webcast (or, when it fits your schedule, use the virtual seminar’s playback feature). Virtual seminar participants can also take part in an online discussion. For more information, e-mail edprograms@tesol.org.

E-List Subscriptions Have New Features

The interest section (IS) and caucus e-lists have new features that enable members to manage their own subscriptions. You can now set and change the preferences for your e-list connections, such as changing the e-mail address and setting subscriptions to digest mode.

For these features to take effect, you will need to edit your member profile on the TESOL Web site. If you are currently subscribed to IS and caucus e-lists, you will need to check “Join Your IS or Caucus E-list” in your member profile to remain on your respective e-lists. Note: If you did not edit your member profile by May 1, you were automatically unsubscribed from your e-lists, and you will need to resubscribe.

To use these new features, go to http://www.tesol.org/: Association : Communities : Standing Committees of TESOL : Publications Standing Committee. Applications are due October 1, 2006.

Improved Member Application and Renewal

TESOL has changed the way members may transact membership business online. When you join or renew online, all financial transactions are live. You will become an active member immediately after you have completed the transaction, with no more waiting to hear if your payment has been processed.

Members now have two online options for renewing their TESOL memberships. After logging on to the TESOL Web site, they should select Renew. If members have no changes to make to their membership record, they may use the Quick Renew option. If members wish to make any changes to their record, they should select Membership Application and make the necessary changes.

These options are designed to make it easier for members to renew their TESOL membership.
Renew Early to Avoid Delays during Convention Preregistration Process

If you plan to attend the TESOL 2007 convention in Seattle, Washington, USA, in March 2007, and plan to wait to renew your membership as part of the preregistration process, you may want to renew when your invoice appears instead. The convention preregistration process will no longer include the opportunity to renew membership or join TESOL. Registrants will be referred to the TESOL Web site instead.

Members can now renew online instantly and avoid the weeks of delay that result from renewing as part of the convention preregistration process. By renewing membership online, members should incur no delays regarding the status of their membership during convention preregistration.

Easy Access to E-Newsletter Subscriptions

New or renewing members are now automatically subscribed to their respective interest section or caucus e-newsletters. To manage e-newsletter subscriptions, simply log on to the TESOL Web site at http://www.tesol.org, select Edit Profile, and navigate to the Communication Options tab. You can opt to receive the e-newsletters for all of the interest sections and caucuses you belong to or for none of them.

Celebrate World Teachers Day

TESOL invites you to celebrate World Teachers Day by honoring your favorite teacher or teacher educator. You can recognize a special ESL or EFL professional by making a US$20, U.S. tax-deductible contribution to TESOL in the teacher’s name. TESOL will send honorees a special thank-you and a certificate honoring the teacher for service and dedication to the profession. For more information visit TESOL’s World Teachers Day Web site at http://www.tesol.org/:
Professional Development : World Teachers Day. Be sure to include the name and teaching venue of the honoree with your donation.

The 2007 Board of Directors and Nominating Committee Slate

The 2007 Board of Directors and Nominating Committee slate shown below has been posted. Visit http://www.tesol.org/, under Association. Voting will begin in October 2006 and end in early January 2007.

President-elect, 2007–2008
(to become President, 2008–2009)

Mark Algren
The University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas, USA

Shelley Wong
George Mason University
Fairfax, Virginia, USA

Board of Directors, 2007–2010

Deena Boraie
American University in Cairo
Cairo, Egypt

Andy Curtis
Independent Consultant
Ontario, Canada

Marcia Fisk Ong
Independent Writer
Phuket, Thailand

Elizabeth Franklin
University of Northern Colorado
Greeley, Colorado, USA

Božana Knežević
University of Rijeka
Rijeka, Croatia

Christopher Sauer
Divine Word College
Epworth, Iowa, USA

Nominating Committee (2007–2008)
Representing Eight Major Groups

Adult Education Programs
Trudy Lothian
Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board
Ontario, Canada
Kirsten Schaeftel
The Center for Applied Linguistics
Washington, District of Columbia, USA

Affiliates
Ulrich Bliessener
University of Hildesheim
Hanover, Germany
Natalie Kuhlman
San Diego State University
San Diego, California, USA

Elementary and Secondary Education Programs
Judie Haynes
River Edge Board of Education
River Edge, New Jersey, USA
Glynis Terrell
Atlanta Public Schools
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Interest Sections
Jane Hoelker
Qatar University
Doha, Qatar

Researchers
Gerald P. Berent
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rochester, New York, USA
Candace Harper
University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida, USA

Higher Education Programs
Fabiola Ehlers-Zavala
Colorado State University
Colorado, USA
Craig Machado
Norwalk Community College
Norwalk, Connecticut, USA

Intensive English Programs and Bicultural Centers
Fernando Fleurquin
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA
Philip Less
Arkansas Department of Workforce Education
Little Rock, Arkansas, USA

Members can now renew online instantly and avoid the weeks of delay that result from renewing as part of the convention preregistration process. By renewing membership online, members should incur no delays regarding the status of their membership during convention preregistration.

Easy Access to E-Newsletter Subscriptions

New or renewing members are now automatically subscribed to their respective interest section or caucus e-newsletters. To manage e-newsletter subscriptions, simply log on to the TESOL Web site at http://www.tesol.org, select Edit Profile, and navigate to the Communication Options tab. You can opt to receive the e-newsletters for all of the interest sections and caucuses you belong to or for none of them.

Celebrate World Teachers Day

TESOL invites you to celebrate World Teachers Day by honoring your favorite teacher or teacher educator. You can recognize a special ESL or EFL professional by making a US$20, U.S. tax-deductible contribution to TESOL in the teacher’s name. TESOL will send honorees a special thank-you and a certificate honoring the teacher for service and dedication to the profession. For more information visit TESOL’s World Teachers Day Web site at http://www.tesol.org/:
Professional Development : World Teachers Day. Be sure to include the name and teaching venue of the honoree with your donation.
Think Outside the Bubble

New Program!

Leap into Science Vocabulary and Improve Test Scores!

Introducing Passwords: Science Vocabulary, a new research-based series that strengthens students’ content literacy. The considerate text structure supports intermediate level English Language Learners as they master science vocabulary and concepts. Covering life, physical, and earth science concepts, the versatile program provides ALL students with preparation for standards-based science testing — an NCLB requirement in 2007.

The Passwords: Science Vocabulary series:

- Contains multi-step lessons based on Marzano and Pickering’s recommendations for teaching new terms
- Engages all students with differentiated listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities
- Includes an illustrated glossary with definitions and pronunciations

WIN a FREE Classroom Set — a $216 Value

25 Passwords: Science Vocabulary Books and 1 T.G.

Enter at www.CurriculumAssociates.com/bubble7

A winner will be drawn each month:

October, November, December 2006

FROM THE PUBLISHER OF THE:

CARS® and STARS® • TEST READY® • BRIGANCE® • WRITE® • QUICK-WORD® Programs
New Ways in TESOL Series

Activities for Teachers, by Teachers

TESOL’s popular New Ways Series provides a forum for English language teachers from many different teaching and learning contexts to share professional knowledge gleaned from years of classroom practice. The series’ 20 volumes cover a broad range of practical topics relevant to English language teaching, including reading, listening, speaking, writing, content-based instruction, assessment, teaching culture, technology in the classroom. These books are useful for teacher education and professional development, as well as for teachers who need inspiration or just some new ideas for what to do on Monday morning.

Order Online at www.tesol.org
TESOL 2006 Sponsors

PLATINUM +
Cambridge University Press
Educational Testing Service

PLATINUM
The Hampton Brown Company
Harcourt Achieve
LeapFrog SchoolHouse

GOLD
Education Research & Development (R&D) Training Service
Harcourt Achieve
McGraw-Hill ELS
National Geographic School Publishing
Santillana Publishing
Thomson-Heinle
University of Central Florida
University of South Florida

SILVER
AmidEast
GES Exposition Service
Kaplan English Programs
University of Houston-Downtown

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.
This easy-to-use handbook is an essential resource for anyone who needs to write English correspondence and other documents for an international business audience. In an engaging, accessible style, it integrates the theory and controversies of intercultural communication with the practical skills of writing and editing English for those who read it as a second language.
Managing ESL Programs in Rural and Small Urban Schools

This resource offers aid and comfort to the ESL manager in U.S. rural and small urban communities. It describes how a small program of services can fit into the standards movement and how to staff such a program.

This volume will guide you through the challenges and offer the tools necessary to support an ESL program. It contains a wealth of suggestions for instruction, student assessment, program evaluation, parent and community involvement, and multimedia resources.

A practical and timely guide for the ESL manager, this is a volume to use, to share, and to revisit often.

Order # 919
ISBN 0-939791-91-9
$30.95 ($22.95 member)

More Than a Native Speaker
Don Snow
Revised edition

This book offers a nontechnical introduction to English teaching for native-English-speaking teachers working outside their home countries. It covers classroom survival skills, lesson planning, and adapting to life in a new country, along with detailed discussions of how to teach listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and culture.

New to this revised edition are an expanded discussion of student-directed language learning, workbook activities for volunteer teachers enrolled in courses or studying the book individually, and a full array of culture-based discussion topics for use as supplementary activities or core material for an English course.

Order No. 325
Member $27.95
Nonmember $36.95
TESOL presents...

PreK-12 English Language Proficiency Standards

Expanding the scope and breadth of TESOL’s 1997 publication, ESL Standards for Pre-K - 12 Students

This volume provides an invaluable resource for each and every educator of English language learners and a model for states and districts.

This volume:

- Connects language to the core curriculum content areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies
- Values students' native languages and cultures as the foundation for developing academic language proficiency
- Acknowledges the social and intercultural aspects of language development
- Provides an organizational structure that is synchronized with U.S. federal legislation

Order# 318
ISBN: 1-931185-31-8
TESOL Members: $18.50
Nonmembers: $28.00

Order online at www.tesol.org

This volume provides an invaluable resource for each and every educator of English language learners and a model for states and districts.

Also available: the Rigby ELL Assessment Kit, the first tool aligned with TESOL’s PreK-12 English Language Proficiency Standards. Available online at http://rigby.harcourttachieve.com

TESOL presents...

PreK-12 English Language Proficiency Standards

Expanding the scope and breadth of TESOL’s 1997 publication, ESL Standards for Pre-K - 12 Students

This volume provides an invaluable resource for each and every educator of English language learners and a model for states and districts.

This volume:

- Connects language to the core curriculum content areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies
- Values students' native languages and cultures as the foundation for developing academic language proficiency
- Acknowledges the social and intercultural aspects of language development
- Provides an organizational structure that is synchronized with U.S. federal legislation

Order# 318
ISBN: 1-931185-31-8
TESOL Members: $18.50
Nonmembers: $28.00

Order online at www.tesol.org

This volume provides an invaluable resource for each and every educator of English language learners and a model for states and districts.

Also available: the Rigby ELL Assessment Kit, the first tool aligned with TESOL’s PreK-12 English Language Proficiency Standards. Available online at http://rigby.harcourttachieve.com
When a student succeeds, everyone succeeds. For ESL students, the possibilities are endless when they learn to speak, read, write and understand English. Rosetta Stone® language-learning software helps make this possible every day in U.S. schools.

> Every step of the way, our Dynamic Immersion™ method provides audio and visual feedback; so they know they're getting it right.

> Students of any age or ability are challenged at their own pace and level through customizable curricula.

> Tracking their success is simple with our integrated Student Management System.

> Stunning imagery, native speakers, real-life contexts and hands-on interaction keeps students engaged.