



## Table of Contents:

- President's Message.....1
- Officers.....1
- Featured article.....2
- Conference News .....4
- Announcements .....5
- Treasurer's report.....5
- SIG news.....6
- Articles by our members.....9

Don't miss an opportunity to publish in your professional newsletter!!!

Contact the newsletter editors at [eslsnoke@vt.edu](mailto:eslsnoke@vt.edu), [lbatkinson@vcu.edu](mailto:lbatkinson@vcu.edu), or [lopesmsa@jmu.edu](mailto:lopesmsa@jmu.edu)

Next deadline is February 15, 2010!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

*VATESOL is a professional organization dedicated to promoting professional development, strengthening instruction, and supporting research opportunities at all levels for teachers and administrators of ESL/EFL/ESOL.*

## Message from the President

Dear Colleagues,

Like some of you, I lead a double life. I am an elementary ESOL teacher by day and a college ESL instructor by night. I am fortunate to work in both settings and be a part of an organization such as VATESOL that is designed to engage and support ESL professionals at all levels.

I am proud of the work VATESOL has accomplished. We have further developed our relationship with Southeast TESOL (SETESOL), expanded our web site, successfully implemented online membership and conference registration for a second year, grown our membership, and have maintained an active group of committed VATESOL leaders throughout the state. We have also worked to meet the needs of our members by providing conferences that focus on issues that are of importance to members in their work with English learners.

The goals for the 2009-2010 are to: review our administrative organization and the responsibilities of our officers, maintain active communication with TESOL, continue to build our



relationship with SETESOL, and plan and prepare for VATESOL's 2011 SETESOL Conference.

In October 2011, VATESOL will be hosting the SETESOL Conference in Richmond. The SETESOL conference will be a regional, multi-day conference with attendance rates expected to approach 1,000. Lily Mir-Jahangiri is our SETESOL Liaison and Conference Chair.

This will be a busy planning year as VATESOL prepares for SETESOL, and a few dedicated leaders cannot do it all. VATESOL is your professional association. In order to provide an effective conference for teachers at all levels, VATESOL needs representation and participation from educators at K-12, adult education, higher education, and teacher education. We need ESL professionals from all regions of Virginia to assist with the conference. Students are welcome too. Please contact (continued next page)

## 2009 -2010 Board

### President & Liaison to TESOL

Jennifer Kuchno

### 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

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Jo Tyler

### Legislative Liaison

Denise Ricks

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Liz Bowles

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### Chair

Natasha McKellar

(continued President’s Message from page 1)

Please contact a Special Interest Group (SIG) leader or Board member below if you or your students can help. This is an excellent opportunity to network with other ESL professionals, gain leadership experience, and support the state’s TESOL affiliate. Newcomers are welcome and encouraged to participate.

**VATESOL’s Special Interest Group (SIG) Chairs**

|                                  |   |   |  |
|----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| <b>Adult Education</b>           | William Chambers                        | Best Academy, Springfield, VA;<br>Fairfax County Adult Continuing Education | <a href="mailto:wlc19@earthlink.net">wlc19@earthlink.net</a>   |
| <b>Higher Education</b>          | Laura Ray                               | Old Dominion University   | <a href="mailto:lray@odu.edu">lray@odu.edu</a>   |
| <b>Secondary Education</b>       | Margaret Overton<br>Christine Urynowicz | Henrico County Schools<br>Prince William County Schools                     | <a href="mailto:maoverton@henrico.k12.va.us">maoverton@henrico.k12.va.us</a><br><a href="mailto:christine.urynowicz@mpark.net">christine.urynowicz@mpark.net</a> |
| <b>Elementary Education</b>      | Margaret Whitt                          | Roanoke County Public Schools   | <a href="mailto:margaretwhitt@comcast.net">margaretwhitt@comcast.net</a>   |
| <b>Teacher Ed/Administration</b> | Jo Tyler                                | University of Mary Washington   | <a href="mailto:jtyler@umw.edu">jtyler@umw.edu</a>   |

SETESOL Conference Chair: Lily Mir-Jahangiri [lily\\_mj@hotmail.com](mailto:lily_mj@hotmail.com)

VATESOL President: Jennifer Kuchno [jkuchno@gmail.com](mailto:jkuchno@gmail.com)

VATESOL Vice President: Laurie Weinberg [lweinberg@reynolds.edu](mailto:lweinberg@reynolds.edu)

I look forward to working with you to support English language teaching in Virginia and across the region. Have a great year!

Jennifer Kuchno  
VATESOL President

**Featured article**

**Engaging in Collaboration for a Greater Language Teaching & Language Learning Experience**

By Solange A. Lopes-Murphy, James Madison University

I would like to share a collaborative activity conducted at James Madison University on Sunday, October 18, 2009. It involved taking adult language learners and their families to a planetarium viewing. The activity was designed by three faculty members representing three different areas on campus: Dr. Solange A. Lopes-Murphy, Associate Professor in Teaching as a Second Language (TESL) in the Department of Exceptional Education, Mr. William

Alexander, Assistant Professor in the Physics Department and Director of the Planetarium at JMU, and Mr. Stephen Lambert, English as a Second Language (ESL) Lead Teacher in the JMU Career Development Academy (CDA).

Adult language learners seek the CDA for English classes to help them develop the communicative skills that will enable them to transition more easily into their new community. These learners represent a variety of cultures, language backgrounds, professional expertise, and proficiency levels in English. The goal of this activity was then to provide these learners and their families with a whole-family language rich learning

experience through a planetarium viewing session to enrich their background knowledge, provide vocabulary expansion, and stimulate communicative language use and practice beyond the context of the classroom.

To reach this goal, several steps needed to be considered prior to the actual event. The first involved submitting the activity to the JMU Internal Review Board (IRB) for approval. Once approved the logistics of the activity started. Flyers were developed to advertise the event. Because seats in the planetarium were limited to 62 viewers in one given session, advertisement of the activity was restricted to the groups taught by Mr. Lambert. Two planetarium viewing shows were made available – one in English and one in Spanish – at two different times.

The next step involved creating a PowerPoint presentation for recruitment purposes. The presentation explained what a visit to the planetarium entailed and what participants should expect in such a visit. Those interested in participating in the activity entered their name, the name(s) and age(s) of participating family members, and country of origin.

Once participants were identified (a total of 107 participants), Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) minors in the College of Education provided tutorials to the adult learners on the vocabulary and language that would be used during the planetarium visit. TESL minors also developed post-viewing activities (crossword puzzle and word search) for families to work together and engage in expanded opportunities for vocabulary practice and language development.

On the day of the planetarium visit (10/18), TESL minors met CDA participants in Memorial Hall, divided them up in 6 groups of approximately 10 individuals each. Each group was given direction cards with walking directions from Memorial Hall to Miller Hall (Planetarium site). Each group was accompanied by a TESL minor to make sure directions were followed correctly. Each team received different directions to prevent groups from simply following the team ahead of them. The purpose was to give these learners increased

opportunities to follow directions and reinforce what they were learning in their CDA classes.

At the end of each show, participants were asked to fill out a simple questionnaire where they shared their opinion on the value of the experience for their language learning efforts. The responses on the questionnaire showed that participants thought this was a rather interesting and valuable learning experience for them. As a result, we plan to duplicate this activity spring 2010. Our goal this second time around is to invite individuals from the community as well as those in the Career Development Academy at JMU.

This experience was also very well received by TESL minors. Below are the opinions of some.

*“As a teacher in training, the planetarium activity gave me the hands on experience that I needed to better understand the importance and reality of putting the techniques we learn in class into practice. It gave me insight to a perspective and to a community that I had never previously been exposed to. It really helped me put theory into practice while gaining exposure and one-on-one contact with ELLs in the surrounding community. For me, it made the possibility of becoming an ESL teacher even more real and it emphasized how rewarding of a career it will be when I saw the excitement and enthusiasm of the ELLs participating in the planetarium activity.”* By Kendell Pepe

*“I think this planetarium event was a great opportunity to meet with ELL parents. It is hard to get a chance to talk to parents in comfortable situations such as this one. If we set up an ‘official’ time to meet with ELL’s parents, it can be hard for them to talk or to share their opinions, but this planetarium event allowed instructors to talk to them in natural environment, and it made them to be relieved by some pressures that they might have. Also, this event was in two languages, which are Spanish and English, and I thought that was very considerable because a lot of ELL’s parents do not speak English very well, and providing this event in another language other than English could help them to understand better. It was the first time with this event, so I think a lot of people was unaware of what this event was. However, for the next time, it*

*will be much better and I am willing to help again."*

By Sun Shim

*"I participated in this planetarium activity with my course on Methods of Teaching ESL. While teaching a class of adult English Language Learners before the planetarium activity, we discussed the things they would be seeing at the planetarium. Through teaching the important concepts around the idea of a planetarium, we talked about the meanings of words such as constellations, planets, galaxy, and nebulae. Teaching such complex words was difficult, but this activity taught me a lot about how to teach difficult material to ELLs. I learned how*

*important body language is, as well as the tone and enthusiasm in which the subject is being taught. These aspects of teaching are so important to convey one's message and make students excited and engaged with what they are learning. I take away from this experience more understanding of how to teach English, and how to excite students about learning."* By Mary Jones

*Webmaster Ross Retterer and new Treasurer Charlotte Young man the registration desk – thanks!*



## VATESOL 2009 Conference review

*by Jennifer Kuchno, President, Conference Chair 2009*

**2009 Fall Conference: ESL Newcomers: Teachers and Students**



*Outgoing VATESOL President Tanya Gray and new Past President/ Nomination Chair*

On October 3, 2009 Tidewater Community College hosted the annual VATESOL fall conference *ESL Newcomers:*

*Teachers and Students.* Judie Haynes of *Everything ESL* was the keynote speaker. The conference was very successful and we reached the maximum number of attendees permitted by TCC. Judie Haynes sold out of her book, *Getting Started with English Language Learners: How Educators Can Meet the Challenge.* Registration went smoothly and even more people registered online this year than last year. The session evaluations were overwhelmingly positive, and Adult Education SIG's William Chambers' session *Using Music to Build the Class Community* was submitted by VATESOL as "Best of Affiliate" to TESOL.

Thank you to the following for contributing to the success of the conference:

Venue Sponsor: Tidewater Community College – Virginia Beach Campus; Susan Boland, ESL Program Director

2009 Fall Conference Committee: Jennifer Kuchno, Tanya Gray, Charlotte Young, Laura Ray, Natasha McKeller, Ross Retterer, William Chambers, Margaret Overton, Margaret Whitt, Jo Tyler, Lily Mir-Jahangiri

Conference Presenters (in order of session)

- Robert Fugate, Virginia Department of Education
- Deborah A. Westin, Ph.D., Chesterfield County Public Schools Adult Education
- Marla McClintock, Chesterfield County Public Schools Adult Education
- Laurie Weinberg, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College
- William Chambers, Fairfax County (VA) Adult Continuing Education
- Lauren Ellington, Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center
- Patricia E. Reynolds, University of Mary Washington
- Kim Norvell, Chesterfield County Schools



Board members: Back: Laurie Weinberg, Laura Ray\*, Jen Kuchno, Charlotte Young\*, Lily Mir-Jahangiri, Front: Jo Tyler, Seonhee Cho, Leslie Bohon, Tanya Gray, Virginia Clark\*. Not pictured: Ross Retterer, Chris, Denise Ricks, Margaret Whitt, Margaret Overton, William Chambers, Christine Urynowicz\*, Joya Hricko\*, Susan Neu, Natasha McKellar, Judy Snoke, Solange Lopes-Murphy, Liz Bowles \*new Board member

- Rebecca Waters, Educate VA, the Career Switcher Program -VA's Community Colleges
- Julia Tucker-Lloyd, Educate VA
- Karin Rohmann, Educate VA
- Betsy Conyers, Educate VA
- Solange A. Lopes-Murphy, Ph.D., James Madison University
- Dawn Knight, Page County Public Schools
- Dr. Jo Tyler, University of Mary Washington
- Elisa Tucker, Loudoun County Public Schools
- Jamie Sturgis, Old Dominion University
- Sabrena Groseclose, Rockingham County Public Schools
- Christine Hoppe, Virginia Beach Adult Learning Center, Old Dominion University
- Judie Haynes, Everything ESL
- Virginia A. Cabasa-Hess, Northern Virginia Community College
- Jim Toepper, Northern Virginia Community

- College
- Tim Schleeter, Northern Virginia Community College
- Peter Snow, Ph.D., Christopher Newport University
- Leslie Bohon, Virginia Commonwealth University
- Seonhee Cho, Ph.D. Virginia Commonwealth University
- Judy S. Richardson, Ph.D. Fulbright Scholar: Tetevo and Bitola, Macedonia
- Jiuhan Huang, Ed.D, Regent University
- Dr. Andrea Todd, Virginia Tech Language and Culture Institute
- Kimberly Oxley, Harrisonburg City Public Schools
- Laura Feichtinger-McGrath, Harrisonburg City Public School

## Announcements!!!

**Congratulations** to our Adult Ed SIG Chair **William Chamber** on his TWO presentations at the New York State TESOL at their convention in White Plains, NY on November 13-14, 2009. Bill grew up only 20 minutes from White Plains and was delighted to be a part of their convention!

From John Segota, TESOL Advocacy:  
 Dear Affiliates,  
 At its recent meeting, the TESOL Board of Directors approved a revision to the *Position Statement on Teaching English as a Foreign or Additional Language to Young Learners*. A copy of the revised position statement is attached; it is also available on the TESOL website at <http://www.tesol.org/PositionStatements>. Please share this information with your members.  
 Regards, John Segota

### VATESOL Treasury Report

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| <b>Balance 06/05/09:</b>  | \$7249.94        |
| Membership conference Dues and Vendor Fees paid since 06/05/09: | \$5389.23        |
| Conference Expenditures:  |                  |
| Breakfast.....  | \$344.53         |
| Lunch.....  | \$705.58         |
| Speaker.....  | \$1000.00        |
| Tech Support (both locations).....                              | \$.550.00        |
| Supplies.....   | \$385.88         |
| <b>Balance as of 12/01/09:</b>                                  | <b>\$9760.15</b> |

Send information  
and concerns to  
your SIG Chairs!  
Use emails below.

# Special Interest Group (SIG) News

**Message from Jo, Tyler, Teacher  
Ed/Program Admin SIG Chair**  
[jtyler@umw.edu](mailto:jtyler@umw.edu)  
**Universities Stepping Up to Meet Virginia's  
ESOL Needs:  
Teacher Education and Licensure Programs  
Profiled**

Each year the Virginia Department of Education compiles a list of the "Top 10 Critical Shortage Teaching Endorsement Areas in Virginia." Nearly every year, ESL has appeared on that list, and this year it is in the fourth slot—the highest need ranking for ESL teachers reported by the VDOE since they began keeping track in 1999! The good news is that Virginia universities are stepping up to meet this growing need by expanding established teacher education programs for ESL and to develop new ones.

Two events this year have highlighted the wide variety of ESOL teacher education programs in Virginia universities. In May, the Virginia ESL Supervisors Association (VESA) hosted a panel of teacher education program directors from seven universities in the Commonwealth. In October, members of the Teacher Education/Program Administration Special Interest Group of VATESOL met to discuss programs at four Virginia universities. These discussions revealed that opportunities for ESOL teacher training and licensure are expanding rapidly throughout the state.

Virtually every region of Virginia now has one or more professional development opportunities for teachers to become licensed for K-12 education in the field of English as a second language. All of

paragraphs, I will summarize some of the information about the programs discussed at the VESA and VATESOL forums earlier this year.

*George Mason University*, located in Fairfax, has one of the oldest and most prestigious ESOL programs in the country. Their initial licensure program for ESOL is the M.Ed. in curriculum and instruction with a specialization in ESL. Information is available at <http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/esl/>. They also offer a graduate certificate in ESL, as well as a Ph.D. in Multicultural/Multilingual Education, all through their Graduate School of Education. In addition they offer programs in their English Department for individuals interested in teaching English overseas or in adult programs.

*James Madison University*, located in Harrisonburg, offers programs for added endorsement in ESL at the undergraduate and graduate levels. They also have 18-credit undergraduate minor in TESL, which requires additional education courses for initial licensure. For more information, visit

<http://www.jmu.edu/coe/exed/teachingesl.shtml>.

*Liberty University*, located in Lynchburg, offers an undergraduate major in ESL. This major includes courses for initial licensure in ESL. For more information, visit

<http://www.liberty.edu/index.cfm?PID=680>.

*Old Dominion University*, located in Norfolk, offers a M.A. in Applied Linguistics with an emphasis in TESOL. This program includes an option for an added licensure endorsement in ESL. They also have a graduate Certificate in TESOL for individuals interested in teaching English overseas or

in adult education programs. For more information, visit

[http://al.odu.edu/english/academics/ma\\_linguistics.shtml](http://al.odu.edu/english/academics/ma_linguistics.shtml). ODU also has additional academic programs in Latin American Studies (undergraduate) and International Studies (graduate).

**Regent University**, located in Virginia Beach, offers both certificates and graduate programs for individuals interested in teaching ESOL in K-12 settings, adult or college settings, and abroad. They have a M.Ed. in TESOL that includes an optional added licensure endorsement. One highlight of this program is that it is a hybrid, which means that courses are offered online in combination with on-campus weekend or summer classes. For more information visit

<http://www.regent.edu/acad/schedu/masters-tesol/>.

**University of Mary Washington**, located in Fredericksburg, offers M.Ed. degrees with initial licensure or with added endorsement in ESL, as well as a graduate certificate program for added endorsement without the degree. For more information, visit

[http://www.umw.edu/publications/catalog\\_cgps/academic\\_programs/master\\_education.php](http://www.umw.edu/publications/catalog_cgps/academic_programs/master_education.php).

**University of Virginia**, located in Charlottesville, offers a Master of Teaching, which is a 5-year undergraduate/graduate degree program, as well as a 2-year post-graduate Master of Teaching for those who already have a Bachelor's degree in another field. Candidates may pursue ESL licensure as an added endorsement area in these degree programs. For more information, visit

<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/program-descriptions-teachereducation-215?task=view>.

**Virginia Tech**, located in Blacksburg, offers both Masters and Doctoral degrees, through its School of Education, in the area of second language education, including TESOL. The M.A.Ed. program offers initial licensure, as well as added-endorsement and professional development options for those who are already licensed to teach in another area. For more information, visit

<http://www.soe.vt.edu/secondlanguage/programs.html>.

In addition, Virginia Tech offers a pre-education undergraduate English major in Literature,

Language, and Culture Studies through its English Department.

**Virginia Commonwealth University**, located in Richmond, offers a graduate level program for pre-service or in-service teachers leading toward an added license endorsement in ESL. For more information, visit

<http://www.soe.vcu.edu/departments/tl/programs.html>.

In addition to these schools, whose TESOL programs were represented at the May VESA meeting and/or the October VATESOL conference, there are several other Universities in Virginia that offer courses for those interested in teaching English as a second or foreign language, including: **Eastern Mennonite University**, **Marymount University**, **Shenandoah University**, and the **University of Richmond**. New programs are emerging every year, so there may be others out there!

**Jo Tyler** is chair of the Teacher Education/Program Administration SIG and VATESOL's liaison to VESA. She is professor of linguistics and education at the University of Mary Washington.

### Message from Laura Ray, Higher Ed SIG Chair

[lray@odu.edu](mailto:lray@odu.edu)

### Report from the Higher Ed meeting at the Fall Conference

At the 2009 VATESOL Fall Conference, the Higher Ed SIG convened in a brief break-out session over lunch. After determining that the Higher Ed SIG is comprised of individuals coming from a number of Higher Ed contexts (i.e. intensive English programs, teacher-training programs, and ELL services), a number of relevant issues were discussed. One current issue is the alignment of expectations between K-12 and Higher Education. Many of us have found that international students who have gone through ESOL programs in high school are often not prepared to enter the university, particularly when it comes to their reading and writing skills. This can be frustrating for Higher Ed teachers and students alike, because the students often don't have the

higher level vocabulary, for instance, required to perform at the university level. Suggestions were made in terms of how a support system can be established, including working with high school teachers to integrate and align the K-12/Higher Ed curriculums, and determining how we can assess needs by looking at SOL requirements. Finally, we discussed how “Generation 1.5” students have specific issues, particularly when it comes to being placed in ESL vs. developmental classes designed for native speakers upon entering college. One distinct concern is that of the stigma resulting from the “deficiency standard” of developmental classes. The Higher Ed SIG hopes to continue the dialogue on these important issues, and will be in contact via e-mail and the VATESOL website. -Laura Ray, Higher Ed SIG Leader

**Message from Chris Urynowicz, Secondary Education SIG Co-Chair**

[christine.urynowicz@mpark.net](mailto:christine.urynowicz@mpark.net)

**“What a Wonderful Opportunity to Share Information”**

It was a wonderful day at the fall conference filled with extraordinary and talented informational speakers! Judy Haynes, our key note speaker, was exceptional in delivering a wealth of information for educators as well as administrators working with ELLs. You must visit her web site, <http://www.everythingsl.net>. for a plethora of information concerning English Language Learners (ELLs).

I do want to take this opportunity to mention that as a new member of the board, I am committed to assisting ESL teachers in the commonwealth with assistance in providing the best teaching methods, discourse of ELL problems and success stories, and help in the field of ESOL that I am able to relate to those who need the assistance.

I do have a very important question to ask of those interested parties reading the newsletter and I hope that I can gain some insight as well as email conversations concerning my dilemma. I do so want to get other teachers and educators involved in the process of considering the answer to my question by

talking to other educators, teachers, administrators, and of course our state representatives.

My question is: Considering the fact that VDOE has determined that an ELL student is literate by completing the WIDA Testing Assessment by taking a Tier C Assessment and that assessment results in a score of 4.8 or higher, (thus creating a level of literacy for that ELL student) how is it that we ESL teachers and others are using the VGLA portfolio assessment in lieu of the Reading SOL Assessment in the state of Virginia? How is it possible for a Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 ELL student who is assessed with the WIDA at Tier A or Tier B to use the VGLA Assessment in lieu of a reading SOL when the established literacy level for ELL students is a WIDA Tier C Assessment that results in a score of 4.8 or higher? I don't know the answer to this question, but I would love hearing from newsletter readers on this one. I can be reached at [Christine.urynowicz@mpark.net](mailto:Christine.urynowicz@mpark.net)

**Margaret Whitt, Elementary Education SIG Chair**

[mwhitt@rcs.k12.va.us](mailto:mwhitt@rcs.k12.va.us)

**William Chambers, Adult Ed SIG Chair**

[Wlc19@earthlink.net](mailto:Wlc19@earthlink.net)

Update on the Adult Ed SIG meeting with Bill Chambers:

Denise Ricks was kind enough to come and talk to our group about the legislative goings on. The group thanks Denise for sharing. Most attendees who came were looking for ideas. Many were new teachers. One member is starting as a church volunteer and she asked for pointers on a first class. Bill shared some ideas. ***What ideas do you have for this teacher who is starting a new program at her church?*** Please send any suggestions to Bill to pass on to the group ([wlc19@earthlink.net](mailto:wlc19@earthlink.net)). Any ideas, big or small, what worked and what didn't work, will help out this new teacher! Thanks for sharing your thoughts and advice!

## Articles by our members

### *Reflections on Teaching English to Adults in China*

Deborah A. Westin, Ph.D.

Adjunct Faculty, School of Continuing Studies,  
University of Richmond

ESOL instructor, Adult Education Program,  
Chesterfield County

This past summer, I spent three weeks teaching English to young adults at the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies in Guangzhou, China. I would like to share with you my experience with Chinese students, teachers and another university.

The students are not required to take any placement examination and can choose their own level, either intermediate or advanced English. The average age of my students was 22 years old and they were either working in multi-national corporations or studying at a college or university. On the first day, I asked them what they wanted to learn and, uncertain of their level, I spoke at a slow pace. The teaching assistant addressed me, “Deborah, there are some things that I must tell you.” She asserted, “The students said that you talked too slow and that your lessons are boring.” She claimed that a majority of these students are the “Best and Brightest” and want to learn about foreign topics such as health care and the U.S. economic crisis. I listened.

Speaking at a faster pace on the second day, I asked students to submit a list of topics of interest. The third day, my teaching assistant asserted, “I have some feedback for you.” My mind was on the extreme heat, humidity (110 F), lack of air conditioning or fans in the classrooms and my friends and family in the U.S. I paused and calmly stated, “I feel confused, and I’m not sure what to teach at this point.” I sighed, “I need your help.” Asking for help is not easy for me, especially from someone whom I met two days ago from China, where the norms are radically different from ours. I asked her to provide me with a list of five suggestions that I can implement to improve the class. Suggestions included disseminating more handouts, using the internet, and group work

During these first three days of teaching, I knew when I was speaking too slowly or too quickly as I observed many blank expressions. Day four, I connected my insights and observations to a topic on personal values and cross-cultural norms. Because many of my students expressed a desire to work or study in the U.S, I suggested that we hold a class on honesty, values, and trust. Attempting to build rapport, I shared my work and educational background. I also stated that I felt confused because I was receiving conflicting messages; on the one hand, my students said they didn’t understand me. On the other hand, the teaching assistant informed me that these students were the best and brightest students on this campus.

I asserted that international students cannot pretend to know something when they do not. I informed them that exaggerating one’s competency would not breed success neither in an American university nor a U.S. corporation. The students’ demeanor shifted. I asked them to respond immediately regarding the pace and to quickly inform me if something was too hard, easy, or boring. We covered topics such as the U.S. economic crisis, diversity, workplace communication, leadership, personal values and team-building. I was not prepared to teach these topics. I was prepared to teach conversation, grammar, pronunciation and listening skills. Although we had access to a textbook, most of the material was in British English. I’m thankful for my network in the U.S. because of my background in training and development, I contacted a colleague in the U.S. and she e-mailed assessments and information on leadership, values, trust and honesty in the workplace. I adapted the materials to this class.

Concerning my reflections on teaching in China, I observed that my students were competitive. I learned that the cultural norm is to pretend to know something whether one knows the answer or not. I discovered through dissertation research that “pretending to know” will catch up with someone, especially an international student in an American university.

Saving face is an integral part of this culture. In this experience, the students were saving face, they would refrain from telling the truth perhaps because “What would the teacher do if she observed that I could not keep up with the demands of this class?” I learned the truth and the class was very effective. I received several hand-written notes from students for apologizing to me for making me feel confused. They were concerned that I would never return to China. I informed them that I would welcome the opportunity to return to China. Once the topic of honesty was brought to the surface, everyone felt more comfortable and relaxed.

Three weeks later, the teaching assistant apologized to me and in confidence, shared with me that this was her first time as a teaching assistant at this university. She wanted the class to succeed and therefore, felt a need to react and immediately share feedback with me. Today, this teaching assistant and I are friends and we correspond frequently. She confessed that she was catering to the needs of a few students and not the entire class. I appreciated her honesty and the open dialogue we were able to exchange.

At the end of our time together, we had tears in our eyes for we drew close and saying goodbye was difficult for us. Many of the students thanked me for teaching them about respect, honesty, compassion and win-win situations. I informed the students that they were not to compete in this class and that everyone was a winner. I let them know that they were all successful because they came to learn and improve their English.

What could have been a teaching disaster turned out to be an enlightening experience. My reflections are stated below. In my case, they were successful; however, they may not work for everyone.

1. I responded to the situation with kindness and honesty.
2. I listened with an open mind and heart.
3. I let students, teachers and the university know that we were all working toward the same goal of helping students learn English.

4. I asked non-judgmental, open ended questions of both the students and the teaching assistant.
5. I built relationships. I took walks with students, stayed after class and talked with them, arrived early and went to dinner with some of the students.
6. I allowed time for students to write anonymous notes to me. I learned that some students were much more comfortable giving feedback in writing instead of speaking.

I am grateful that I had the opportunity to teach English to adults in China. This experience was life-changing and I felt so much warmth and caring. I welcome many opportunities to teach in China again.

## Articles by our members

*A New Focus on Oral Language Development for English Language Learners*

By Chris Urynowicz, ESL Specialist and Teacher at Manassas Park Middle School, SIG Co-Chair-Secondary Ed.

In an article from Education Week, written by Mary Ann Zehr, there appears to be a shift in research with a new focus on the development of oral language for English Language Learners. Having stated that, it is clear to me that the emphasis for teachers and educators to develop, create, and structure oral language development opportunities for English Language Learners is now a necessity in order for ELLs to develop the skills and core academic concepts that must be mastered in order for ELLs to achieve English Language Proficiency.

### Academic Connection

The case is made that all students in the classroom benefit from learning listening and speaking skills in the classroom. Building and developing academic language through the use oral language activities helps students make necessary connections in order to comprehend and remember the information by using discussion skills and strategies. The art of debate, role playing, and public speaking are strategies of oral language development

and for the most part sorely lacking in classrooms throughout our public school systems. We educators and teachers should use oral language development in our classrooms in order to teach all of our students to be proficient speakers and enable our students to communicate thoughts, concepts, and ideas in a clear concise manner.

### **Building Vocabulary**

In order to acquire academic vocabulary, students need opportunities in the classroom to learn the difference between oral language communication between friends at lunch and the oral language communication necessary to achieve academically in the classroom. It isn't enough to teach lists of vocabulary words across the content with limited applications of definitions. According to one of the researchers from the article, words that need to be taught should be made very student friendly in that, students will be given the opportunity to make necessary connections through multiple definitions, using a variety of teaching strategies therefore, creating an easier way for students to remember the meaning of vocabulary and then use the vocabulary more definitively in the classroom.

### **Integrating Skills**

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is a strategy used in many content classrooms to support students working in small groups in order to develop and integrate language skills. Research findings do show that using this model; provided that the small groups or pairs contain students with demonstrated English Language Proficiency skills, as well as students who are not fluent in English Language Proficiency, tend to perform better on tests in science and language arts. Using this model will require staff development in order to achieve success through the use of the strategies and the ability of staff to integrate all of the language skills which are: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The success of the model is contingent upon the effectiveness of the teacher to adequately implement instruction in all areas of the language skills.

I think we educators and teachers tend to forget the importance of oral language development in that

ELL students need to develop self-confidence in learning to speak English. It is my further contention that without a concerted effort to provide an environment conducive to the nature and conditions necessary for English Language Learning students to comfortably begin the process of speaking English; we assist in the practice of producing reluctant speakers in our classrooms. Research tells us that English Language Learners who develop this fear of actually attempting to speak English are not successful in the process of becoming literate or fluent in English Language Development. My education, teaching experiences, and background in research in the area of English Language Acquisition confirms how imperative a situation it is in providing oral language opportunities for English Language Learners. Oral language opportunities determine success in achieving: Proficiency in developing Social Language; Proficiency in English Language Literacy; and proficiency in mastering academic language across the content subject areas.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/10/21/08ell.h29.html?tkn=NYTC110eXOjql39>

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**Mark your calendar!**

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**When:**

**Saturday, October 2, 2010**