

# ITBE Newsletter

## Distance ESL Teaching: Tips and Techniques

Darcy Christianson

Distance language learning has become increasingly popular. White (2003) pointed out that over a thousand language courses in over a hundred different countries are registered in the International Distance Learning Course Finder, and this number is growing (p.2). Furthermore, distance English as a Second Language (ESL) is increasingly popular. In particular, Ling (2001) noted that distance ESL learning is in high demand for many Asian countries. A reason for this high demand is that learning ESL at a distance costs less in comparison to the more expensive private face-to-face lessons. A typical private ESL teacher will charge from \$20 to \$150 an hour for a face-to-face ESL lesson. However, online lessons average about \$30 a month.

Another possible reason for the increase in demand is convenience. With learning ESL via a web-based learning platform and tools or phone communications, distance learning ESL students are provided with more flexibility for when and where to participate and learn. Therefore, learning ESL has become more available to those who have full-time jobs or family care responsibilities. In an article reviewing ESL students' perspectives on web-based distance learning (*Community College Week*, 2000), the students cited conveniences that included ability to do homework while

holding a part-time job or caring for children. Furthermore, students frequently pointed out the convenience of being able to repeat and review lessons and materials as much as desired. All of these conveniences are not as easily available with traditional ESL learning.

A common assumption of distance learning is that the teacher and student are always and completely in different locations. However, distance ESL classes are often hybrid courses, meeting partially at a distance and partially in a traditional classroom setting. Adams (n.d.), an instructor for an ESL hybrid course at Highline Community College in Des Moines, Washington, points out many benefits to hybrid ESL teaching. For example, students have some flexibility in attending and participating in class, yet can also receive the face-to-face communication and interaction, which is both a helpful and useful aspect of language learning. Thus, the students have the advantage of using useful language learning technologies such as email or discussion forums for practicing writing skills as well as the advantages of in-class discussions for practicing listening and speaking skills.

Nonetheless, whether students are completely or partially learning ESL at a distance, the increasing demand and convenience of distance language learning results in an increase in the need to better understand distance language learning techniques. Distance ESL teaching can be a daunting task if one is not well prepared or informed. This paper will discuss five essential aspects of distance ESL teaching for those who are interested yet unsure about teaching ESL at a distance.

### Provide frequent and concrete feedback

The first and perhaps the most essential aspect of distance ESL teaching is providing students with feedback. In a study examining course design factors that are essential to effective asynchronous online learning, Swan (2002) found that students who reported low levels of interaction with their teachers subsequently reported low levels of course satisfaction and low levels of learning. However, students who reported high levels of interaction with their teachers also reported high levels of course satisfaction and high levels of learning. Therefore, feedback in a distance learning environment assures the learner that he or she is indeed on track and accomplishing the objectives. It is easier for a distance learner to become confused, frustrated, and off track of the objectives when effective feedback is not being used.

In addition, more specific to distance ESL learning, Hyland (2001) noted the importance of feedback in distance ESL learning classes. Through interviews and questions, Hyland found that ESL students and their respective tutors viewed differing methods of feedback helpful and useful. Students preferred feedback on their English language skill strengths and weakness rather than being told their English language skill level or receiving comments on an idea. Therefore, distance ESL teachers should not only give frequent feedback, but feedback that is useful and helpful for each individual student.

### Respond promptly to inquiries

Timely responses to students' inquiries also help the students stay on track with the course. A distance ESL teacher should not only provide adequate means for the students to communicate but should frequently check all communication mediums such as email, voice mail, and classroom discussion or chat rooms. Furthermore, the teacher should promptly respond to all inquiries given. If a student waits too long for a response to an inquiry, the student will likely become uninterested and frustrated with learning.

Inquiry response techniques include setting up an email auto-respond option, which provides a receipt to all received email messages. This option assures the students that their submitted messages to an instructor indeed have been received. It is also useful to set and communicate a standard response turn-around time to a student's inquiry, perhaps even as quickly as within 24 hours. This set-time prevents confusion in any communication delays that may occur. Furthermore, setting and clarifying virtual office hours is also a helpful technique.

### Include and promote interaction with content, teacher, and other learners

Interaction is another key aspect to effective distance ESL instruction. Swan (2001) noted that distance learners need to engage with a course on three separate levels: with the courses content, with the teacher, and with the other learners. For an example of engaging with course content, distance ESL learners are engaged when a reading is posted to a forum or bulletin board and open-ended discussion questions are provided and answers are required. In addition, with this type of content interaction, learners are learning the required material as well as the perspectives of the other classmates.

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The newsletter is a publication of Illinois Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages•Bilingual Education, a non-profit professional organization, founded in 1970, which disseminates information, provides a forum, and serves as an advocate for students, educators and administrators in the field. Illinois TESOL•BE is an affiliate of TESOL, an international organization.

Membership in Illinois TESOL•BE is open to all interested individuals. To join, please use the form in this issue of the *Newsletter*; for further information about membership, call (312) 409-4770 or visit our web site at [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org).

### Submission Information

Illinois TESOL•BE welcomes letters and contributions to the *Newsletter*. The *Newsletter* is published four times per year with the following copy deadlines: **July 15 • October 15 • January 15 • April 15**

Articles and other items for consideration should be submitted as Microsoft Word attachments to email and sent to: [news@itbe.org](mailto:news@itbe.org) Alternatively, Microsoft Word documents on disk, with hard copy enclosed, can be submitted. (For those without access to computers, hard copy only is acceptable.) Mail to:

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# Message From The President

Madonna Carr

Summer has turned to Fall, Fall to Winter. The election is over. Decisions have been made. We are settled into the school year. Moved indoors till Spring. But before you are lulled into the everyday routine, please remember that now more than ever ITBE needs your voice and active participation. We have recently seen several teachers' strikes in Chicago and the surrounding area. The City Colleges of Chicago and Northeastern Illinois University strikes ended in success for the teachers. This positive result reminds us that there IS safety in numbers. Attempts by administrators to increase workloads, reduce salaries, and generally destabilize the instructors should make us all realize that we need to stick together.

ITBE is the organization that brings everyone reading this together. ITBE is your voice on critical issues affecting the field. As an organization, we post position statements, contact representatives and officials concerning relevant issues, and have Board positions dedicated to part-time issues and professional concerns.

Again, I ask you to become an active member of the organization. Don't just attend the annual ITBE

Convention, go to our web-site ([www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org)) and see if you can help out the organization by serving as a volunteer. Don't just renew your membership, contact the Nominations Committee and submit your name or the name of a colleague to run for the ITBE Executive Board. Don't just read this message and put the Newsletter in the recycling bin, bring it to work and leave it in the faculty lounge so your co-workers can read it. Tell them about ITBE and encourage all your friends and members of the field to join and support the organization.

Finally, please let us know what your thoughts are on critical issues that affect our community. We have a very user-friendly web-site. You can e-mail your thoughts directly to [membership@itbe.org](mailto:membership@itbe.org) or see what your colleagues are talking about in the 'members only' chat area.

We look forward to another productive and effective year for ITBE. Be a part of it!!

Madonna Carr ([carr@uic.edu](mailto:carr@uic.edu))  
ITBE President

## Fall Workshop Report

By Jennifer Eick-Magán and Karen Hilgeman  
Professional Development Committee Co-Chairs

This year's Fall Workshop took place on a warm, sunny, September 18 morning at Roosevelt High School, on Chicago's north side. While attendance was lower than in previous years, the selection of excellent presentations made the Workshop a success. New ITBE President Madonna Carr opened with a welcoming address in the school gymnasium, followed by two sets of concurrent sessions, Special Interest Group (SIG) meetings, and plenty of browsing through sponsoring publishers' exhibits.

Highlights of the Workshop included popular presentations by Yasmin Ranney, Tim Collins, and María Fidalgo-Eick. Also, at the Higher Education SIG meeting, Claudia Kupiec of DePaul University was elected to be the new Chair of the Higher Education Committee.

A special word of appreciation is in order for ITBE Board Member Maja Teref and the contributing faculty at Roosevelt High School for all the time and effort they put toward this year's Fall Workshop.



# Your Board At Work

**Yasmin A. Ranney** ([y-ranney@neiu.edu](mailto:y-ranney@neiu.edu))  
*1st Vice President, Illinois TESOL•BE*  
*Northeastern Illinois University*

◆ **The ITBE Executive Board** met on September 18th at Northeastern Illinois University, immediately following the Fall Workshop at Roosevelt High School.

◆ **Professional Development Initiatives:** The Fall Workshop, held on September 18th at Roosevelt High School, Chicago, was organized by Jennifer Eick-Magan and Karen Hilgeman, and participants earned CPDU credits for attending. The following represents just some of the informational presentations: Integrating Technology into ESL Classrooms (Yasmin Ranney), Benefits of Learners' Awareness of Proficiency Goals (Maria Fidalgo-Eick), English-No Problem! Language for Home, School, Work and Community (Carol Larsen), and Making Content Comprehensible for Middle School ESL Students (Tim Collins). Publisher Exhibits included vendors such as Heinle/Thomson, New Readers Press, Oxford University Press, Rosetta Stone, Pearson Longman ESL, and Alta Book Company, to name a few. SIG chairs led Elementary Ed, Secondary Ed, Adult Ed, and Higher Ed interactive sessions.

◆ **The ITBE Nominations Committee** seeks nominations for the positions of First Vice President, Second Vice President Elect, and Members At-Large. For more information, please visit our website at [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org).

◆ Grant writing opportunities and Constitution/By-Laws review are currently ongoing.

◆ 'Tis the Season to **Renew ITBE Memberships!** Our membership "year" has been changed. ITBE membership will no longer run for a calendar year, but instead will run for a year (or two years) from the date we receive your payment. Visit our website to download a membership application form or renew online at <http://www.itbe.org/>. Don't forget to let us know if your mailing address has changed; change your address/phone/email address etc. by accessing your account via the MMS on-line system or drop us an e-line at [membership@itbe.org](mailto:membership@itbe.org).

◆ **Scholarships** for undergraduate (\$500) and graduate students (\$1000) are available each year through ITBE. Awards to attend the Annual Convention at Navy Pier in February 2005 are also available to qualified candidates. The deadline for application this year is DECEMBER 14, 2004. The awards will be presented at the Convention in February. Applications are available on the ITBE website ([www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org)). Please help spread the word by mentioning this to your classmates and colleagues, or apply for yourself!


◆ TESOL offers identified ITBE members 3 free annual memberships. For more information, email via ITBE's website at [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org)

◆ Our **Part-Time Issues Chair**, Eric Bohman, reported that the Committee will reach out to other professional organizations' part-time committees to promote events and presentations of common interest. The committee is planning to do a poster session and host a lunch-time workshop at the 2005 Annual Convention.

◆ **Higher Ed SIG Chair**, Barb Linek, hosted a book club discussion at a wine and cheese reception.

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**Ik ben Elizabeth. Ik wil niet aardapples.  
Ik ben gerostgesteld.  
Ik heb niet fiet.**

*Elizabeth Minicz*  
*Harper College*

Can you figure out what I wrote? Here's the translation from Dutch. "I am Elizabeth. I don't want a potato. I am at ease. I don't have a bike." Actually, I am just guessing about the translation because I wrote the sentences with the help of my Dutch-English dictionary and notes I took in the classes I visited at ROC12 in Ede, Netherlands, the last two weeks of May 2004. Ede is 70 miles, 70 minutes, or 70 kilometers from Amsterdam; I never did find out how far it really was, and I lost track of time because I was so busy looking out the windows of the car at the Netherlands scenery the day I arrived. The next day I took a train to Amsterdam from Ede, but again I was too busy taking in the sights to be very exact about time and distance. I guess it doesn't even matter much. Ede is about in the middle of the country.

One of the first questions I asked my hosts was how to pronounce "Ede." Alet and Willem found my question to be hilarious and repeated it to every Dutch person to whom I was introduced over the course of the next two weeks. I was quite relieved when I didn't meet new people. "Ede" is pronounced like this "eh-deh." When asked by my hosts if there were any places I especially wished to visit, I mentioned I'd like to see the Van Gogh paintings at a local museum. They looked at me with blank faces until I spelled V-a-n G-o-g-h. For your information, "Gogh" is not pronounced "go." Think very guttural "g" combined with clearing a very phlegmy throat, and you will almost have it. My attempts to say, "I saw the Van Goghs at the Kroeller Muller (cruller mooler) museum at the Hog Veluwe." provoked howls of laughter each time I tried to produce the Dutch words.

In preparation for my participation in the faculty exchange program I began an email correspondence with Alet. We wrote to each other several times a week over a period of five months and sent photos so we would recognize each other at the airport. Alet was holding a sign with my name that I saw immediately upon exiting customs so even without the photos, I would have made the connection. In addition to writing to Alet each week, I met with a colleague, Peggy Kazkaz, who had participated in an exchange to the Netherlands the previous year. Peggy showed me her photos, gave me excellent advice on customs, weather, and packing, made suggestions on gifts for college personnel as well as my hosts, and loaned me books and videos on the Netherlands. I purchased several tourist guides, dictionaries,

grammar books, and audio CDs. The grammar book cautioned me not to use it until I had a vocabulary of at least 2,000 words. I didn't have five so I never used it. I didn't get around to listening to the CDs either. I am considering donating the books and CDs to the college library.

Everyone I met in the Netherlands spoke English--even students in Dutch as a Second Language (DASL) classes, albeit to varying degrees of proficiency-- so there was no need to try to speak Dutch for a two-week visit. I think I would have made more of an attempt to learn Dutch if I were going to live there for six months or more. My host partner, Alet, spoke English quite well, and it was chock full of idiomatic expressions; she continually surprised me. Willem was less proficient, but since he had such a wonderful sense of humor, laughter compensated for comprehensibility.

My host, Alet, was the manager of adult education at ROC12, which seemed to be a combination of technical school, adult school, and community college, but much smaller. Alet arranged for me to meet several administrators and trustees, called directors. The President delivered a formal speech, and then invited me and the other exchange visitors to talk about our colleges and impressions of the Netherlands. I sensed it would be bad form to make comparisons about Harper and ROC12 so I talked mostly about students and learning. I presented everyone at the meeting with gifts I brought from Harper: pens, picture frames, post-it-note holders, coasters, key rings and so on. I spent several days visiting classes at ROC 12, and I toured the technical facilities--an automotive shop, carpentry area, photo lab, and a robotic area. I was unable to tour the nursing and public health areas.

I kept a journal during my visit, and here are few excerpts from it that describe the students and teachers I observed.

### **Tuesday, May 17, 2004**

Alet drove to Barnneveld, about 20 minutes from ROC12's main campus. She wanted me to observe a class of beginners at a satellite location. The five students in class were from Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Thailand, and Morocco. The lesson was about parts of the body and medical terms. The teacher taught everyone to pronounce "urine" and "poop" correctly, words I have never used in my classes. I wonder why I haven't. Puritan prudery? The classroom itself had all the typical realia (stuff) we have at Harper. I took a few photos, but felt awkward about imposing. I don't think the students had any idea of who I was or why I was there.

### **Monday, May 25, 2004**

Today I observed a Dutch for Specific Purposes class at the main campus. There were eight women present--from Afghanistan, Morocco, Zambia, Liberia, and Nigeria. The

focus of the lesson was on what to do when there are problems with colleagues or employers. The teacher read situations to the students and they had to determine:

- ♦ "Wat is de oorzaak? (What is the cause or origin?)
- ♦ "Wat is je doel? (What is the purpose?)

At first it appeared that the students didn't understand a word of the teachers' directions. I didn't either! It is good to be reminded of how students feel when they are bewildered. Eventually, everyone was on track, and I even joined a group to give an American perspective. The students were high beginners in Dutch, but advanced in English. So curious.

### Tuesday, May 26, 2004

This morning I observed Willi's class. She is a very tall (at least six feet, if not more) woman who towers over her students. Alet told me that the Dutch are the tallest people in Europe, and when I returned home I read that the Dutch are the tallest in the world as a result of a diet rich in cheese, excellent health care, and education. I digress already. Sorry. Back to the class. Willi's eight students were from Morocco, Afghanistan, and Vietnam, and all were literacy-level students. Although I had a difficult time understanding the lesson because it was in Dutch, I did get the gist of things. Students were given a drawing of a living room and a handout with questions about the picture. They were divided into pairs, asked and answered the questions, and wrote the answers. Willi spoke very softly and used the same "teacher talk" that I have observed at home. I think language teachers must have the same demeanor everywhere. The teaching methodology was quite "traditional," and really no different from here in the U.S. Willi said the students told her they speak like a salad, and I quite like that metaphor. As is true, too, of the students in my classes. Willi's students mixed up word order and had little if any control of grammatical structures.

The morning classes at ROC12 are made up primarily of women. Classes start at 9:00 so parents can bring their children to school before they attend class. At 10:00 everyone takes a break. The teachers congregate in the break room where a sleek, modern machine dispenses free coffee. After the break students return to their classes or go to the computer lab for "self-study." The students attend classes four days a week, but have different teachers. The teachers follow a school curriculum, and the Monday teachers write lesson plan notes for the Tuesday teachers, and on down. Everyone uses the same text, Icebreaker, and the computer programs expand on the textbook. I got the impression that all of the Dutch as a Second Language (DASL) classes in the Netherlands used the same materials. The Netherlands requires all immigrants and refugees to learn Dutch.

### Thursday, May 28, 2004

I'm visiting a family literacy class at a local elementary school. The five women here today are from Turkey and Morocco. The teacher is reviewing a previous lesson. She says a sentence and the students tell her how many words they hear. Then she says individual words and the students tell her how many syllables they hear. Apparently the lesson was about describing people and things.

- ♦ De man is dik. (The man is big.)
- ♦ De auto is snel. (The auto is fast.)
- ♦ De man is dun. (The man is a fool or a madman.) etc.

Next the teacher passed out photos from a field trip to an art exhibition the students attended. The women were talking about the trip, but I didn't understand a word.

Switching gears, the class started a new lesson which appeared to be completely unconnected to the previous one. The students listened to a conversation on a CD about nails to pound wood, and then they answered questions about the conversation. I was not understanding the point of this, and I had a difficult time understanding how this class was a family literacy class. I think it was designated such simply because it was in a school.

At 10:00, the lesson stopped. The teacher put cups, coffee, and milk on the table and began to pour. The women took bread, olives, cheese, and sweets from their backpacks. I was served homemade halvah and homemade cheese. There was something mentioned about one of the women digging a hole in the yard and out coming cheese several months later, but I didn't really want to know any more details of the cheese I was gagging down. It actually tasted pretty good, but the details about its making made me gag. I don't mean to sound critical of the class so let me end by saying that everyone was gracious and generous, and I felt badly for not being able to communicate with the women.

My journal is full of words I dutifully copied off the boards in the classes I visited, but now I don't have the faintest idea how to pronounce any of them. In fact, the only three words or expressions I still remember are duwen and trekken (push and pull, written on every door I had to open or close) and pas op! (watch out!) because I was in constant danger of being run over by cyclists during my two-week stay. While I can't speak Dutch, I can read my journal, look at the photos, and anticipate the next email from Alet. Did I say she is coming here for a two-week visit in October?

**Elizabeth Minicz** is an Associate Professor and Co-Chair of the Adult Educational Development Department at Harper College. She is a Past President of Illinois TESOL/BE and author of numerous ESL texts, most recently the literacy level of *English--No Problem!*

(continued from page 1)

Distance ESL learners also become more involved with the course and learning if and when the teacher is actively involved in interacting with the learners. To do so, the teacher should give timely and frequent feedback to assignments, join in on class discussions, and provide various ways for the students to inquire about concerns. Another technique is to request feedback from the students on the course and materials used after the class or lesson is complete. In other words, invite the students to share their experience and perspectives on the learning experiences.

Lastly, it is important that distance ESL learners engage in learning experiences with other distance ESL learners. By interacting and learning with each other, distance ESL learners can build a learning community--a shared respect of understanding and learning the course subject. This can be accomplished by creating small groups of learners and requiring learners to respond to certain discussion questions or posts. This requirement encourages interaction with classmates.

One function of distance learning that is useful and enhances interaction between teacher and student or students and classmates is real-time communication. Options for real-time communication via web-based learning include video, voice, or text chat programs. Useful as well, oftentimes the real-time communication program provides recorded or transcribed sessions. A copy of the session is then available for students who have missed a class or simply want to review what had been discussed (Hodgson, 8, 1999).

### **Become familiar and comfortable with various distance language learning technologies**

It is important to become familiar and comfortable with some of the language learning technologies available in order to be a successful distance learning instructor. Furthermore, there are many language learning resources available that are often overlooked. Teachers should take the necessary time to test, try and research distance learning technologies before implementing them. If the teachers feel intimidated by technology, the learners may feel confused and frustrated as well.

Teachers could better understand distance language learning technologies by participating in technology workshops and conferences and subscribing to or reviewing language-learning technology related journals. Among the many organizations and journals, a few that may be of help as a start include the international non-profit organizations Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO) and International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALLT), and the free

online journal Language Learning and Technology (<http://llt.msu.edu/>)

### **Provide successful distance learning criteria**

Although many learners believe that learning ESL at a distance will be easier, shorter, and quicker, it is not for everyone. Distance ESL students need to be highly motivated and feel relatively comfortable with using technology to be successful learners. Therefore, all potential distance ESL learners should be informed of what it takes to be a successful distance ESL learner, prior to enrolling in the class.

Though successful learning criteria can be different per course and per instructor, some items are more important than others. For example, students should always be informed of what is expected of them. What are the requirements for participation? Where and how are students to meet? In addition, students should be informed of the technical skills required to attend and participate in class. If the course requires certain technology skills, specifically state what these skills are rather than simply stating "advanced" or "intermediate" technology skills required. A student may think submitting and receiving an email is an advanced skill, while the actual advanced skill required is to be able to re-configure an email account.

In summary, these five distance ESL teaching tips and techniques can be of help to ESL teachers who may be interested in creating full or hybrid distance ESL classes but do not know how to start. For the most part, behind all the technological talk of distance ESL learning, the main point to keep in mind is to allow the students the opportunity to learn. This can occur via feedback, a timely response to an inquiry, or simply better understanding of the language learning technologies available. Furthermore, just as distance ESL learning is not easier than traditional ESL learning, distance ESL teaching is not easier than traditional ESL teaching. Distance ESL teaching requires a lot of development time, patience, and perseverance. Likewise, just as distance ESL learning is not for everyone, distance ESL teaching is not for everyone either. However, for ESL teachers considering this new challenge, these five distance ESL teaching tips and techniques can help them become better aware and prepared for teaching ESL at a distance.

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**Darcy Christianson** is an ESL teacher of 10 years with a Master's Degree in Teaching English as a Second Language and Adult Education Distance Learning. Currently, she is teaching and tutoring English and ESL at a distance for Western International University Online and Tutor.com.

## From The SIGS

### Elementary and Secondary SIG News

There was an error in the Elementary and Secondary SIG news in the fall 2004 issue. The correct news is as follows (with apologies from the editor):

Elementary and Secondary SIG held a joint meeting at the Sept. 18th fall workshop at Roosevelt High School in Chicago. We first discussed the 2004-2005 ESL Student Writing Contest. For more information about the writing contest, go to the Illinois TESOL/BE website: [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org). Marsha Robbins Santelli reported that TESOL has accepted a proposal from the Elementary Education Interest Section members for funding of a Special Project on Culture. Elementary ESL/Bilingual teachers are invited to participate in the making of an attractive 40-page booklet entitled *Memories of Home*, which contains ESL students' poetry, writings and illustrations. The deadline for submission of entries is Nov. 29, 2004. For more information, contact Michelle De Cou-Landberg, Elementary Education Interest Section Immediate Past Chair/Special Project Coordinator. E-mail: [aillon@aol.com](mailto:aillon@aol.com); Tel: 703-471-4995.

The rest of the time was spent discussing recertification. It was decided that Illinois TESOL/BE should hold a session on recertification at the Annual Illinois TESOL/BE Convention in February at Navy Pier.

The 2004-2005 Co-chairs for Elementary SIG are Maritza Perez and Margaret Gigous and the 2004-2005 Secondary SIG Co-chairs are Pam Forbes and Kathy Mundell-Bligh.

### Adult ED SIG News

It's winter in Chicago: time to put on the bathing suit and head for warmer climates for an extended beach holiday, right? Well, maybe not on our noble ESL teacher salaries. At least we can get together, pretend we're somewhere warm, eat Mediterranean food and at least TALK about being some place warm, colorful or at least not in the Midwest.

Please join Higher Education SIG members for a night of warm Greek food, warmer Ouzo, and an informal discussion of international volunteer vacation opportunities and/or fellowships. Have you done a Fulbright in the Philippines? Taught English in Ethiopia? Built houses in Haiti? Done Aid work in Algiers? Would you like to and want more information?

We will meet for drinks in the bar area at Greek Islands, 200 S. Halsted, on Friday, January 21st at 7:00, and proceed to dinner at 7:30. Bring yourself, money for food and drinks, and information, pictures or questions about your volunteer or educational trips, and some business cards. Free valet parking is available at the restaurant, or you can take the blue line to UIC- Halsted.

Please RSVP to me at [ckupiec@depaul.edu](mailto:ckupiec@depaul.edu) by Wednesday, January 19th, so that I can reserve a table. I look forward to meeting you and hearing about your adventures!

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# Member Snapshot

**Name:** Pam Forbes

**Place of Birth and Current**

**Residence:** Birth: Chicago, IL  
Residence: Elgin, IL

**Currently Working As:** ESL instructor at Larkin High School, District U-46. I teach Survival ESL, ESL 1 and ESL 2 to grades 9-12.

**Years in Education:** 29

**Years as an ITBE Member:** 18. I've been on the ITBE Executive Board since 1986. Currently I chair the ESL Student Writing Contest and co-chair Secondary SIG.

**A memorable experience for me:**

Back in the 1980's U-46 had a huge population of Lao students. Those who lived on the farms never attended school. At that time I taught ESL Literacy to these students. They also were taught Lao Literacy Skills. I will



never forget one of my students. She was so excited to go to school for the first time. She always wanted to participate in the spelling of words. However, she spelled every word wrong. Then one day when I called on her she spelled a word correctly. I thought this was just a guess. So, I asked her to spell another word. She spelled it correctly. She continued to spell and write every word correctly. After class I spoke to her Lao Literacy teacher. I asked, "Did the light go on with this student in your class?" He said, "Yes!" We were amazed. We always heard that once a learner was literate in his/her first language that the transfer to a second language would take place. We never dreamed it would happen so fast. Since then I have

always enjoyed teaching Literacy to ESL students.

**A regrettable professional experience:**

My first year teaching ESL was a nightmare. I had taught Spanish for five years and worked on the M.A. in Applied Linguistics, with an emphasis on ESL. I thought teaching ESL would be the same as teaching Spanish. Boy, was I wrong! My first year teaching ESL reminded me of student teaching. I was clueless. Thanks to my colleagues mentoring me, I survived. Since then I always try to tell new teachers those things they don't tell you in the courses for ESL and Bilingual endorsements, i.e. how to survive!

**Professional Passions:** I love to develop materials! I've participated in many curriculum writing projects in U-46. I was part of a writing team that developed a curriculum for a vocational ESL summer school. I was also on the writing team that developed the U-46 ESL/Bilingual Secondary Program Handbook.

**Future Plans:** : I plan to write an ESL Survival book for the secondary level. I also plan to continue to present at state conferences.

**Beyond Work:** Do teachers have a life outside the classroom? I didn't know that!

## TESOL Update

The following message comes from TESOL:

**NCATE & TESOL on ESL STANDARDS for P-12 TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the TESOL Board of Directors in October, 2001 approved the Standards for P-12 ESL Teacher Education Programs. As a result, institutions of higher education in the US and abroad are working towards aligning their curriculum with the standards so as to prepare for future program evaluations by NCATE.

At present, TESOL is recruiting volunteer program reviewers to serve a 3-year term on the TESOL/NCATE review panel for the TESOL/NCATE P12 ESL Teacher Education Program Standards. This year, TESOL needs five (5) qualified persons. To learn about reviewer qualifications and application forms, please go to:[http://www.tesol.org/s\\_tesol/sec\\_document.asp?CID=219 & \DID=332](http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/sec_document.asp?CID=219&\DID=332).

Reviewers who are accepted to serve in this panel will be required to attend the Tuesday, March 29 training in San Antonio, Texas. It is important to know that NCATE reviewers do not typically receive payment.

According to TESOL, here are some of the possible benefits resulting from serving on such a panel:

- ♦ Meeting professionalism criteria for national board of professional teaching standards certification.
- ♦ Obtaining tenured status
- ♦ Qualifying for merit pay
- ♦ Enhancing your resume
- ♦ Help your own institution to prepare for the NCATE/TESOL program review

Additionally, if your institution is planning a NCATE/ TESOL program review, serving as a reviewer will help you prepare for the process.



## Come Join the Navy Pier Event

Once again, Navy Pier will be the site of the ITBE annual convention. Over the two days of February 18 and 19, 2005, participants will have an opportunity to hear presentations on timely topics, share ideas with fellow teachers, administrators, or students, browse through publishers' exhibits, and have an opportunity to win some valuable prizes.

The program will include over 50 individual sessions dealing with instructional issues at all levels from elementary to university and adult education. Paper sessions will include those dealing with academic vocabulary, CALL based curricula, content-based instruction, and solutions for bilingual transitional readers. Among workshops and demonstrations will be those dealing with teaching culture through film, community based writing programs, new direction in programs for international teaching assistants, and assessment. Professionally oriented issues will be addressed via panels on certification, occupational transition for teachers, and implications of legislation.

In Friday's plenary address, entitled No Teacher Left Behind, Jodi Crandall will cover a range of topics dealing with the impact of state and national legislation affecting teachers, students, and administrators. On Saturday, Carol Chapelle will be our plenary speaker speaking on The Challenge of Technology for English Language Teachers. On both days, these plenary speakers will also lead smaller breakout sessions on related topics. A total of 16 demonstration sessions will be offered by publishers; over 50 publishers and educational associations will be represented in the exhibits area.

The deadline for early registration at a reduced rate is January 14. Registrations postmarked after January 14 will be combined with on-site registration at the higher rate. **Note that it is possible this year to register and pay fees electronically via the ITBE website - go to the convention section of the website: [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org).** Please note that while registration for Saturday only is possible, registration for Friday only is not. A full, served luncheon is provided on Friday.

**Don't miss this important professional event - see you at Navy Pier!**

### JoAnn Crandall

JoAnn (Jodi) Crandall is Professor of Education, Co-Director of the MA Program in ESOL/Bilingual Education, and Director of the interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in Language, Literacy, and Culture at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC).

She is the author of more than 100 books, articles, chapters, and monographs on educational policy, program design, and teacher education for K-12 and adult English language learners, with a special focus on literacy and content-based language instruction. Her most recent publications include "Language teacher education" for the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*; *Case Studies in Content-Based Instruction in Higher Education Settings*; and *Case Studies in Content-Based Instruction in K-12 Settings* (in press), the latter two co-edited with Dorit Kaufman.

Dr. Crandall has been President of AAAL, TESOL, and the Washington area affiliate (WATESOL). She has also served on a number of advisory boards, including the USIA English Teaching Advisory Panel, the Fulbright Applied Linguistics/TEFL Selection Committee, the TOEFL Committee of Examiners and Policy Council, the Adult ESL Lab School at Portland State University, and the National Clearinghouse for Adult ESL Literacy (NCLE). She recently became a member of the Board of Examiners of the National Association for the Accreditation of Colleges of Teacher Education (NCATE).

### Carol A. Chapelle

Carol A. Chapelle is Professor of TESL/applied linguistics at Iowa State University. Among her many professional service activities are her positions as Editor of *TESOL Quarterly* and Second Vice-President of the American Association of Applied Linguistics. Her recent books explore issues in technology and applied linguistics: *Computer applications in second language acquisition: Foundations for teaching, testing, and research* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) and *English language learning and technology: Lectures on applied linguistics in the age of information and communication technology* (John Benjamins, 2003). Her papers have appeared in journals such as *TESOL Quarterly*, *Language Learning*, *Language Testing*, and *Language Learning & Technology*. In addition to teaching a wide range of courses in applied linguistics at Iowa State, Carol has also taught in Arizona, Hawai'i, Michigan, Spain, and Canada. She has recently been an invited lecturer and has served as a consultant to universities and educational agencies in Chile, Denmark, France, Japan, Morocco, Scotland, Spain, and Taiwan.



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Mylanguageexchange.com is primarily for adult students since, although moderated, it is open to

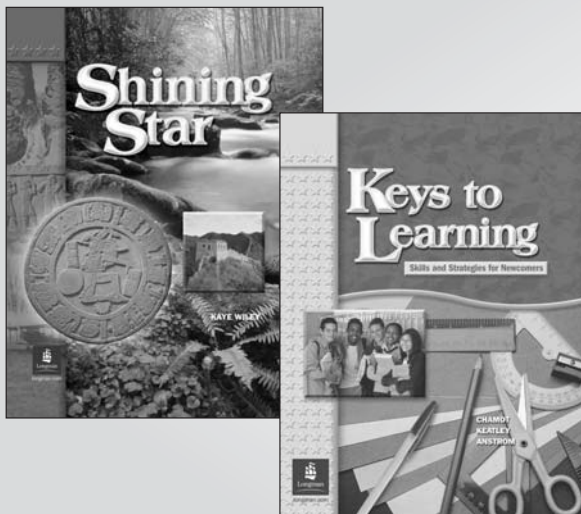
anyone online. The site allows students to search for online text or voice chat partners and email partners. It is well-established and has many members so that finding a language exchange between English and another language should be very easy.

Epals.com is a site more appropriate for elementary or high school students. Teachers can post a request to other teachers who are interested in finding online partners for their students. The site

also has online security products designed to maximize students' safety. A teachers' forum and a collection of online projects are there to provide support.

Educationoasis.com has a pen pals section (<http://www.educationoasis.com/curriculum/penpals.htm>) which is relevant to elementary school teachers. Teachers are looking for online and standard pen pals for their classrooms, and you can post an ad yourself or respond to one.

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## NEWS BITES

**Elizabeth Minicz**  
*Harper College*

### **Salaam aleikum!**

"Radio Islam," which debuted in late September on WCEV-AM 1450, is the first daily English-language program about Islam in the United States, according to a story in the Chicago Tribune by Geneive Abdo on October 3, 2004. Abdo reports that Inam Abdul Malik Mujahid, executive producer of "Radio Islam," said, "The goal is to tell non-Muslim listeners things they often don't believe or don't want to hear: Islam does not condone terrorism; Islam is not at war with the West; and your Muslim neighbor is your friend."

For those of you who are not listeners to programming on WCEV, the call letters stand for "We're Chicago's Ethnic Voice." This 25 year-old radio station broadcasts to Chicago, the southwestern and western suburbs, and parts of Indiana. Joseph Migala was the founder of the station, which offers programs in languages from Polish to Arabic and Bosnian to Gaelic. Lucyna Migala, the program director for WCEV says, "We tend to be the ethnic public radio station." Tune in to "Radio Islam" from 6 to 7 p.m. and find out for yourself what "Radio Islam" is all about.

### **Nowhere Man is Everywhere in the News**

A few issues back (well, maybe a few years) I wrote about Aleksandar Hemon, a Bosnian journalist who relocated to Chicago and, in fact, actually studied English as a Second Language at Truman College. I wrote about how diligent Hemon was in learning English and News Bites focused on the publication of *Nowhere Man*, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle fiction award. Hemon has been in the news again, this time for being a recipient of a MacArthur "genius grant."

Hemon has been compared to Vladimir Nabokov and Joseph Conrad, two writers who also learned English as a Second Language, although Hemon believes such comparisons are premature. So do I. Patrick T. Reardon and Terry Armour in a Chicago Tribune article on September 28, 2004, quoted Laura Miller at Salon.com, "He (Hemon) wrenches English words into previously unknown yet alarmingly fitting configurations." Megan O'Grady, in the Village Voice, noted Hemon's "metaphors startle with strangeness and accuracy."

Over the next five years, Hemon will receive \$500,000 from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. When he first arrived in the U.S., Hemon, as many immigrants do, worked minimum-wage jobs. Recently he has fared better due to book advances and freelance writing. He says the "genius grant" will free up his time. You bet!

### **Dyslexia and Language Learners**

Several years ago, I attended a to-day seminar on learning disabilities and English Language Learners. I recall being startled by the presenter's assertion that students could have a first language learning disability, but not in English, and vice versa. The Associated Press News Service on September 2, 2004, and The New York Times on September 7, 2004, both published articles about dyslexia: "Dyslexia Not the Same in Every Culture" and "Study Finds Biology of Dyslexia Varies with Culture."

The journal, *Nature*, cited in the news stories, reported on a study that suggests, "that Chinese speakers who suffer from dyslexia have different brain abnormalities than English speakers who are dyslexic. The article in the Times says that" the treatments for English speakers with dyslexia might not be effective for those who speak other languages and have the disability." The Times also reports that from five to 15 percent of Americans, and up to seven percent of Chinese have dyslexia. Imaging studies have identified anomalies in the left temporoparietal region of the brain. This is the area that helps link phonemes to different letters. Previous studies have

focused on alphabet-based languages. This new one by Li-Hai Tan of the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda and the University of Hong Kong looked at brain scans of 16 Beijing schoolchildren, 10-12 years old, of whom eight were dyslexic. When reading Chinese, the left middle frontal gyrus, or LMFG, is used, an area of the brain associated with symbol interpretation. The AP article says that Tan's study demonstrates that, "the learning disorder dyslexia is not the same in every culture and does not have a universal biological cause." Using brain-based research to inform and improve teaching and learning is vital for all teachers-and absolutely fascinating (at least to me.)

### **Obituary: The Last Speaker of a Secret Language Dies**

If you are a reader of this feature, and I hope you are, you may recall previous "bites" about efforts to preserve indigenous languages. The Los Angeles Times on September 28, 2004, contained an obituary for Yang Huanyi. She was "the last surviving writer and speaker of a language invented and used only by women in a small pocket of central China," reports Henry Chu in the LATimes. The mothers and grandmothers of Jiangyong developed nushu ("women's script"), a secret script to communicate with each other about their lives. They used nushu to write letters, poems, and songs that were safe from the prying eyes of men during a time when most women in the area were illiterate. In the article, Chu says that the existence of nushu did not come to the attention of scholars until about 20 years ago. The origins are mysterious. One legend attributes nushu to a girl "who was forced to become an imperial concubine and wanted to find a way to write home in code." Scholars say a coin dated from the mid-19th century was found with nushu writing on it. It has up to 2,000 characters. Contrast that with Mandarin, which has 50,000. The 1966-76 Cultural Revolution helped to sound the death knell for nushu. Government officials forced women to denounce it and destroy texts. When Yang Huanyi was last interviewed by the Times in 2002, she said of nushu, "There's no use learning it anymore." A sad farewell to her, and to nushu.

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\* Family members residing at the same address may apply at the joint membership rate.

Membership in Illinois TESOLBE is separate from membership in TESOL.

The Professional Planner	<b>January 21, 2005</b> <b>Illinois TESOL/BE Executive Board meeting, Truman College, Chicago</b>
	<b>January 19-22, 2005</b> <b>NABE, San Antonio, Texas</b>
	<b>January 24-27, 2005</b> <b>28th Annual Statewide Conference for Teachers of Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students</b> <b>Hyatt Regency, Oak Brook</b> <b>For more information, contact the IRC at 847-803-3112</b>
	<b>February 18-19, 2005</b> <b>Illinois TESOL•BE 31st Annual Convention, Navy Pier, Chicago</b> <b>For more information visit: <a href="http://www.itbe.org">www.itbe.org</a></b>
	<b>March 30-April 2, 2005</b> <b>TESOL Annual Convention, San Antonio, Texas</b>
	<b>April 25-27, 2005</b> <b>Family Literacy, Galt House Hotel and Suites, Louisville, Kentucky</b>
	<b>May 21, 2005</b> <b>Illinois TESOL/BE Executive Board meeting, Wheaton College, Wheaton</b>
	<b>July 24-29, 2005</b> <b>Applied Linguistics, Madison, Wisconsin</b>





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