

## Tools and Techniques for Effective Interaction in the Adult ESL Classroom

**Cheri Pierson, Mary Cerutti,  
Becky Swab**

### Introduction

According to H. Douglas Brown (2001), interaction is “the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other.” While interaction is a stated goal that most ESL teachers strive for, some are unsure as to how to foster and develop interaction among learners in their ESL classrooms.

The importance of interaction is obvious as learners use language to negotiate meaning in a range of situations. Even as beginners, language learners need to interact to improve their listening and speaking skills. Wilga Rivers (1987) suggests that in interaction, students can use the full array of what they possess of the language in real-life exchanges. When interaction is authentic and related to their own needs and reasons for learning the language, students are motivated to

engage. Moreover, if they understand the purpose of the interaction, students are more willing to take risks.

ESL teachers sometimes tire of using the same ideas and activities to engage students to interact in the classroom. In fact, sometimes it feels like pulling teeth, when the intent is only to encourage students to communicate with each other. The purpose of this article is to suggest some interactive groupings, provide techniques that will increase classroom interaction, and offer some tools for future reference.

### What are some effective interactive groupings?

Most ESL teachers are familiar with pair work such as Four Corners, Inside-Outside Circles/Parallel Lines and Mixers, but perhaps not with other options for interactive groupings. It might be helpful to try several less familiar options such as Team Word Webbing, Three Step Interview, and Think, Pair, Share.

### Team Webbing

This interactive grouping is especially useful for developing and reviewing vocabulary. It also addresses those learners who are more visual and kinesthetic. To use this technique, begin with a specified topic, a large piece of paper or poster board and several markers. Write the overall topic in the middle of the paper, and a subtopic in the four corners. For example, if the topic is money, the teacher writes “money” in the middle of the paper and then writes the following words in each of the four corners: coins, cash, check, and bank.

The students each select a corner and begin writing words or drawing pictures that relate to the sub-topic written in their corner. After a brief period of time, the students rotate the paper and write about the next word. This process is repeated until all the students have had a chance to add words or pictures to each corner of the paper. At the end of this process, the papers can be displayed around the classroom and each group can report on their Word-Web. The poster can remain up in the room as a tool for review.

### Three Step Interview

The three step interview involves the students working in pairs and then sharing the information discussed in the pairs with the whole class. Before beginning the process, a topic is selected. The topic should be something each student has individual insight or knowledge about, that is not known to the other students. Some topics include information about a student’s hometown, family or job, or a specific report or project the student is working on. Before the interview, students should be given time to develop questions to ask their partner. Once the topic is selected and questions developed, the students get into pairs and Student A interviews Student B about a topic. Then, they reverse roles to complete the process. After the pair work is complete, the students assemble in a large group, and Student A shares the information gathered from student B. Student B does likewise. This interactive approach encourages listening, speaking, writing, and note-taking.

*(cont. on page 5)*

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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**

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# Message From The President / Board News

Kasia Stadnik - Illinois State University



Kasia Stadnik  
2006-2007 President

**ITBE** has just experienced another successful professional event, the fall workshop, which was held on the beautiful campus of St. Xavier University (see more on the workshop in this issue of the Newsletter). Once again, the Professional Development Committee, and specifically Jennifer Eick-Magan and

Claudia Becker, have done a wonderful job putting together a program that offered a variety of topics and presenters for the members to enjoy.

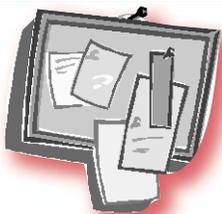
I wonder if any of you ever consider what kind of preparations and work are involved in organizing an event like this? At the risk of sounding trivial/obvious, I would like to share with you some of the details of this, what I consider, rather demanding task. Let me begin by sharing with you what one of ITBE's past convention chairs once said of her job—she compared it to organizing a wedding (that comparison should, by the way, give you an idea of what level of true enthusiasm and excitement that convention chair displayed in approaching her responsibilities!)

Now, organizing a workshop can be seen as a similar task, perhaps on a slightly smaller scale. Translated into the specific tasks, it means dealing with all the details ranging from envisioning the overriding theme for the program so that the plenary speaker as well as all the other presenters invited and/or selected for the workshop fit into that vision; through securing a location that can accommodate the event; to contacting the presenters,

arranging the details of the schedule (assigning time slots, rooms, AV equipment), preparing copies of the event's program, coordinating publishers' exhibit-related jobs, securing technical support for the event, and arranging for the refreshments to be available. In addition to these tasks, there are countless other details that need to be taken care of—preparing certificates for presenters, copies of CPDUs, certificates of attendance, copies of various ITBE forms and publications, signs to direct the participants, name tags, ribbons for the presenters, all the way down to masking tape for posting the signs, pens, cash box, etc., etc. Each of these tasks in itself may not be all that challenging—it is the combined number of them that is capable of keeping extremely busy, if not overwhelming, any one person (or even two, as was the case this fall).

You probably know why I have decided to describe the efforts that go into organizing a workshop in such detail. I sincerely hope you will consider contributing your time and energy to organizing our activities. The Board is hard at work preparing another “wedding reception”—the 2007 Annual ITBE Convention. Each of you has a standing invitation to this event on any level you would like to participate in it—as one of the organizers, a presenter, a volunteer, or an attendee. Look on ITBE's website to find a way to offer your help in any way you can. Without active participation from each and every one of you, it is hard to maintain a healthy, productive organization. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Kasia Stadnik, President 2006-2007



## From the Editor: Call for Contributions

ITBE members are invited to contribute to the *News Bites* column. Liz Minicz, who has been the sole, faithful contributor to this column for many years, has suggested that the column be expanded, not necessarily in size, but in content, beyond just news. One suggestion for expanding it is to include short pieces on personal teaching or learning experiences, classroom anecdotes, language humor, or anything else that ITBE members may find interesting and relevant to their professional life. Liz will continue to contribute to the column but wants to encourage contributions from other members. Another idea we discussed is to ask the membership to suggest a new name for the column. I must admit, however, that I think “News Bites” is wonderfully ambiguous (for which we must credit the former editors, Jane Curtis and Julie Howard), albeit a little negative. Perhaps we should change it to “News Bits”! If you have any ideas about where we should go from here, please drop me a line to my email – [ibrosnahan@yahoo.com](mailto:ibrosnahan@yahoo.com). Or better still, send me something for the column.

Irene Brosnahan



### Highlights from the Executive Board meeting on August 26, 2006:

- ✎ The Board approved the dates and locations of its meeting for the year 2006-2007.
- ✎ The Board identified committee chairs of the various committees within the Board.
- ✎ The Board discussed choosing a convention theme as well as finding plenary speakers for the 2007 Annual Convention.

### Highlights from the Executive Board meeting on October 14, 2006:

- ✎ The Board approved “Learning Today for

Tomorrow” as the theme for the 2007 Annual Convention. Betsy Kubota agreed to serve as chair of the convention.

- ✎ The Board approved the honorarium and expenses for two confirmed plenary speakers for the convention. The Board discussed additional speakers for the convention.
- ✎ The Board wishes to remind ITBE members that information and updates on the convention can be found on the ITBE website at [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org).
- ✎ The Board approved the ITBE budget for 2006-2007, submitted by Eric Bohman, the Treasurer.
- ✎ The Board congratulated and thanked Claudia Becker and Jennifer Eick-Magan, co-chairs for the fall workshop, for their work in the success of the workshop.



## TESOL UPDATE



TESOL’s 41st Annual Convention and Exhibit, with the theme “Spanning the Globe: Tides of Change” is scheduled for March 21-24, 2007, at the Washington State Convention Center, Seattle, Washington.

At its recent meeting, the TESOL Board of Directors approved the following position statements:

- ❖ Position Statement on Immigration Reform in the United States
- ❖ Statement of Principles for the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Copies of the position statements are available via [www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org) on their website.

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 reflect TESOL’s Position Paper on Equitable Treatment for Part-time, Adjunct, and

Contingent Faculty. The revised position statement is also available on the website.

TESOL’S Committee on Education and the Workforce and the Subcommittee on Education Reform presented testimony at the Hearing on “Examining Views on English as the Official Language” on July 26, 2006. Testimony was submitted by Charles S. Amorosino, Jr., Executive Director, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL).

TESOL offers affiliate travel grants to new, growing, and active affiliates in good standing and in financial need. Affiliate Representatives are invited to apply for an Affiliate Travel Grant by contacting Laura Bryant, [lbryant@tesol.org](mailto:lbryant@tesol.org). Affiliate travel grants help cover a portion of the travel and accommodation expenses for one affiliate delegate to attend the annual TESOL convention. Affiliate members who demonstrate a need for financial support have the opportunity to benefit from the global exchange made possible through the travel grants program. Submit an application today to attend the 2007 TESOL conference in Seattle, Washington USA.

Submitted by Yasmin Ranney, Past President 2005-06

*(cont. from page 1)*

### Think-Pair-Share

This method is a three-step process that begins with the students individually thinking about a topic. Providing time for students to think individually gives more reflective learner's time to compose their ideas. After the thinking step is completed, students move into pairs to discuss the topic. Finally, students individually share information from their discussion with the whole class. This process can be especially helpful for students who are not confident in their English speaking skills, since they have time to discuss a topic with a partner before moving into a large group setting. To simplify the interaction between students, the teacher can combine this method with the Three-Step Interview procedure. This whole process should take approximately three to five minutes.

### **What are some effective interactive tools and techniques?**

Aside from the various grouping techniques, there are a number of tools and procedures that can enhance interaction within the classroom. Listed below are several of these tools, along with a short explanation as to how to begin using them in the classroom.

#### Picture File

A picture file can be a very valuable tool – especially helpful for visual learners. They are inexpensive to make and store and can be used for multiple activities and levels. To begin, it is useful to have a filing system (file folders or envelopes that can be labeled and put in a file box for storage). Sometimes the most difficult task can be deciding on the topics. Listed in Appendix A are some options for use in a picture file.

Once a system for sorting and storing the pictures is established, it is time to begin the search for pictures.

Photographs can be found in magazines, newspapers, advertisements, old encyclopedias, and old textbooks. Don't forget to visit restaurants for menus and travel agencies for travel brochures and maps – and the internet has many places to find a variety of symbols. Along with collecting and sorting the pictures, it is helpful to laminate those that will be used on a regular basis.

This collection of pictures can then be used to have students practice their writing skills or speaking skills, simply by describing the image. This activity can go a step further by having students write a description for a picture that the teacher collects. The pictures are then displayed around the room and the descriptions distributed among the students. Then, the students walk around the room and match the description they were given with the correct picture. This activity works best when the pictures have a great deal of

similarity, such as all pictures of beach scenes or of children playing.

Pictures that have not been laminated and can easily be replaced can be cut up and used in a class project such as making-over a house. For this activity, a cutout of a house is drawn on poster board, displaying the typical rooms. The students then use pictures to furnish the house. This activity encourages the students to use vocabulary words and to practice negotiating skills to determine what furniture should go in which rooms of the house. Variations of this type of activity include what to put in a suitcase for a vacation, or what to put in a backpack for the first day of school.

#### Index Cards

Every teacher should have a large supply of index cards and plenty of markers. With these two tools, a teacher can create a variety of activities to review content information, practice grammar principles, provide conversation starters and practice questioning techniques. Index cards are inexpensive and can easily be packed in a suitcase for those who travel overseas to teach. Even without index cards, pieces of paper can serve a similar purpose.

Index cards can be used to practice content areas by writing questions about a specific topic on the cards. The questions can be true/false, either/or, or multiple choice/one word answers. The students can work in pairs or small groups to take turns asking each other a question, and teams can also be used to provide some competitive practice.

To use index cards for conversation starters, several topics or questions for discussion can be written on cards that pairs or small groups discuss. Students can also take one card and walk around the room, asking each person his/her question, or walking around asking a question and switching cards. Another way of developing conversation cards is to have outlines of conversations written on cards and then have partners A and B use the cards to complete the conversation. The outlines can be centered on a specific context. An example is shown in Appendix B.

Index cards are also very effective for sort-and-stack activities, which provide for a thorough review and tap into the kinesthetic learner. Cards can be sorted based on parts of speech, regular/irregular verbs, pronunciation sounds or a specific content area such as reptiles vs. mammals.

#### Dictation

Dictation is a traditional technique that has been used for ages. While students from across the globe are familiar with dictation exercises, there are many creative twists that

can enhance the common exercise. For example, teachers can dictate words to the students that are somehow connected. As the students write down the words, they need to determine the connection. For example, students might guess that the words: *life*, *car*, *policy*, and *signatures* connect to the word *insurance*. With this type of activity, students can brainstorm other words that are connected to the topic, or create a unique list of their own.

Dictation can also be used for pronunciation exercises. The students are given various sounds to write as headings in columns on their paper. As the teacher dictates the words, the students write the word under the correct heading. An example involves using the different sounds for *-ed* as the categories and dictating words ending in *-ed* to be placed in the correct columns for the *-ed* sound.

In the exercises listed above, dictation is used as an individual activity for review and evaluation. However, dictation can also be a collaborative action. One technique involves the teacher dictating several sentences to the students. The difference is that after the first sentence is dictated and written, the paper is passed to the person next to the student. This student then underlines any words that are not correct and writes the next sentence. This process continues until all of the sentences are dictated. Then comes the collaborative part. The students form a group using whatever papers they have in front of them to create one sheet with the most correct answers. This process involves a lot of discussion and collaboration; examples include completing surveys related to prices at various stores or gas stations, collecting information on the hours of operation for public buildings, or surveying the types of services offered at the library, food pantry, or senior center.

Besides collecting information about the community or classmates, a survey is a useful tool for the student to take responsibility for their own learning. Students can complete a survey about their learning styles, attendance record and completion of homework, or use of English outside the classroom. These types of surveys are not only useful for the student, but also for the teacher. For example, by knowing the general makeup of learning styles in the classroom, the teacher can gear the lessons to best meet the class's needs.

### Conclusion

Teachers play an important role in the interactive classroom. By presenting and facilitating effective techniques that relate to the students' needs and wants for learning the language, more interaction will take place. The techniques presented in this paper have been proven effective in a variety of classrooms and, if used consistently, promote

fun in learning the language, and guarantee that the students will use the language more effectively in the world they must learn to communicate in.

### Teacher Resources

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- Addison Wesley Longman <http://eltcatalogue.pearsoned-ema.com/>  
(now part of Pearson Education)
- Alta Books <http://www.altaesl.com/>
- Cambridge University Press <http://www.cup.es/efl.html>
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- Delta Systems <http://www.delta-systems.com/>
- Heinemann ELT <http://www.heinemann.com/>
- Heinle & Heinle <http://www.heinle.com/>
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(now part of Pearson Education)

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 Pro Lingua <http://www.prolinguaassociates.com/>  
 University of Michigan Press <http://www.press.umich.edu/esl/index.html>

**Bio's**

**Cheri Pierson** (Ed.D., Northern Illinois University) is an Assistant Professor at Wheaton College Graduate School in Intercultural Studies and TESOL. She specializes in teacher education and English for Special Purposes. She taught ESP in Sweden for ten years. She has served on the ITBE board and is a presenter at the ITBE State Convention.

**Mary Cerutti** (M.A., Intercultural Studies/TESOL, Wheaton College Graduate School) teaches ESL to adult learners for World Relief DuPage in Wheaton and a Chinese School in Hoffman Estates. She is a presenter at the ITBE State Convention.

**Rebecca Swab** (M.A., Intercultural Studies/TESOL, Wheaton College Graduate School) is the English for All (EFA) Pilot Coordinator at the Pui Tak Center in Chinatown, Chicago. She also teaches part time at DePaul University. She has taught in China for two years and with World Relief DuPage for one year. She is a presenter at the ITBE State Convention

**Appendix A**

Advertisements	Health (doctors, hospitals, fitness, sports)
Aerospace (space shuttle photos from space)	Hobbies
Agriculture	Holidays
Airport	Home Appliances
Animals	Health (doctors, hospitals, fitness, sports)
Arts	Housing (apartments, tents, condos, home)
Bicycles/Motorcycles	Living Spaces (bathroom, kitchen, living room, bedroom)
Boating/Sailing	Menus
Buildings	Music/Dance/Theater
Business Technology (copy machine, fax machine, phone systems, computers, time clock)	Nature (plants: wild/domestic)
Business People	Occupations
Cars/Trucks/Vans	People (different races, genders, social backgrounds)
Cities/Towns/Rural Communities	Picture Series (pictures which tell a story)
Clothing	Recreation/Camping
Conversation Starters (unique pictures)	Scenery (different landscapes)
Culture: Foreign/U.S./Foreigners in the U.S.)	Seasons/Weather
Education	Shopping (supermarket, department store, mall)
Family	Sports
Famous People (American/International)	Technology (cell phones, ipods)
Finance	Toys
Fitness	Trains
Food	Weddings
Furniture	World Maps
Global Travel	

**Appendix B**

<b>Person A</b>	<b>Person B</b>
1. Hey, what do you think of this house?	1. I love it!
2. Really? What do you like best about it?	2. I like _____. What do you like?
3. I like _____.	3. Oh, I like that too. I also like _____.



## Fall Workshop 2006

By Jennifer Eick-Magán

It's becoming an ITBE tradition: our Fall Workshop lands on a spectacular autumn day. In spite of stiff competition from the lakefront and other outdoor attractions, the October 7th workshop brought in around one hundred participants to Saint Xavier University on Chicago's south side.

Claudia Becker opened the plenary with a reflection on her poem "No More Questions Asked," a winner in the 2003 All Nations Poetry Contest. Dr. Becker, Saint Xavier professor and Fall Workshop co-chair, explained that, "The poem deals with changes in an ever-changing environment, especially when coming to new countries." Our new ITBE President, Kasia Stadnik, followed with a warm welcome to all attending and a word of thanks to our host, represented by Carol Tolson, Associate Dean, School of Education at Saint Xavier. Finally, Dr. Tolson introduced our featured presenter, Edwin Silverman, Chief of the Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Services for the State of Illinois. Dr. Silverman's engrossing plenary spoke of the often little-known facts related to immigration, including the fact that immigration has been a global phenomenon and mentioning the resources that his office has made available to help immigrant students, parents, and teachers.

The centerpiece of the workshop consisted of twelve concurrent sessions which offered options for all ITBE Special Interest Group areas (Elementary, Secondary, Adult, and Higher Education) plus Generation 1.5 and

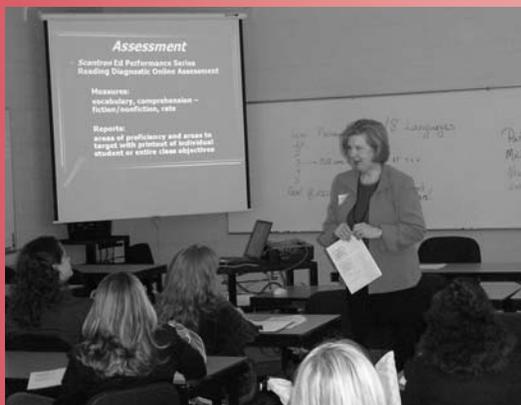
even Nursing. Such popular topics as "Low-Preparation Games and Activities," by Dennis Bricault of North Park University, and "Language Learning with iPods," by David Eick and Janel Pettes Guikema of Grand Valley State University, demonstrate the relevance of both the traditional and the cutting-edge to today's ESL/Bilingual Ed teacher. Topics also dealt with political and academic issues such as James Rabbitt's "Legal Foundations of Bilingual and ESL Education in the US and their Effect on the Future" and Jean Madden's "Comparison/Contrast of Linguistic Models to an Observed Model to Ascribe Teaching Methodology." In another session, Julie Ashley from Saint Xavier University spoke about why it is important for ESL and mainstream teachers alike to be familiar with the phenomenon of Generation 1.5 as well as how to service such students. Of this session, Maja Teref noted that, "If you ever wondered why some well researched teaching methods have not worked with some of your students, it may be precisely because they are part of the "cross-over" generation that is becoming increasingly prominent in U.S. schools."

ITBE would like to thank our host, Saint Xavier University, which provided presenters and exhibitors with beautiful accommodations. We are honored to go down as the first such event at Saint Xavier in the history of the institution. ITBE also expresses gratitude to Dr. Becker's students for their help and to all our sponsoring exhibitors.

## Pictures from the Fall Workshop



# More Pictures from the Fall Workshop



ELECTRONIC LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS PRESENTS...

**AWARD-WINNING ESL SOFTWARE  
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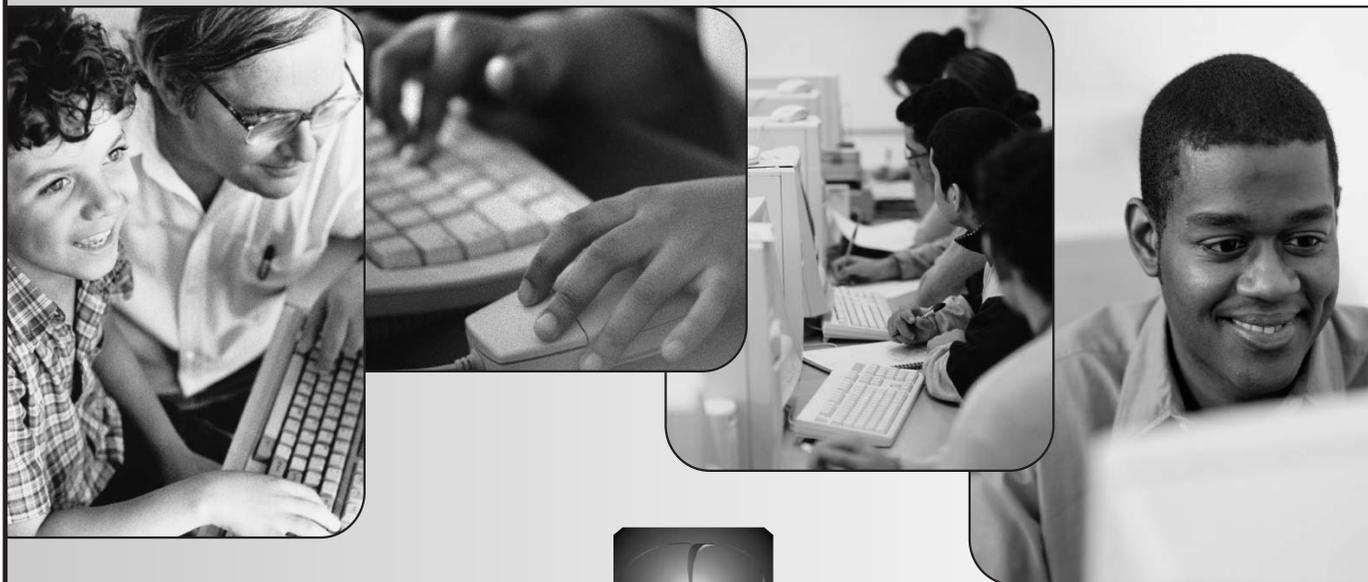


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# Member Snapshot

**Currently working as:** I have been the director of the English Language Academy, the intensive English program at DePaul University, for the last four years, having first come to DePaul in 1998 as an instructor and associate director.

**Years in Education:** Altogether it's about 32 years that I've been in working in TESOL, which includes 15 years teaching full-time, and 17 years in program administration of various kinds: coordinating, supervising, doing curriculum work, and editing.

**Years as an ITBE member:** I joined ITBE when I moved to Chicago in 1996, and served as a member-at-large on the board for one year, and then treasurer for four years. I seem to collect treasurerships, having in my time been treasurer of three TESOL affiliates and the first treasurer of Study Illinois, our state international-education marketing consortium.

**A memorable experience for me:** I have been fortunate to have enjoyed so many memorable experiences in the field, most of them related to the excitement of working with teams to launch EFL and ESL programs from the ground up, which I did in both Tokyo and Hokkaido, Japan; in St. Paul, Minnesota; and also here in Chicago. As a teacher, it is of course the work itself that is most satisfying. I remember my teaching of civil servants in Saudi Arabia very fondly, actually more than 6,000 hours of it all in the same classroom! And later I had the honor of teaching the managers' class at Toyota World Headquarters in Japan for two years. That was an extraordinary experience. As a long-term ESOL professional – with no way to hide it – I particularly treasure those experiences of having former students come back after many years to express appreciation for what our programs have made possible for them in their lives and careers.

**A regrettable professional experience:** I have often said, without joking, that I think of our profession in the way the Chinese think of the Yangtze, as a “sorrow” – because of the constant flooding – but also as the river of life that sustains and nurtures us. Frankly, I don't think people stay in the TESOL field if they let regrets get to them, and if they move on to something better and more challenging and rewarding for them that's fine. This is an extremely volatile field, with lots of employment ups and downs, with programs opening and closing right and left, and many of us have simply found

that we have had to work where we can for a time, while we can – I certainly have. We struggle to change that, to improve our status, our working conditions, our compensation, and so on. But on the whole, I think you choose this field because you love it, and you stay in it because you find intrinsic rewards, and you know that the work you are doing is important.



**Professional Passions:** You might guess from my previous answers that I am passionate about the significant contribution that second-language education makes generally, and that here in the U.S. globalizing and diversifying our curricula are crucial – more important now, not less, than prior to 9/11. I don't think you can be a teacher or administrator in TESOL today without being an advocate. We need to continue to get the word out there to Administrator A – and forgive me, but that goes right up to the White House and beyond – that we ARE globalization, we ARE diversity. And our students are here in our schools – elementary, secondary, colleges, adult programs – as teachers as much as they are learners. It is increasingly important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that we listen to them and learn from them.

Being committed to these things, I have to say for myself: “No regrets” – though I do admit that the enforcer role we program administrators have had to embrace very unhappily post-9/11 weighs very heavily. I have spent a great deal of time in the last five years fighting for my program's survival, and like all challenging work, that has had physical and personal costs.

**Future Plans:** I figure I still have a few good years left in me, in my current position, and as part of that I was also ready to take on this three-year leadership role in ITBE, as president-elect, president, and past president. I am just working out my specific professional objectives as we speak. There are times when I find my mind wandering to a few other “incompletes” I have earned in the great gradebook of life – some unfinished writing and performing projects, volunteer service, travel, and so on.

**Beyond Work:** I have a very busy and full life beyond work, though as I have implied in recent years, work is occupying way too much of my waking time. I come from a small but close-knit family. My partner and I enjoy the Chicago arts scene and activity in our church, serving on the board of trustees and participating in educational and worship initiatives there. Like many of us at this age, we are both managing aging parents, from afar, which is not a snap. I have been involved for the last several years in musical groups of various kinds, as a singer, pianist, and bubonic bassoonist. So I would like to try to find time as much as possible to continue doing those things, and getting to the health club more often, where my cardiologist advises me I should SPIN!



Elizabeth Minicz  
Associate Professor, Harper College

### **Dateline Glendale Heights: NEWS BITES BITES THE DUST**

This will be the last News Bites column for the ITBE newsletter. I feel that it is becoming more and more difficult to find interesting stories to write about. I am disheartened by the sameness of the stories I report and fear that my efforts are as stale as week-old baguettes. A year or two ago, I tried to interest one of the readers to take over, but alas there were no biters. After complaining to the editor, Irene Brosnahan, about my frustration, she suggested that a revamp was in order. New Bites will morph into something else. At this point, I'm not sure what that will be, but I think reporting on classroom practices may inject new life into my writing. First the last few news stories. Then, I'd like to end on the teaching highlight of my last week.

### **Don't Fence Me Out**

This past summer the 60-plus "boyfriend" of a friend who lives in Colorado was dispatched to Arizona for border patrol duty. "John" is in the Reserves of the National Guard. Perhaps you recall previous News Bites columns where I reported on President Bush's promise that 7,000 National Guards would be sent to patrol the border. Did you picture sixty-year-olds with arthritic knees when you read about the initiative? Perhaps you also recall reports on the House and Senate efforts to pass immigration legislation. As of today, months after the flurry of news stories last winter and spring about new legislation, it still hasn't happened.

Jim Abrams of the Associated Press quotes House Judiciary Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) in the September 22, 2006, issue of the *Chicago Tribune* as having said, "We're running out of time in this Congress." You think?

On September 21, the House approved three bills on deporting gang members, imprisoning tunnelers, and empowering the police to arrest illegal immigrants. Senator Arlen Specter (PA) countered, "I don't see how we can deal with the immigration issue on a piecemeal basis." Neither the House nor the Senate has been able to reconcile their opposing bills. John Conyers, (MI), top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee said, "It's political gamesmanship that forecasts an election." Duh?

### **Bilingual Babies**

*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* published an article by D. Aileen Dodd on September, 4, 2006, about bilingual education programs for babies and toddlers. Dodd wrote, "Some well-heeled metro Atlanta parents are paying thousands of dollars so their babies can learn a second language before they can fully speak their first."

Preschool immersion programs abound today in Atlanta and other cities too. Bilingual Baby Academy in Gwinnet County, Georgia, opened in August 2006, to teach two, three, and four-year-olds Spanish. In Fulton, Georgia, the Spanish Academy, another immersion program, has been operating for six years. DeShea Brooks, director of the Spanish Academy, said, "A lot of kids are bored in a traditional preschool. They know their colors and they know their numbers. Children love to be challenged. Here the whole day is a new adventure."

The monthly tuition at the Bilingual Baby Academy is \$365 per child for two four-hour sessions twice a week. Staying fluent after preschool is a challenge that most school districts cannot afford to meet so some parents hire bilingual nannies to care for their children. Does any of this sound strange to you?

I spent the first five years of my life in a household where English was not the first language. I lived with my grandparents who emigrated from Sweden in the 1920s. All of the adults spoke Swedish on a daily basis, but curiously enough, as soon as we kids could understand the adults they stopped speaking Swedish. We were not sent to Swedish school to maintain the language, eventually moved to an Irish-Catholic neighborhood, and now *please* and *thank you* are the extent of my Swedish. I confess that learning to speak French and Spanish outweighed any desire to speak

Swedish. Bad me.

Back to bilingual babies. Ah, the point is unless public schools implement and sustain foreign language programs, bilingual baby academies will just be another fad for affluent parents.

For more information check out these websites. [www.cal.org](http://www.cal.org); [www.bilingualbabyacademy.com](http://www.bilingualbabyacademy.com) [www.thespanishacademy.com](http://www.thespanishacademy.com); [www.multilingual-children.org](http://www.multilingual-children.org)

### **It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing**

Do you ever get tired of teaching the same old stuff? I do. Unfortunately, there's a limited number of ways to put a new twist on lessons that revolve around life skills. This week, however, I was really excited about lessons I created for my low-intermediate adult ESL class. For a change of pace this semester I decided to use an old textbook that I hadn't used for several years. The arts and entertainment focus in the chapter I planned to teach this week is *Jazz*. When I asked my students if anyone liked jazz, only one student seemed to know what I was talking about. The rest all claimed to dislike it, but from their comments I decided they really had no idea what I was talking about.

I asked Roberto to bring one of his jazz CDs to the next class meeting, and he agreed. Although I hoped the music might win students over, I didn't think that was enough to get them to understand what jazz is all about.

After class I did a web search for jazz. One of the sites that inspired me was the PBS site for Ken Burns' series on Jazz and another was for PBS kids. My jazz lesson began to take shape. The PBS kid site had a page devoted to jazz greats. There were photos and brief bios of Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, Benny Goodman, and others. Next I went to the library website at Harper and learned that the library had the complete Ken Burns series on video. It also had numerous CDs of the music featured on the series. I took a quick trip to the library and returned to my office with the video devoted to Swing in the 1930s, and a CD with many notable recordings by the same artists featured in the video. That night instead of watching HGTV (Home and Garden Television), I watched the Ken Burns documentary and more les-

sons took shape.

I chose three songs for students to listen to in class the next day: "It Don't Mean a Thing If You Don't Got That Swing" by Duke Ellington, "Ain't Misbehavin'" by Louis Armstrong, and "God Save the Child" by Billie Holiday. I made a chart that listed the titles and artists and wrote five questions students had to answer while listening. I provided a brief historical context for the music (The Great Depression: unemployment, poverty, racism, discrimination), and then played the songs. Students filled in the charts and then interviewed a partner by asking and answering the questions.

I gave each student a copy of the Jazz Greats page from PBS Kids so they could see photos of the musicians. Goodman was the only white face. Next I gave students a homework assignment which required them to answer questions about the "greats." Since we have been focusing on past tense regular and irregular verbs in class, the assignment continued this theme and provided additional practice asking and answering questions.

While students worked on computer assignments later in the class, I played Robert's CD of Oscar Peterson.

At the next class meeting, I will be showing a ten-minute segment of the Burns' video that highlights the early career of Ella Fitzgerald. I will play "A Tisket A Tasket" by Fitzgerald as a pre-watching activity and they will see her perform this song in the video. I also prepared a while-listening activity.

I hope my efforts have piqued the interest of students in a kind of music they rarely listen to. They have learned a little history, engaged in conversation, practiced grammar, and writing, and used an interactive website. We have moved well beyond, "What music do you like? and Who is your favorite singer?" to something a little more substantial. I wish I had the space and time to relate the results of our conversation about "What musical instrument would you like to play? and Why is music important in our lives?" Another time perhaps. The next chapter in the textbook is on housing. I've been watching and recording programs on HGTV all weekend.

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## Nominate a Colleague or Yourself for 2007-2008!

We are looking for nominations for the following positions:

### VICE PRESIDENT

- ❖ Serves as the President Elect of the Association from June 2007 to June 2008 and presides at all official occasions when the President is absent
- ❖ Acts as recorder at all board meetings and maintains the official documents of Illinois TESOL•BE as First Vice President
- ❖ Serves as President of Illinois TESOL•BE from June 2008 to June 2009
- ❖ Serves as Past President, and ITBE liaison to TESOL, from June 2009 to June 2010

### MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

- ❖ Elected to a three-year term, from June 2007 to June 2010
- ❖ Serve as members or chairs of the active committees of Illinois TESOL•BE
- ❖ Participate in the business and activities of Illinois TESOL•BE
- ❖ Support the officers and other members of the Board by regularly attending Board meetings

Please fill out the form below and mail by March 15, 2007 or visit our website and download form at [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org)

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A nomination form is also available on the Illinois TESOL•BE web site – [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org)

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\* Student membership applications must be accompanied by verification of full-time enrollment (e.g., current semester registration).

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

**Membership in Illinois TESOL•BE is separate from membership in TESOL.**

The Professional Planner

<b>December 11-14</b>	<b>30th Annual Statewide Conference for Teachers of Linguistically And Culturally Diverse Students</b> Oak Brook Hills Resort Marriot, Oak Brook, IL
<b>March 9-10</b>	<b>Illinois TESOL•BE Annual Convention</b> Holiday Inn Select, Naperville, IL For more information, visit: <a href="http://www.itbe.org">www.itbe.org</a>
<b>March 21-24</b>	<b>41st Annual TESOL Convention &amp; Exhibit (TESOL 2007)</b> Seattle Convention Center, Seattle, WA For more information visit: <a href="http://www.tesol.org">www.tesol.org</a>
<b>If you need information on the above dates, please visit website at <a href="http://itbe.org">itbe.org</a></b>	





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Mark your calendar for the Annual State Convention on March 9 and 10, 2007.



Apply for an ITBE scholarship -- Graduate, Undergraduate, and Professional Development. The deadline is December 1, 2006.



Participate in the SIG contests – Poetry for Elementary and Writing for Secondary. The deadline for submission is December 29, 2006, and January 14, 2007, respectively.

**For more information, go to our website – [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org)**