



# ORTESOL NEWS

OREGON TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

ORTESOL Quarterly Newsletter \* Volume 35, No. 2 \* Spring 2012

Portland State University \* PO Box 751 \* Portland, OR 97207

## ORTESOL Work Plan for 2012

*Luciana Diniz*

*ORTESOL President*

Dear ORTESOL Members,

The ORTESOL Board has been working hard this year to organize several professional development events for its members, including our spring workshop and fall conference.

At the spring workshop, which will take place at PCC Cascade on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, members will have an opportunity to listen to and discuss new approaches to teaching reading and vocabulary in all ESL levels and environments. We are excited to have Neil Anderson, who will be sponsored by Heinle/National Geographic, with us in the morning, and four wonderful speakers/facilitators in the afternoon: Julia MacRae, Carmen Caceda, Kathy Harris and Susan Conrad. The afternoon sessions will be highly interactive, and members will have a chance to share ideas and learn from other attendees. I hope you can join us! This event is free for members, but we would like attendees to register in advance, so we can better plan the event. To register, please use the link on our website ([www.ortesol.org](http://www.ortesol.org)).

On November 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, we will hold our fall conference at PCC Sylvania. We have one confirmed plenary speaker, Christina Cavage, who be sponsored by Pearson/Longman, and we are waiting for confirmation for the second one. The conference theme will be "Teaching in the Time of Transitions." The theme reflects all the changes that have been going on in public schools and colleges/universities in the past few years. All members are encouraged to submit a proposal for the conference. You can find instructions on how to submit a proposal on our website ([www.ortesol.org](http://www.ortesol.org)). The deadline is July 31<sup>st</sup>. Registration for the conference will open in September, and that's when you will also have a chance to renew your membership for 2013.

I hope to see you at the spring workshop and at the fall conference!

Have a great summer,

*Luciana Diniz*, ORTESOL President

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## Call for Proposals

### ORTESOL Fall Conference 2012

ORTESOL is Now Accepting Proposals for our Fall Conference:

#### Teaching in the Time of Transitions

*November 16-17*

*PCC, Sylvania Campus*

Please submit your proposals to:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/OR2012conference>

**by Tuesday, July 31st, 2012**

**(Deadline will not be extended)**

## Plagiarism and the ESL Student

*Demetra Perros*

*Writing and Academic Resource Center, Emerson College*

In the ESL setting, the reality is that plagiarism is prevalent—too prevalent. Instructors hear tone shifts, identify vocabulary that seems too advanced, and see verb tenses that haven't yet been taught. We write "see me after class" on the borrowed essay because as cross-culturists, we understand that plagiarism may not be directly translatable to another country's cultural and ideological systems.

Recently, I had a similar experience in a one-on-one conference with a graduate-level Marketing student from Southeast Asia. I highlighted a paragraph in this student's essay, asking him if the passage was in his own words.

"Yes," he replied, almost defiantly. "Why?"

I pointed out the paragraph's inconsistency in tone. Then I stressed the importance of in-text citations.

"Isn't using quotes cheating?" the student asked.

"Not using quotes would be cheating," I corrected.

Yet the student persisted. He told me that using sources seemed lazy, like he was relying on others instead of relying on himself. He believed that using other peoples' information, even when cited, was "no good" because he was not thinking of the ideas *on his own*.

*Plagiarism Continued on Page 5*

## Book Review: *The New Kids*

David Jordan

Portland Community College

Have you ever read a book with a truly compelling premise but with a presentation that just doesn't do it justice? *The New Kids: Big Dreams and Brave Journeys at a High School for Immigrant Teens*, written by Brooke Hauser in 2011, is one of those books, unfortunately. Hauser tells the story of a year in the life of New York City's International School at Prospect Heights, a public high school for immigrants, including the stories of many of its amazing students. Two stories which stand out are those of Mohamed Bah from Sierra Leone, who came to the U.S. as a guest of a New England church group and decided to stay permanently, and Yasmeen Salah, a young woman from Yemen, taking care of her two younger siblings after their parents' death and awaiting her arranged marriage.

The students are English Language Learners, which is what attracted me to the book in the first place, but this is not a book about pedagogy, or even really about language. It is, however, about something I think many of us ESL teachers are equally interested in: different cultures and how they clash and mesh when they all end up in the U.S.

My main problem with the book is Hauser's inability to focus on what is important (at least to me). Instead, she ends up dwelling on superficial details, like each kid or teacher's appearance.

Here is what she writes about Chit Su, a Burmese student who came to the U.S. via a refugee camp in Thailand:

Today Chit Su is dressed in a gray hoodie over a tight white camisole with a short jean skirt, leggings, black Converse All Stars, and ankle socks stitched with tiny American flags.

Hauser may be trying to show us how far Chit Su has come since she first arrived and how she now fits in after being in the States for a while, but do we need to know what she's wearing?

Her effort to include details, perhaps thinking they would make the story more interesting or compelling, just ends up being distracting, almost like product placement. We hear over and over again about students' True Religion jeans and in her description of teacher Alex Harty, Hauser writes, "Alex is rarely seen without his headphones. Not just any headphones. These are Shure SCL2 sound-isolating earbuds in black..." Did we really need that information?

I wonder if by writing in the way she did, Hauser was trying to tap into the mind of the students she was writing about: sex-crazed, fashion-obsessed, and constantly examining themselves and each other? In her description of the school's first prom, Hauser writes,

The air was balmy, almost tropical. The sky was the color of a new hickey, purplish and dark except for a thin sliver of moon, dangling over the Williamsburg Bridge in the distance, as tiny and perfect as two charms on a bracelet.

Of Jessica, a Chinese girl on her own in the city, with her mother still back in China and her father in the States but remarried with a new family, Hauser writes,

Her contemplativeness is at odds with her personal style, which appears to have been culled from bargain bins across Chinatown and inspired by old episodes of Punky Brewster. She favors stripes and sequins and clothes in My Little Pony colors, which she pairs with little punk touches like an Arabic keffiyah scarf in robin's egg blue or a single silver star dangling from her ear.

Don't get me wrong—I am a huge fan of pop culture. I find it fascinating and it is always interesting how outsiders like these kids interpret it. But there is a time and a place for pop culture. These kids' stories deserve more serious treatment that would help convey their struggles and inspire others. *The New Kids* could be a source of insight, and in some places it is, but overall it was a bit too fluffy. I'm not sure if it's Hauser's magazine background or the fact that she was trying to make her book appeal to a broader audience or just keep us entertained, but I felt that the purpose of the book and its style were at odds with each other.

You may be wondering now whether you should read this book or not. I think you should, for pure enjoyment, and with low expectations. You may see some of yourself in the school's teachers or some of your students in these kids. For instance, I loved this passage on the idiosyncrasies of Mohamed Bah:

In a school echoing with strange malapropisms—"Chill down, dude," for instance—Mohamed's vernacular is among the strangest. His teachers came up with a name to describe his particular brand of pidgin: Fubahnish, a hybrid of the West African language known as Fula, English, and a third tongue that can only be described as Bah-nese. A distinguishing characteristic is Mohamed's inability to pronounce his *r*'s. He has gotten his fair share of dirty looks at restaurants for asking the server for a *fahk* and knife. Another feature is hyperbole. In distress, Mohamed often sighs, "Oh, my life!" No one knows where he learned the expression, but it fits into a bigger lexicon of dramatic exclamations and catchphrases that he has amassed in the two years since he landed in America. "Life is a crazy jah-ney," he likes to say, shaking his head.

It's hard not to smile when reading about Mohamed in this book. Conversely, some of the harrowing details of students' lives described here will shock you, such as Ngawang Thokmey, whose journey from Tibet to Nepal to India and finally to the U.S. is the focus of the chapter entitled "Twenty-Four Hours in a Suitcase."

Another part of the book I enjoyed was being reminded, yet again, how much we take for granted in terms of what we think of as common knowledge and no matter how culturally aware we think we are, there is always more to learn. In the chapter titled "Over the Counter and Under the Radar," we learn about students struggling to fill out the high school intake form, which asks basic questions like "How old are you?" "Where are you from?" and "What is your name?" The students don't have difficulties because of language but because perhaps in their country, no one uses last names or in their country,

## Connecting the Classroom with the Real World: An Event at PSU's IELP

Claudia Porter, Ph.D  
Portland State University

It is Winter Term 2012 at Portland State University. In the Intensive English Language Program, all sections of the intermediate Reading classes are reading a novel about a young Cambodian girl who escaped the Khmer Rouge genocide and consequently starts a new life in Oregon. The book, *Children of the River*, is a challenging read because there is a lot of challenging vocabulary. However, although the novel is fiction, the students are moved by the story, as they can relate to the concept of living in a foreign country. In class discussions, we establish connections with their own lives as students, yet the question remains as to what someone might go through when forced to move to another country due to the circumstances in his or her own country as described in the novel.

A copy of an article about an actual Khmer Rouge survivor handed to me by the lead instructor gives me the idea of connecting the classroom experience with the real world. The article is about Kilong Ung, author of *Golden Leaf*, who lives in Portland, Oregon, with his family. In his book, he describes his experience as a child in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. Despite circumstances that are nearly humanly

impossible, he survived and was brought to the U.S. at the age of about 15 by an American family. Having survived the traumatic events in his country and escaped to the U.S., he got his education in the U.S., during which he experienced some struggle with the English language, and he now lives and works in Portland and has written his memoirs about the traumatic events that took over his life, his family, his childhood, and his country.

After searching for the author's contact information, I email him and described the novel that my class had been reading. I invite him to come to my class as a guest speaker. I explain how it would be an extraordinary opportunity for the students to connect the classroom experience with reality, and how grateful I would be if he could come. Within 15 minutes I have an affirmative response. Thrilled about this extraordinary opportunity, I start planning the event by asking other Reading Level 3 instructors if they might be interested in participating and reserve a lecture hall that seats about 100 people. Everything is set for March 5, 2012.

On the day of the event, Kilong Ung arrives as the lecture hall is still filling up. Soon, all seats are taken, and as more students keep streaming in, some remain standing throughout the event. When



Year: 1979; Status: Refugee

Year: 2012; Status: Author

Kilong Ung starts his guest lecture, the audience is more quiet and attentive than I had never seen before. His lecture is captivating. He has a real skill to connect with the audience and pull them into his lecture. He talks about his book, events that are described in his book, some of them so atrocious that they are hard to process. He shares his perspective of coming to the U.S. when he was about 15 years old. While his experience as a student was very different from any of the students' experience who chose to come here for some time to study, the connection is there between the students' culture shock and his own culture shock. Kilong talks about how American high school students complained about school, but what he saw was, "I am getting an education!" He talks about the complaints about food by American high school students, but he says, "I was getting food!" He adds some other incidents of culture shock, which are easy to relate to for anyone from a different culture.

Next, he shares pictures of his family and tells us that he lost ten immediate family members and fifty relatives (possibly more). Then, "one day", he says, "this guy comes up to me and says, 'I know who is responsible for your family members' death. For \$800, I will kill him for you!', but Kilong tells us, 'I said, 'no, I don't want you to kill him!'" The audience is glued to the speaker's words. While on the screen we see Mahatma Gandhi quoted, Kilong tells us that we can overcome our sufferings as a way to help others. He shares with us that everyone is a golden leaf. "Golden Leaf," when capitalized, refers to someone who survived the Khmer Rouge genocide, but non-capitalized, it can refer to everyone, because everyone has some type of suffering in his or her life, for example, a disease or any kind of hardship that we have to overcome.

*Classroom Connections, Continued on Page 6*

## Listening and Speaking Tips for ESOL Teachers

Nancy Hiser

American Speech Sounds/English Talk Shop

### Tips when listening to someone with an accent who may be difficult to understand

Our world is becoming increasingly diverse. We often interact with people from many different countries. Some may be perfectly understandable and others may be more difficult to understand. Here are suggestions when listening to someone who speaks with an accent and who may be difficult to understand:

1. Listen in a relaxed manner and show the speaker you are trying to understand. Give them positive verbal (“uh-huh”, “yes,” “I see.”) and non-verbal (head nods, facial expression) feedback when they pause.
2. Be honest and let them know kindly when you have **not** understood. Assume responsibility by using “I” language, such as, “I’m sorry, I didn’t get that.” “You” language (“You are speaking too quickly.”) tends to assign blame or fault for the way they are speaking.
3. Give the speaker sufficient time. Don’t speak for him or her.
4. Rephrase the message as you have understood it and allow the speaker to confirm it for you. Using different words may help.
5. Be positive. Applaud the tremendous accomplishment that this person has achieved in speaking in a second language.



### Tips when speaking to those who may not understand you because English is not their native language

You may be speaking with people with varying degrees of English proficiency. Here are suggestions for speaking with those who have learned English as a second language and may not understand you:

1. Let the listener(s) know you want to be clear and understandable. Ask them to let you know when you are not. They may not tell you, but it shows you are interested in a successful interaction and welcome the opportunity to clarify or repeat what you have said to them. When you are asked to explain something or repeat it, welcome that opportunity and reinforce the person who asked you. (“Thanks. I may not have been as clear as I could have, so let me try again.” “Is that clear?”)
2. Watch your rate of speaking. The faster you talk, the more difficult you may be to understand. Rate is a combination of how quickly you pronounce words and how often you pause. Pauses allow the listener to catch up and think about what has been said.
3. Speak with adequate loudness; increasing your volume above normal won’t be helpful.
4. Alter your vocabulary and sentence structure to your audience’s language level. Using more common vocabulary and simpler sentence structure enhance your chances of being understood. Using elevated vocabulary and complex sentences heighten the risk of being misunderstood.
5. Be aware that conversational speech often has slang and idiomatic expressions that native speakers take for granted but may not be clear to non-native speakers. Avoid these expressions.

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### *New Kids Continued from Page 2*

age is determined by the growing season, not a date on a calendar.

It was surprising little details like these of the students’ lives before America as well as once they arrived here that kept me reading. Once I stopped being annoyed by hearing about Wet ‘n Wild nail polish or the shade and shape of a student’s hair, I was able to enjoy this book and appreciate what it had to offer. Maybe I’ll just have to write my own book someday about my own experience and the experiences of my students! Until I do, though, I’ll have to be satisfied with what other people have to offer.

Happy reading! By the way, if you end up reading this book, I’d love to hear your thoughts. Please email me: [davidaschoem@yahoo.com](mailto:davidaschoem@yahoo.com)

*Plagiarism Continued from Page 1*

I explained that academic writing in America encourages the use of reliable sources. “The quotes support your argument,” I told him. “They show your credibility as a writer and your authority on the subject.”

Then he told me that his “voice” was made up of everything he hears and reads—his professor’s lectures, his textbook’s sentence structures, his peers’ comments in class. His voice incorporates all of these aspects, regardless of how they compare to his tested English proficiency.

This experience stuck with me (so much that I needed to write this reflection). I understand that plagiarism is not a universal concept, but I had never before looked at it from this student’s seemingly reverse perspective. How could *using* sources be perceived as cheating? Eventually, I conceded that the only reason it seemed so peculiar was because I was imposing *my* ideological framework upon the student. I grew up in America, with full awareness of the concept known as ‘plagiarism.’ My student did not.

Plagiarism is a markedly Western concept, and it is a post-colonial act of dominance when the Western world imposes its academic concepts upon its subjects (Sutherland-Smith, 2008, p. 96). In her article “Plagiarism, cultural diversity and metaphor,” Leask (2006) recommends that plagiarism be viewed as an “intercultural encounter” (p. 191). Just because the dominant culture is knowledgeable of plagiarism, doesn’t mean that our international students are. Leask puts it best when she describes that ESL students should be regarded as “efficient learners in an unfamiliar environment rather than as deficient learners who need to be taught a better way of doing academic work” (p. 196). As inter-culturists, it is our duty to exercise this sense of open-mindedness.

Now, how do we transform theory into practice? As DeSena (2007) points out in *Preventing Plagiarism*, no one solution exists in eradicating plagiarism altogether (it is too complex to be so grossly simplified). But here are a few tips to apply to the classroom that can help deconstruct the concept for ESL students.

Before distributing an essay prompt, I suggest spending time on the concept. Define the operative term, i.e. “Plagiarism is using another person’s written work or ideas without citing them.” You’ll probably then go on to define “cite,” using lots of examples. Next, explain the seriousness of plagiarism in the American education system and why it is so serious.

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ORTESOL is an association of professionals concerned with the education of students for whom English is a non-native language. Newsletter submissions may be mailed to the editor at the address below or e-mailed to [j.n.eisenberg@gmail.com](mailto:j.n.eisenberg@gmail.com). Those accepted for publication may be edited. The newsletter is not responsible for the opinions expressed by its contributors. Send all inquiries concerning the organization to ORTESOL, c/o Dept. of Applied Linguistics, Portland State University, PO Box 751, Portland, OR 97207.

After the students *listen* to your lecture, ask them to *speak* out loud, explaining in their own words what plagiarism means. Have them *write* down why plagiarism is treated as a serious issue in America. Provide your class with examples of correct in-text and end-text citations—a sample sheet they can *read*, showing the proper format for MLA/APA citations. Lead a *grammar* activity illustrating the correct ways to punctuate quotes, complete with signal phrases. By integrating plagiarism awareness into your curriculum, you will effectively teach speaking, writing, reading, and grammar skills before the essay has even been assigned.

### References

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*Classroom Connections, Continued from Page 3*

When asked the reason why he did not consent to having the responsible person killed, Kilong responds that he decided then that he did not want to take revenge because it wouldn't change anything. Instead, he decided to be an ambassador and let the world know what happened in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979. In order to prevent anything like this from happening again, he is helping Cambodians build schools in order to guarantee that children get an education and learn critical thinking. "Children who get an education and become critical thinkers, don't follow orders blindly!" With his book, he is telling the world what really happened. He gives guest lectures and lets people know about the horrific events.

The focus of his lecture, however, is not about all the gruesome things the Khmer Rouge did. The lecture focuses mainly on the question, "What do you do with your life after a traumatic experience like this?" It is the most inspiring lecture that I have ever seen. I look at the students who are all still glued to the speaker's face. When it is their turn to ask questions, the exchange begins. The story of the novel read in class takes on a whole new dimension. This is not a mere exchange of information. This takes us very far away from the four walls of the classroom. This is a cultural exchange, where English is used as a second language not only to share information, but to penetrate cultural boundaries in an attempt to truly understand an amazing human being and his approach to life after experiencing life-changing traumatic events. In this event, everybody becomes an equal member of the multicultural group, as the cultural differences fade in the background. Every participant of this event is using English as a tool to communicate about the events and to try and connect with the amazing guest speaker. Cultural walls crumble, as students and instructors begin to see from Kilong's perspective what his mission is. The fact that Kilong, too, was once a second language learner helps bridge the gap even more between him and the students who came here for very different reasons. What an experience for the students to meet someone who has been completely traumatized by the tragic events in his country and yet turned this trauma into such a constructive and positive contribution to his own country and the world.! Kilong Ung has shown us what a true ambassador is, and the students, who will eventually take this home, can, with this experience in the back of their minds, contribute to a better world. Real English is not taught through textbooks and novels alone, but through making the connection with the real world and real people. If we can open our students' hearts and minds, they will learn real English and contribute to a more peaceful, more understanding world.



## Maybe It's Like Money in Heaven

*N. Carver  
Portland State University*

I woke up this morning thinking that  
My students would no doubt soon forget me  
We just said goodbye yesterday  
Lot's of hugs, smiles, photos  
But I'm sure they will soon forget me

So I tried to remember *my* teachers  
All the way back  
Back through elementary, junior high,  
High school, and college

I remembered what they had done for me  
One taught me to love learning History  
Another taught me to understand and even enjoy Geome-  
try  
One taught me the beauty of Shakespeare  
And another encouraged me to go to college

I thought of all the kindnesses I had received  
From these and other teachers  
Too late to send thank-you letters I guess  
For I am quite old and my teachers  
May have all passed away by now

But, perhaps when a student thinks about his or her teachers  
In this way

It's like money in heaven

And maybe if you get enough money in heaven  
You can come back here again – teach again

All I know is

I am thankful for all my wonderful teachers and what they did for me  
And perhaps one day, one of my students will remember me in this  
way

Cha Ching!