



ORTESOL NEWS

OREGON TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

ORTESOL Quarterly Newsletter Volume 35, No. 1, Winter 2012

Portland State University PO Box 751, Portland, OR 97207

Letter from the ORTESOL President

Luciana Diniz
ORTESOL President

Dear Fellow ORTESOL Members,

ORTESOL was very busy last year organizing many professional development activities. We hosted three main events: the spring workshop, the tri-TESOL conference (with Washington TESOL and British Columbia), and the fall mini-conference. They were all very successful, and we received extremely positive feedback from members. ORTESOL also provided travel grants and free memberships to TESOL for selected members. We hope to have even more opportunities like these in the years to come.

The Board is also excited to report that we have a new Advisory Council. The plan is to have a number of Advisory Council members who will help us spread the word about the organization and advise the board in different areas, such as K-12 and higher education involvement, finances, and intercultural communication. Our current Advisory Members include Carmen Caceda, Kathy Harris, Larissa Sofronova, Julie Belmore, and Aylin Bunk. I would like to welcome them to our team.

The Board has great plans for this year. We are already starting to plan our spring workshop and the fall conference, as well as other opportunities for professional development. We would love to hear from you if you any ideas or suggestions. You can contact the board at ortesol@yahoo.com

Many thanks!

Luciana Diniz, ORTESOL President

Save The Date!

ORTESOL Spring Workshop 2012

ORTESOL Presents a free workshop for members!

Improving L2 Reading Fluency

Neil Anderson, Department of Linguistics and English
Brigham Young University

Saturday, June 2nd from 9:00am to 3:00pm
PCC, Cascade Campus

Neil Anderson's presentation will focus specifically on improving reading fluency by building readers' comprehension skills and reading rates. Participants will have the opportunity to consider how these elements can be integrated into their philosophy of teaching L2 reading.

More details coming soon!

ORTESOL Board Update

You can find below the names and positions of the current ORTESOL Board Members, effective January 2012.

In this issue:

- ◆ Page 1: Letter from the ORTESOL President
- ◆ Page 2: Learning to Learn
- ◆ Page 3: Fall Mini-Conference Report
TE-SOL—Only Connect: Revisiting
Notes from a Plenary Session
- ◆ Page 4: PCC Sylvania's Got Talent 2011
- ◆ Page 6: The Common Core State Standards (CCSS): Guiding Students Through Research

President

Luciana Diniz

Treasurer

Patti Schilasky

TESOL Liasons

Judit Szentirmay

Katie Mitchell

Workshop Coordinators

Annae Nicholson

Youngmi Choi

Volunteer Coordinators

Marianna Nagy

Lara Mendicino

Technology

Sarah Bailie

Barbara Dahne

Publishers' Liasons

Monika Mulder

Jenny Stensenth

Administrative Assistant

Pati Sluys

Special Interest Groups (SIG) Chairs:

Adult Education SIG Chair

Sean Brennan

Higher Education SIG Chair

Dawn Allen

Elementary/Secondary/ Bilingual Education SIG

Barbara Page

Learning to Learn

Steve Linke

Tokyo International University of America, Salem, OR

As language instructors, we may too often focus on our materials and “teaching” methodology, and we think of the people in our classrooms as “students.” When we view them as “students,” as recipients of our instructor-centered and -directed focus, not so much as active, self-centered learners who have to process all the “stuff” we direct at them by themselves. This is called learning.

Caleb Gattegno, the Silent Way methodology proponent, posited that teaching should be subordinated to learning and that awareness is the prime engine of this process. (See “How Caleb Gattegno Influenced My Teaching,” cited below, for more on this.) I learned spoken Korean in the U.S. Peace Corps via the Silent Way. When I reflect back on this experience some thirty-five years ago what still stands out is how I was learning, not how the instructor was teaching. The Silent Way color charts and colored rods, the almost total lack of instructor vocalization, the method and techniques all took a back seat to my struggles—yes struggles—with my awareness of what *I* was doing to make Korean mine. In a word—to learn.

Like a baby learning its mother tongue, I too watched a lot—a *lot*. Listened a lot—a *lot*. Then when courage arose I’d venture an utterance and again watch the instructor’s reactions, if any. All the while my mind was processing this somewhere beneath the veneer of my immediate conscious awareness. Somehow I was watching myself learn. Or *trying* to learn. I was letting my subconscious mind do the heavy lifting while my conscious mind waited for the pieces to fall into place. Then I’d experiment with what I had (or thought I had) understanding and control of—a kind of linguistic Texas two-step: watch, take a step; watch, take a step.

What was I watching? Now upon reflection and I can say I was watching my learning. Or rather letting awareness of my learning guide me, not my awareness of what the instructor was doing. Certainly the latter was in focus but it was ancillary to watching and waiting for my subconscious learning to become conscious and aware enough to venture some vocal output. Then I’d let my awareness watch the reaction(s) to this output and start the dance all over again.

Whether this is applied to a linguistic neophyte as in my case with Korean or to students—oops—*learners!*—who already have some command of the language can be a point of discussion elsewhere. The crux here is that I was subordinating the received teaching objectives, the charts, the rods, the instructor silence, etc., to my own learning via my own awareness. The instructor’s method and techniques forced me to rely on my awareness and thus to be more and more aware of my learning.

Granted, we may not use the Silent Way method and techniques much in our day-to-day teaching-learning situations. Then what can we glean from this that is applicable to our own situations? I suggest we look at

learning to learn.

One way to do so is to ask oneself, “If I as the instructor do X, how would I process this if I were the student/learner? Would X help me be more aware of what I as a learner was doing with the target language? Would I focus more on what the instructor was doing (X) instead of what I as learner was doing?”

This may be a bit too abstract for some. Alternatively, if possible, be a student-learner, take a language class, a language you don’t know and keep a daily journal of the process of your learning awareness, not just the instructor’s teaching style, method, techniques and activities. Watch yourself learn. Become aware of your awareness both on the immediate conscious, interactive level but also little by little on the subconscious processing level.

That’s for the instructor-now-student-learner. But what about working with learners in our class when we are instructing, when we are instructing, when we are teaching? One, ask students directly if X, Y, and Z are working and why or why not. Ask them to describe as best they can what’s going on with their awareness of their own learning when you do X, Y and Z. All students may not have the language to do so, or be willing to venture actively into this territory with you.

So two, give them time to process *when you are doing X, Y, and Z*. We all know of this processing time from our grad school training but in the heat and fluidity of the classroom moment we may become impatient and want results N-O-W, *now*. When letting the learners have this time, watch their faces and body language and notice if and when the “lights go on”—and when they don’t. Let them have time to become aware of themselves learning, not just grapple with what you are doing.

Three, sometime soon after a learner’s light goes on, ask him/her to describe as best they can how they felt at that “Aha!” moment. Did they feel a stress relief, a release of tension? By noting these sensations, the learner will become more in contact with the subconscious process of learning. As in awareness meditation, (e.g. Buddhist Vipassana, yogic breath awareness, silent Quaker prayer, etc.,) this awareness of awareness leads to a deeper conscious experience and understanding of the subconscious at work. Learning takes place in and via the subconscious, not solely in the conscious mind.

Lastly, if our teaching fails to solicit the desired output, ask the student how he or she would teach X so she or he would “get it.” Have them then teach it this way to others in a peer group (not in front of the whole class) or have them teach X to *you* in their native language so both of you can work on development of learner/teacher awareness simultaneously.

In summary, teaching and learning are *not* “East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet.” They meet continuously, in flux every moment in their interplay and in the awareness of the learner’s mind. It’s just that often we focus too much on the teaching side of this dynamic and don’t give the learner enough time and space to work with the self-awareness of learning to learn.

Reference: <http://www.saudicaves.com/silentway/influenced.htm>

Focus Groups a Favorite at ORTESOL Fall Mini-Conference

*Heather Dittmore and Annae Nicholson,
Mini-Conference Co-Coordinators*

On Saturday, November 19, 2011, ORTESOL held its first Fall mini-conference at Portland Community College's Sylvania Campus. We decided to hold the half-day mini-conference rather than have a full two-day conference since so many of our members participated in TriTESOL in October. While much smaller than our regular Fall conference, the mini-conference had over 60 participants, and it was a great success!

Attendees really enjoyed the smaller morning breakout sessions, which were repeated so two out of the three could be attended. ORTESOL board higher education chair Dawn Allen presented on a project she's



Barbara Page's breakout session

working on called English Language Learner University (ELL-U). Her presentation was titled "Community of Practice for Sustained Professional Development" and included an introduction to this innovative and interactive free professional development network for ESOL practitioners. Allen demonstrated an ELL-U club, which is a virtual space within ELL-U where teachers form a community of practice around a shared area of interest.

Another breakout session entitled "The Whole Family Approach in Community ESOL" was presented by Patrik McDade, program director for People-Places-Things. Participants in this demonstration experienced and reflected on activities that include the entire family, regardless of level or literacy skills. McDade presented a multilevel and multigenerational approach that addressed the needs of whole families in English learning.

The third breakout session was presented by ORTESOL board K-12 Special Interest Group chair Barbara Page on "K-12 Education Reform & ELLs: Federal and State Updates". Page attended TESOL Advocacy Day in June 2011. See her article in *ORTESOL News*, Summer 2011 about this experience. Her mini-conference presentation informed attendees about educational policy at the state and federal level that has had a significant impact on our students and our jobs, and about the decisions

being made to take effect next school year. In her discussion, Page wanted to update and empower ELL educators to have a voice in these deci-



Participants in Patrik's session

sions and to advocate for change that makes sense in the classroom.

All breakout sessions were well-received. After lunch, there were four information sharing focus groups. The different areas were Classroom Management, facilitated by Barbara Page and Jenny Stenseth; Intercultural Communication, facilitated by Aylin Bunk; Teaching Multi-level Classes, facilitated by Jennifer Snyder; and Technology/Websites in the Classroom, which was facilitated by Luciana Diniz and Linnea Spitzer. These were also very well-received. One attendee commented in a survey response, "The focus groups were the best part of the conference! Great conversation and very informative." Another respondent liked the combination of hands-on teaching resources as well as information about current research provided at ORTESOL conferences and workshops: "I think the mixture that ORTESOL supplies is great." Another participant requested that we "Keep to these types of very practical informative sessions." Since they were so well received, we plan to continue offering informative idea sharing like these at future workshops and conferences. We are also working on ways to have virtual discussions and idea sharing. We'll let you know when those are available. In the meantime, if you have ideas to share, or requests for future conferences, contact us at ortesol@yahoo.com.

T-E-SOL—Only Connect: Revisiting Notes from a Plenary Session

*Carmen Caceda
Western Oregon University*

What comes to your mind when you read TESOL? One of your answers is probably our national organization. However, I would like you to go beyond that initial answer and think of the concepts that each letter entails. Then, ask yourself if you have ever thought critically about each concept or how they should be intertwined so that our understanding of our field is sounder. I have realized that the more I think of each letter (i.e., each concept), the more I embrace the area I have chosen.

TE-SOL—Only Connect Continued on Page 5



PCC Sylvania's Got Talent 2011

*Ana Vitale & Luciana Diniz
Portland Community College, Sylvania*



The ESOL Program at Portland Community College, Sylvania Campus, held its second International Talent Show on November 18, 2011. About twenty students and faculty performed at the show, which also included a Fashion Show with students and instructors representing a variety of countries in the world. The outstanding performances included a ballet and Korean hip hop dance, singing in Vietnamese, Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese and Filipino, music pieces played on the piano, a song played on the Farsi santoor, and a poem beautifully recited in Chinese.

The International Talent show was also an opportunity for students and faculty to contribute to the ESOL Fund, which helps non-credit ESOL students who cannot afford classes or textbooks. All the money raised from tickets went straight to the fund. We're already looking forward to next year's show!

*Students at PCC Sylvania
Performing in the
International Talent Show*



Save the Date! ORTESOL Fall Conference: Nov. 16-17

When? November 16-17

Where? Portland Community College, Sylvania Campus

Theme: "Teaching in the Time of Transitions"

TE-SOL—Only Connect Continued from Page 3

In that vein, I would like to share with you some notes I wrote about Widdowson's plenary session presented at the TESOL Convention in San Antonio in 2005. That session made me reflect on what we, ESOL educators, should keep in mind when we teach a language or teach content through language. Although Widdowson's presentation was for an international audience, the core topics of the plenary can be translated into the U.S. context. I have selected only three of his key points to share: (a) giving a rationale for the phrase "Only connect," (b) the separation of the acronym TESOL (see title), and (c) his reflection of each individual letter.

Widdowson stated that when he referred to the phrase Only connect, his initial intention was that we, educators, should find ways to link our current professional performance with our past educational paths. He suggested we consider this because the way we have been prepared as teachers will always influence our practice. As an example, Widdowson shared that he started to teach in 1958, adding that as any newly appointed teacher, he was a bit idealistic, having studied at Cambridge University. In his first job in India (as I recall), he was asked to teach literature, so he looked for his Shakespeare collection to develop his lessons accordingly. His students appeared to follow the lessons, but—as classes developed—he felt that there was a disconnection between the E (English, or literature in his case) he was teaching and his student population (i.e., with the SOL, Speakers of Other Languages). He added that some students might have been interested in his classes because they probably had some previous background, but he stressed that some of the texts were dry.

The presenter continued with the T, his teaching, which mirrored the way he was taught at the university. That is, he replicated what his professors did in their classes. He was not prepared to adapt his lesson plans and make them more meaningful and culturally relevant for his students. Nor was he prepared to capitalize on what his students brought to the class (Garcia, 2002). Once again he came to the conclusion that the E he was teaching was not connected to his SOLs. This situation led him to find ways to become a culturally responsive teacher (Gay, 2010). In recalling the mismatch between what Widdowson taught and what his students learned, he commented that this replication of teaching, which included the content (i.e., literature), was probably done because there was a need to keep the integrity of the language and to preserve it. He acted as the custodian of the language. He then stated that educators need to think of what is being taught to our SOLs—are we teaching them only the forms with no connections to the functions, meanings, and uses? Or are we teaching them these subtle aspects of the language so that they can know why and when to use them? He then invited the participants to think of who is doing the T—is the job being done by an ESOL professional who has taken the time for his/her preparation and continues his/her professional development?

Widdowson made the audience reflect on how the E, English, was taught (e.g., are they using modern approaches?). He added that some teachers tend to ask their students to read *Paradise Lost* because they appreciate it as good literature, but these same teachers do not ask their students to

Newsletter Staff

Editor

Joyanna Eisenberg

Publishers' Liaisons

Monika Mulder & Jennifer Stenseth

Administrative Assistant

Pati Sluys

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. 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,

as good literature, but these same teachers do not ask their students to read graffiti, text messages, short stories, or other projects where their engagement can be more interactive and productive. The presenter then posed a critical question: Are educators teaching differently at present from when he started to teach in the late 1950s? I believe this is a crucial question to keep in mind so that we can revisit our ESOL professional trajectory, but more importantly, to ask whether we are teaching meaningfully and connecting the E with our SOLs.

Teachers should make an effort not to isolate the T-E from the SOL. If we do, we may continue to preserve the language, content, and standards, but are our students really learning the language? More importantly, are we witnessing our students' transformation so that they can achieve linguistic and academic success in U.S. schools? If the response is no, then we need to question our own practice and find ways to meet our students' needs. Otherwise, we are doing them a disservice. It is crucial that when we teach, we connect our lessons to our students and to their contexts. In so doing, lessons will be more meaningful and relevant for them.

References

- Garcia, E. (2002). *Student cultural diversity: Understanding and meeting the challenge*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research and practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- McBennett, M. (Interviewer) & Widdowson, H. (Interviewee). (2005). Interview with Henry G. Widdowson [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from ELT News Web site: http://www.eltnews.com/features/interviews/2005/12/interview_with_henry_g_widdows.html
- Widdowson, H.G. (2005, March). T-E-SOL: Only Connect. Plenary presented at the 2005 TESOL Convention, San Antonio, Texas.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS): Guiding Students through Research

Diane Tehrani

Portland State University

With the vast amounts of information at our fingertips today, the task of citing and evaluating reliable sources becomes of crucial importance. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) offer a set of criteria for ensuring that this skill is covered adequately.

Lesley Mandel Morrow of Rutgers University Graduate School of Education in her article, "The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Literacy: How Do We Make Them Work?" (*International Reading Association Newsletter*, Fall 2011) outlines the manageability of the standards regarding citation as they build skills from level to level. These skills include engagement in higher-order thinking about reading, exposure to varied texts, vocabulary building in the content areas, integration of reading with writing, and ability to access technology in various areas of literature.

A subsection of the CCSS in writing, 'Research to Build and Present Knowledge', for grades K-5, that could correspond to ESL levels 1-6, would be especially relevant to ESL teachers preparing students to enter college or university courses by learning to cite references when writing research papers. This would offer teachers standards by which students can be moved forward in developmental stages and not be expected to achieve the full complex skill in a matter of one or two terms.

The CCSS standard for learning to cite sources begins in Kindergarten and gets increasingly more complex, as follows:

Kindergarten and first grade: *With guidance and support from a teacher, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.*

Grade 2: *Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question. (Note that teacher support is no longer required.)*

Grade 3: *Recall information from experience or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.*

Grade 4: *Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.*

Grade 5: *Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.*

After such continuity between levels and the addition of one more challenging element at each level, students could then easily access an excellent textbook for advanced students to write solid academic papers from outside sources such as *Sourcework: Academic Writing from Sources* (2006) by

Nancy E. Dollahite and Julie Haun.

The authors of this text are instructors at Portland State University where the text has been used for over five years to prepare students for the academic writing requirements of full time university study. The Intensive English Language Program there recently tied for first place in the U.S. News and World Reporting of colleges with the highest ESL participation rate with a range of 350-500 students per term representing more than 35 countries.

This text, now in the second edition, takes students through all the steps of academic writing from sources. It guides writers through the challenges of their first academic research papers, helping students master the writing and critical thinking skills necessary to produce strong academic essays using supporting evidence. It is for advanced students with exposure to basic rhetorical styles, academic essays with a thesis statement and supporting ideas. The book is supplemented by a website with additional themes and sources for students as well as an instructor site with chapter notes, answer key, assessment tools and example essays.

Students are presented with all the skills necessary to support their own ideas: note-taking from readings, analyzing information, outlining structures, creating thesis statements, authoring introductions and conclusions, and writing and refining drafts. At each stage, students learn how to document evidence, integrate references, paraphrase, synthesize, and summarize.

In this textbook and in the CCSS, attention is given to appropriate use of sources from the first stages of writing to the final draft of academic research papers. The common core standards will give students an excellent framework to make measured and adequate progress toward their goals of successful completion of college and university study.

Thank you ORTESOL members for allowing me to be your new newsletter editor. I appreciate the opportunity and look forward to serving you and the entire ORTESOL community during my time as editor.

-Joyanna Eisenberg

