The Cairns Conference Issue

The first week in July saw over 300 delegates arriving in Cairns for the start of the third ACTA International Conference, hosted by ATESOL NSW. Convened every two years, the ACTA conference has become known as one of the major TESOL professional learning events in Australia, and this conference certainly lived up to its reputation.

Left: Keynote speaker Dr Tove Skutnabb-Kangas

The pre-conference Pronunciation Symposium was held on Monday 2 July and was well attended by over 100 participants, who enjoyed a morning colloquium and afternoon presentations addressing current issues relating to the Symposium’s focus, Teaching and learning English pronunciation: local and global perspectives on research and practice. Invited experts included Professor Tracey Derwing, from the University of Alberta and Professor Andy Kirkpatrick from Griffith University in Queensland.

The conference program began with a welcome function on Monday evening, giving delegates a chance to catch up with old friends and colleagues and to browse the exhibitors’ stands. The occasion was also marked by the launch of a new PETAA publication, Teaching English Language Learners in Mainstream Classrooms by Margery Hertzberg.

After the official opening on Tuesday morning, the first Keynote Address was given by Dr Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, whose provocative ideas challenged our conceptions about the benefits of teaching English in minority communities. Tove spoke of the dangers of the dominance of English over Indigenous, Tribal and Minority Languages and advocated strongly for the rights of all students to be provided, for the most part, with a Mother-Tongue-based multilingual education. Her concerns were global as well as local as she recognised that the knowledge of how to maintain the world’s biodiversity is often encoded in small, Indigenous local languages.

Notions of the global and local were also explored in a highly engaging afternoon Keynote Address by Professor Suresh Canagarajah. Suresh described The Struggle for Professional Voice by sharing his own professional journey from his first appointment as an eager young teacher to his current position as a highly regarded member of the international TESOL community.

Professor Suresh Canagarajah

...continued on page 5
Welcome to our conference edition of the newsletter. It seems hard to believe that it is now two months since we were up in Cairns enjoying the winter sunshine, networking with colleagues and engaging with the high quality professional learning on offer throughout the four days. It has been a pleasure to collect and read the contributions for this special edition, and I thank all those members who have taken the time to document their responses to some of the presentations and workshops. If anyone has missed the deadline this month, please send in your article and we will print it next time.

I believe the energy of the Cairns Conference has confirmed the importance of ACTA for TESOL teachers throughout Australia and for the students we support.

I would like to thank our president, Robert Jackson, for his vision and hard work in organising this event: as a member of the conference committee (along with Katherine Brandon and Kathy Rushton) I am aware how much time was spent working to make it the success it undoubtedly was.

Happy reading!
By all accounts, the third biennial ACTA International Conference hosted by ATESOL NSW in sunny Cairns was a roaring success. Many of our delegates have remarked on how inspired and challenged they have been by the presentations they attended, particularly those of our Keynote speakers, and our local and international presenters have expressed their gratitude at how well looked after they were over the four days. All credit goes to my conference committee colleagues, Katherine Brandon, Gill Pennington and Kathy Rushton, to our ATESOL NSW Executive Officer Marcel Garrard, who organised the session hosts, to Sarah Jones and AST Management, our event managers, and to the venue and technical support staff at Cairns Convention Centre, for ensuring the smooth running of the conference and for hosting our guests and accommodating all of their needs and requests with courtesy and good grace. Reports in this and subsequent issues of our newsletter will showcase some of the wonderful sessions that were presented, while a statistical overview follows here.

The pre-conference Pronunciation Symposium on Monday 2 July attracted 133 attendees and was followed by the Conference Welcome Reception held at the venue. The conference proper kicked off on Tuesday 3 July, with 307 delegates registered on Tuesday and Wednesday, and 295 registered on Thursday. The Conference Dinner held on Wednesday night at the nearby Pullman Reef Resort was attended by 109 guests.

Our conference delegates came from a broad range of backgrounds, with a fairly even spread between postgraduate students and academic staff from Australian and overseas universities, education officers from the government, Catholic and private sectors, representatives from professional associations, and teachers from schools, TAFEs and private language colleges, with several from overseas. Many of the delegates had dual or multiple affiliations.

The Conference Committee received over 225 abstract submissions. Over the three days of the conference there were five Keynotes and five Featured Presentations, four colloquia, 18 workshops, 58 concurrent sessions and 23 poster displays. There were two ACTA-hosted ex-conference events.

In all, we had eight exhibitors, 17 advertisers and six sponsors. An additional subsidy was provided to the Pronunciation Symposium for their speakers’ travel costs and a reimbursement was made to the international Keynote Speaker for the Symposium for her personal travel and accommodation expenses. The final account is yet to come; we are projecting a small deficit, which will be borne by ATESOL NSW from the seeding funding initially provided.

In terms of conference proceedings, 43 of the presenters’ PowerPoint presentations have been uploaded to ACTA website in pdf format, and 25 manuscript submissions were received for the TESOL in Context Special Conference Edition S3 which will be published online during October. We envisage that there will be 15–18 articles in the edition.

More to come in the next issue.
CORRESPONDENCE

Response to the LLNP Discussion Paper – Cover letter

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
LLNP Section
GPO Box 9839
Canberra ACT 2601

17 August 2012

To Whom It May Concern

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) is pleased to present for your consideration a response to the LLNP Discussion Paper Creating a more flexible LLNP in 2013-16.

The submission was prepared and reviewed by ACTA councillors and state and territory association members who possess extensive expertise in the field of English language and literacy education for adult learners. It has the endorsement of ACTA’s constituent state and territory associations for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in Australia.

We would welcome the opportunity to consult further with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education and to collaborate in the planning, development and implementation of programs and strategies which will enhance educational provision through the LLNP.

Yours sincerely

Robert Jackson
ACTA President
0414 554 216
robert.jackson44@hotmail.com

Throughout the conference there was a wide range of presentations for delegates to attend. Concurrent sessions were organised in strands including ATSI education, TESOL Early Childhood/Primary, Refugee students, TESOL pedagogies Middle Years to Adult, TEFL and EAP, Oracy, Pronunciation and Adult ESOL.

Wednesday morning’s Keynote Address was given by Professor Jane Simpson and Professor Gillian Wigglesworth, who discussed Ecology, Equity and Ethics in Aboriginal Australia. They described their extensive work in five communities in central and northern Australia and made a convincing case for the inadequacy of national assessments that fail to reflect the progress of students who are growing up in what is effectively an English as a Foreign Language environment. They also discussed the inequitable policy decisions that impose an English-only curriculum on many remote schools.

This theme was continued in the afternoon Keynote Address, given by Juanita Sellwood and Denise Angelo, who argued the need for a ‘corporate memory’ of relevant pedagogical responses to Indigenous students’ language backgrounds and ESL proficiencies.

Wednesday evening saw the ‘surprise location’ of the Conference Dinner revealed as the rooftop garden of the Pullman Reef Hotel. Guests were treated to cocktails and a sumptuous buffet whilst enjoying the opportunity to get to know a couple of the reptiles from the Cairns Wildlife Dome, as well as being entertained by Aboriginal dancers – including our president, Robert Jackson, who was persuaded to join in with one of the dances!

The final Keynote Address on Thursday morning was given by Professor Robert Phillipson, who spoke of TESOL expertise in the empire of English. Once again delegates were challenged, this time to re-evaluate the nature of TESOL export activity which was described as constituting linguistic imperialism in an empire driven by political and commercial profit motives. The challenge was made for all practitioners to commit to maintaining a balanced linguistic ecology at all levels.

The conference closed after a lively panel session gave delegates the opportunity to ask questions of all Keynote speakers, and the official handover was made to VicTESOL, who will host the next conference in 2014.

Gill Pennington
Dear Robert,

I don’t seem to have a postal address for ACTA, so I must needs send an email, rather than a letter. I would like to thank ACTA for awarding me what is a unique Life Membership recently. The award came as a complete surprise, as you may have realized at the time, and I was very moved by being acknowledged in that way. The vase is a beautiful way to remind me of how much ATESOL and ACTA mean to me and how much my membership of ATESOL, in particular, has contributed to my career. I think it is fair to say that had I not become involved in ATESOL and professional teachers’ associations, I would not have had such a wonderful career or had anything like the success I have enjoyed in a range of areas.

Please thank ACTA Council for the award. The vase is full of daffodils at the moment, looking very cheerful despite the wintry weather outside.

Best wishes,

Dorothy

CORRESPONDENCE

Subject: ACTA
Date: Saturday, 11 Aug 2012

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Best wishes,

Dorothy

Professor Robert Phillipson – Keynote Speaker

The recent ATESOL conference in Cairns has possibly led to more lively discussion in my family home and amongst my colleagues than I had anticipated. Despite the many helpful workshops of pronunciation and teaching text types that were, obviously, helpful and will undoubtedly add value to my current language teaching practice, it was the keynote address given by Professor Robert Phillipson that has sparked the most pertinent discussions amongst my peers. Professor Phillipson’s professional address on the calamity of the homogenisation of human culture threw so much of what we strive to do daily into question. His claims, captured best in the linked article (http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2001/apr/19/guardianweekly.guardianweekly1), is that “The advance of English reflects American commercial, political and military might, and the impact of Hollywood, CNN and McDonald’s.” He then moved into an impressive detailed comparison between the colonisation and gradual deterioration of indigenous tribal lifestyle and culture of the mid 17th and 18th Century and the similarities apparent in the current imperial approach to the spread of English, most pronounced perhaps in the cultivation of the European Union. In spite of this claim, he did make allowances for the provision of English language in education, but emphasised the importance of seeing English as a parallel language option rather allowing the assumption that English should be taught in place of mother tongues to lie unchallenged by his EAL/D colleagues. He comments “No-one is suggesting that English should not be effectively learned and used, but policy should ensure that people learn and use English in addition to other languages rather than at their expense.”

This said, it was an idea that I had not entirely reconciled in my mind after leaving. To think that the current “lingua franca”, to coin the phrase used frequently at the conference, may simply be yet another stage in the ubiquitous decimation of the difference and diversity had not only never occurred to me, but has since formed the basis of many a lively discussion and debate upon my return. And perhaps is a question we all need to ask ourselves as we move ever so rapidly forward into a new phase of National Curriculum planning.

Professor Robert Phillipson’s session attended by:
Lauren Drego
Leader of Diverse Learning
Clancy Catholic College, West Hoxton

Kathy Rushton and Dorothy Hoddinott
Dr Tove Skutnabb-Kangas – Keynote Speaker

Dr Tove Skutnabb-Kangas strongly argues that languages are today being killed, and linguistic diversity is disappearing at a much faster pace than ever before in human history, and relatively much faster than biodiversity. She believes that the future looks grim – if things continue, we may kill over 90 percent of the world’s oral languages by 2100.

Dr Tove Skutnabb-Kangas claims that linguistic and cultural diversity are as necessary for the existence of our planet as biodiversity. There seems to be mounting evidence that the relationship between linguistic and cultural diversity on the one hand and biodiversity on the other hand is not only correlational but might be causal. She therefore argues that the preservation of the world’s linguistic diversity must be an essential goal in any bio-culturally oriented diversity conservation program.

Dr Tove Skutnabb-Kangas believes that the education of most minorities and indigenous peoples in the world is organised in ways that lead to the disappearance of linguistic and cultural diversity.

Dr Tove Skutnabb-Kangas – Keynote Speaker

Dr Skutnabb-Kangas keynote speaker, ACTA Conference

The Yarrie Way: A look at Yarrie Lingo (an Indigenous Creole from Yarrabah) and how Yarrabah students are learning English

A presentation by – Natasha Holzberger (Yrs 4–7 Deputy Principal) and Bernadette Yeatman (pre-prep – Yr3 Head of Curriculum)

Historical Context
Yarrabah Aboriginal community is situated 52 kilometres South East of Cairns and has a population of 2371 (2006 census). The community was first established as a mission of 80 residents in 1892. The Gungganydji people were the original inhabitants of the area, however, with the establishment of a mission there were soon more than 40 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups living there. On the mission females and males were forced to live in separate dormitories and they were not allowed to speak their traditional languages.

Development of the Language
Yarrie Lingo developed as an Indigenous Creole in the Yarrabah community because of the communication needs of the inhabitants. The words in Yarrie Lingo have been adopted from colonial English and the sounds, accents, pronunciation, meanings, grammar and behaviours that accompany the language have come from traditional languages.

The School
Yarrabah State School has a 100% Indigenous population of approximately 430 students from pre-prep to Yr10, accommodated across three campuses. At the school there is a focus on developing Standard Australian English with recognition of the importance of Yarrie Lingo and traditional languages. This is guided by an ESL Framework including core components of data analysis, community engagement, school strategies and processes, teaching and learning, support and training. Included in the school staff are an ESL/D Curriculum support teacher and Indigenous teachers.

This presentation was particularly interesting as I was not aware that there is such a large community of Aboriginal people in Australia who speak an Indigenous Creole. Also, Yarrie Lingo exemplifies the reasoning behind use of the term Dialect as used in English as an Additional Language and/or Dialect (EAL/D) that is being used in the Australian Curriculum and how this term may relate to our students.

Julia Ray
Multicultural/ESL Consultant 7–12
South Western Sydney Region
Using drama to improve SAE skills and enhancing a feeling of engagement in the process – Presentation by Margery Hertzberg

The main focus of this presentation was on how drama assists the representation of abstract ideas the understanding of which can then be translated through talk into writing. This is directly linked

Some quotes

ACARA – EAL/D Doc p91
“The extent of vocabulary knowledge is one of the best predictors of literacy success.”
“By the middle years students require a vocabulary of 8000-9000 words”
“Students may need to encounter a word up to 15 times for it to become part of productive vocabulary”

FAIR GO PROJECT (FGP)

The research from the Fair Go Project (FGP) a partnership with the University of Western Sydney (UNWS) and Priority Schools Funding Program (PSFP) working with 30 teachers across NSW in 2000 examined what engagement looked like in the classroom especially for students with a background of low socio-economic need (LSES) the majority with poor language skills particularly as English was as an additional language (in some schools as much as 98% EAL).

Engagement was defined as a driving force that enhanced both learning and social outcomes for these students so they would essentially “buy in” to the educational experience and believe that they too could have educational aspirations

Engagement in learning outcomes was defined as much more than compliance or being “on task” but rather “in task” and as such much more connected to the learning.

Engagement was further defined:

• Small ‘e’ engagement where students are involved in a substantive learning task; ‘in task’ rather than ‘on task’
• Big ‘E’ engagement where students have been engaged in schools for an extended and sustained period of time (more than a year) and begin to believe that ‘school is for me’

These two terms are drawn together with the idea of future into the present where students realise “school is for me” by being ‘e’ engaged in class.

In order to achieve small ‘e’ engagement the pedagogical processes need to be:

• High cognitive (deep thinking and problem solving)
• High affective (promotes positive feelings)
• High operative (has active involvement)

There are clear links in this research to pedagogy supporting EAL students notably in the discourse of power and the notion of powerful knowledge one of the tenets of sociolinguistic theory and supported by the work of Cummins, Gibbons and Mariani regarding cognitively demanding programs with high support. See table below for discourses of power.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISCOURSES OF POWER</th>
<th>ENGAGING MESSAGES</th>
<th>DISENGAGING MESSAGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>“We can see the connection and the meaning”</td>
<td>“Why are we doing this?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABILITY</td>
<td>“I am capable”</td>
<td>“I can’t do this”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTROL</td>
<td>“We can do this together”</td>
<td>“I’m not doing that”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLACE</td>
<td>“It’s great to be a kid from...”</td>
<td>“I’m just a kid from...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOICE</td>
<td>“We share”</td>
<td>“the teacher tells us”</td>
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In Margery Hertzberg’s presentation she discussed the how the positive impact of drama in the classroom is demonstrated by both the increased engagement of the students and the corresponding output of language both spoken and written following the experience. Drama engages academically disengaged students by helping them to see connections with school and their own lives and at the same time improves their language and learning.

“Because you’re actually being the person you have to work it out and see how it feels”

11 year old EAL student

“I like it because I am thinking big ideas plus I am allowed to share them with my friends and I like how we work in groups and have to think for ourselves and I think miss likes it because we are all good and we work more and then she is happy”

8 year old EAL student
Drama strategies included:

Dramatic Play for very young students engages learners in the many registers of the outside world.

Sculpting for lower to middle years – students create a “sculpture” of their partner to represent an emotionally sophisticated idea non-verbally. In this kind of activity students can demonstrate their understanding without words but in so doing develop the words to explain the idea.

Still image (or Frozen Moment) – as with sculpting Still image is a strategy to explore emotions of an event or story and can cross a range of subject areas from one scene in a narrative to a series of connected events from history.

Thought tracking this strategy can follow the Still image where the students create a dialogue for the character they portray in the scene and verbalise what the character is thinking at the time.

Role walk is a strategy to get students thinking about how they would feel in character. Students walk around the room as an event is described by the teacher e.g. you were very sick and your life was saved by the invention of antibiotics… How do you feel? The teacher taps a student on the shoulder and asks them what they are thinking.

Readers’ Theatre for middle years is an oral reading of a narrative or a play that supports students comprehension, fluency and critical literacy. It is best to use texts with a lot of dialogue from which the students can create their scripts. Performing in RT connects talking and listening with reading and writing as well as the many aspects of drama such as pace, tone, expression and gesture.

Hot seat lower for to middle years – involves questioning in a role where students “become” a character from a book e.g. the Big Bad Wolf or a person from history e.g. someone from the crew of the Endeavour and their peers ask questions. With this strategy students can go beyond the story and explore its themes. This strategy can also lead students to become writers in the role of...

Perhaps the most thought provoking issue in the presentation was the that while drama in its various forms features prominently in ESL pedagogy, teaching programs and curriculum documents and yet it is under represented in practices in the classrooms of our neediest students!

For example:

Northern Territory ESE and Primary role play is mentioned 13 times and other drama 13 times and cloze 4 times as suggested activities. Which features most?

Perhaps drama is taking students away from other subjects and is a waste of time?

What one student vehemently thinks:

“Drama is NOT a wasting time because wasting time means like you’re out of it, like you’re not doing anything, you’re just sitting there bored but if you are in it, it’s like it’s fun and then you are learning… It’s better, funner, teaching you more. In other lessons I just sit there pretending to do more but I don’t. It’s teaching more and having fun”

Margery Hertzberg’s session attended by:
Janet Freeman
K-6 ESL/Multicultural consultant
Sydney Region
In her presentation Janet Freeman argues the need to explicitly teach writing and integrate writing in a meaningful unit of work which relates to students’ real life experiences. This is core business for teachers as “social and economic empowerment is related to being able to use the spoken and written forms of language effectively” (Cambourne and Brown 1987). The presentation had a clear focus on the eight skills and understandings that students must be taught in order to be successful and independent writers.

Students need to have:
1. An understanding of context of situation and context of culture – the dominant culture determines the accepted language used as does the situation in which the language is constructed.
2. A clear authentic purpose for writing – this will support students to be able to make clear language choices.
3. A wide knowledge of the field they are writing about – students need depth in the topic to write with confidence.
4. Understanding of the grammar and structure required to create specific types of texts.
5. Understanding the difference between spoken and written language – that the audience for written texts is removed, not immediate.
6. The English knowledge to manipulate the language to suit their purpose.
7. A clear idea of audience – to enable students to make appropriate language choices.
8. The confidence to write.

Another crucial factor is the mode continuum, in which teachers effectively build on students’ talk and then incorporate strategies and activities to move the students along the continuum in order to produce texts that incorporate more written like language.

In her presentation Janet illustrates her key ideas through an example of a teaching sequence, in which students are scaffolded to write a procedure to cook hamburgers. Close reference to the ESL teaching sequence of controlled, guided and independent support further provided excellent ideas on teaching writing as part of a well-designed and coherent unit of work.

The key message for all teachers is the importance of focusing on teaching students the skills required to write effectively and not the final product.

Janet Freeman’s session attended by:
Anne Louey
7–12 ESL/Multicultural consultant
Sydney Region
Fractured and Fragile: School age new arrivals in desert detention – Presentation by Tessa Burrows

Tessa Burrows delivered an insightful workshop about her experience in establishing the first off sight education centre for asylum seekers living in detention, at Leonora, 840 kilometres north east of Perth.

In 2010, an Alternative Place of Detention (APOD) was established by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship at Leonora. The closest major town to Leonora is Kalgoorlie, 250 kilometres away. Leonora was once a thriving gold mining town, but is now a “fly in, fly out” town and has a population of 700. Leonora APOD houses family groups while their refugee status claims are assessed.

In 2010, Leonora District High School had an enrolment of 150 students with 60% of those students of aboriginal background. Fifty students from the APOD, from preschool to Year 12, would attend the school. There was a sudden need for new school infrastructure and housing for the English Transition Program staff as well as APOD staff. Students were from Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, all had suffered trauma and significantly disrupted schooling. Some of the students had never been to school before.

Tessa’s role included liaising with government and non-government agencies, employing staff, designing and implementing curriculum and delivering professional learning for all staff. Staff included a deputy principal, three primary, two high school and two education assistants. Students were involved in a full range of education experiences including cooking, manual arts, computer and sports.

The English Transition Program at Leonora was successful. Students developed a positive attitude for school life an enthusiasm for learning. Some of the issues for the staff and students included the absence of bilingual assistance, the initial presence of security guards at the school, and the distribution and content of school lunches!

Tessa attributed much of the success of the program to the positive contribution of the school community. She described the highly successful Leonora School Ball, involving the whole school community including the students from the APOD. The Leonora community ensured that every one was dressed for the ball. The photographs and the story brought tears to our eyes, and for me this workshop was a highlight of the Conference.

Tessa Burrows’ session attended by:
Kim Cootes
Refugee Student Support Officer
South Western Sydney Region

Below: Leonora APOD, view beyond the wire and artwork by a child detainee. Source: Wikimedia Commons
The Cairns Conference

Drama in the Classroom – Presentation by Dr Margery Hertzberg

At the ACTA International Conference in Cairns July 2012, Dr Hertzberg addressed the use of drama as a means to engage students in SAE (Standard Australian English) language learning. Her research focus was on drama as a pedagogy to provide engaging messages for students and to find out what they thought about their literacy learning.

Dr Hertzberg expounded the message that drama as a medium engages students in the task, rather than being merely disinterested participants. The ‘e’ngaging* message was whether the students were ‘in task’ rather than ‘on task’. The ‘E’ngaging* message highlighted the need for students to have enduring engagement with learning, as owners of the process.

We were reminded of the importance of vocabulary acquisition to productive language, as drama activities inherently involve much recycling of the words needed to communicate ideas.

The ‘eE’ngaging classroom model is based on the high cognitive, high affective and high operative domains; relying on teacher feedback and the importance of student reflection. Discourses of power were discussed. Educators are not to assume that learning only takes place with the teacher in control. In this model the student has the voice and power to control their own learning. Students value themselves as capable when they share the responsibility for learning with the teacher and other students =engagement.

How does drama provide a great vehicle for language learning? Role play is prominent in early childhood and develops vocabulary in an interactive way with peers. It involves multisensory experiences resulting in expression of ideas, synonymous with demonstrating understanding using one’s first language. Allow me to digress. Who did not play doctors and nurses or space pirates when young? I remember our loungeroom at home turning into a network of lego monorail stations with my own two young boys. Negotiation of roles in the dialogue and exploration of the learning space were fantastic contributions to one of my children being labelled ‘the class dictionary’ by his peers. He was justly proud of this title. These memories were triggered by Dr Hertzberg’s presentation, which has inspired me to use more dramatic activities in my lessons.

I have used role plays, readers’ theatre and part reading of poems in my EAL/D lessons. Lately I have experimented with apps on media devices as part of a funded trial for small groups of students. For engaging oral interaction, including recasting and recycling of vocab, some of the apps that use dramatic play are among the children’s favourites. These include audio recording, dialogue using puppets and creation of plays and movies. Dr Hertzberg suggested that the rich discussions that result from these activities are invaluable.

During the session, the featured activity of ‘sculpting’ was of most interest to me. At the conference it was slightly intimidating being ‘sculpted’ by a newly acquainted colleague. However, this emotive response clearly demonstrated to me that learning language through a sensory experience stays in one’s memory.

In Dr Hertzberg’s research, the process of positioning another person in order to show emotions and action, in a still ‘photo’, elicited more specific language to describe a situation. The students had the opportunity to discuss the vocabulary to explain what they saw and felt, with the teacher reformulating to include words

Janet Freeman and Dr Margery Hertzberg
like ‘portraying’ rather than ‘showing’ and ‘frowning’ to describe the action of being sad.

Other activities demonstrated to us in this session included: questioning in role, which led to literary descriptions; and writing in role, voice collage and soundscapes.

Another reminder was that drama is prominent in EAL/D research and is mandatory in curriculum documents from all states in Australia. I am not sure why teachers see drama as an ‘extra’ demand on their time, even though the syllabus includes many references. In her research Dr Hertzberg concluded that education drama leads to ‘substantive e’ngagement’ due to the high cognitive, high affective and high operative nature of enactment. The inclusion of students in developing the topics and having a voice in the process fostered their ownership of the learning and language that evolved from the tasks. The students involved in her research certainly thought that drama had helped them to express their ideas in more detail using new vocabulary.

Having fun and learning new words were much valued outcomes for the students involved.

Being a very kinesthetic type, this session was truly an ‘in task’ experience for me; a sensory banquet of ideas, from which I will share a taste with my students.

Margery Hertzberg’s session attended by:
Lindy Bonham
EAL/D teacher Abbotsleigh

* small ‘e’ engagement is when students are involved in a substantive learning task;
* big ‘E’ Engagement includes learners’ long-term beliefs around personal commitment and trust in themselves.

(M. Hertzberg, “Teaching English Language Learners in Mainstream Classes, PETAA: 2012, p.43)

Alphabet Headaches:
The bi-literacy challenge for Chinese students – Presentation by Pauline Bunce

While it may seem self-evident, the sound-symbol relationships in Chinese script operate differently from alphabetic scripts. In her research in Hong Kong, Pauline Bunce found that even very high-achieving students had great difficulty understanding the alphabetic principle that underpins alphabetic writing systems. This has implications for teaching decoding skills to Chinese students, especially those who have established literacy skills in their home language. Pauline has generously provided her annotated PowerPoint presentation, which can be accessed on the ACTA site, via the ACTA Conference tab, or by following this link – www.tesol.org.au/ACTA-Conference/ACTA-International-Conference-2012
Bilingual and multilingual teaching of English and students from vulnerable communities – Presentation by Dr Kathleen Heugh South Australia University

Kathleen described the diversity of refugee students enrolling in university courses increasing and the following challenges that became apparent:

- A reluctance and fear of extended writing;
- Recognising and copying appropriate texts (a positive step but issues of plagiarism);
- The expense of engaging professional assignment writing services
- Delays in submitting work;
- High ratio of missed classes and decreasing self-esteem
- When the first language of students was itself fragile difficulty in all areas were pronounced
- Students course choices did not make sense

Drawing on the Capetown University Experience

From Kathleen’s Capetown University experience improving student’s academic writing was initiated by lecturers using the stigmatised language of the community to move students gradually over to standard Afrikaans or English language needed in academic discourse.

Students were instructed to use their first language to explain academic literature and address questions before translating their understandings back into English. This liberated students from plagiarism and developed their first and second language writing. Collaboration was encouraged and the status of less dominant or powerful languages was raised.

The South Australian Context

At the University of SA, the refugee students in need were from Afghan/Hazara, Southern Sudanese and Blue Nile communities.

Many experienced limited formal schooling especially for women including early literacy practices of reading sacred texts.

The approach to teaching academic English included:

- Recognising and validating students linguistic repertoires
- Expanding and extending their language expertise
- Focussing on the contemporary research of bilingual and multilingual learning
- Building metacognitive awareness of similarities and differences between languages

Student Practices:

- Research of their own language practices in the local diapora community
- Compilation of auto ethnographic portfolios of their language
- Extension of skills for interpreting & translating texts
- Use of translations and two or more languages in assignment writing
- Formation of language nests in the classroom to collaboratively translate readings and clarify understanding.
- Discussion boards and online forums.
- Access to understandings of research and theory of language learning

It was very encouraging to hear how academics are supporting Refugee students at university level to engage and respond to complex texts.

Kathleen Heugh’s session attended by: Angela Kerr
Rel/ESL Multicultural Consultant K–6
Western Sydney Region

Cultural presentation at the Cairns Conference
The Cairns Conference
Ideas for Teaching Spoken Grammar

by Amanda Hilliard

Traditionally, formal descriptions of English grammar have been based on standards of written English. However, recently, particularly as a result of analysis of large corpora of spoken data and an emphasis on spoken communication, researchers and linguists are beginning to focus on describing features of spoken grammar, and there has been increasing interest in understanding and teaching spoken grammar. After all, spoken grammar has arisen to meet the needs of natural spoken conversation, and teaching it in the language classroom can help teachers avoid ‘producing speakers of English who can only speak like a book’ (Carter & McCarthy 1995: 207). Although there is still some debate as to what constitutes spoken grammar and the extent to which it should be taught, raising students’ awareness of spoken grammar can help improve their communication abilities and comprehension skills, particularly in cases where students are learning English in order to communicate with native speakers. This article presents some activities and ideas teachers can use to raise students’ awareness of and ability to produce features of spoken grammar such as fillers, backchannels, heads, tails, and ellipses.

Fillers and Backchannels

Fillers and backchannels are utterances like ‘er’ and ‘erm’ that do not have a specific meaning but rather fill time and allow speakers to gather their thoughts (Willis 2003). Fillers are used by both the listener and speaker. At the beginning of a turn, they signal that the listener has heard the response and needs a little time to respond; after completion points, when it seems that the speaker may have finished his or her turn, they signal that the turn is not really over and that the speaker intends to continue (Willis 2003). Backchannels, on the other hand, are utterances such as ‘uh-huh’ and ‘really’, which are used by the listener to acknowledge what the speaker is saying and encourage him or her to continue. Both fillers and backchannels are common in English conversation because they serve important conversational and interpersonal functions, and it would be both difficult and awkward to have a conversation without them (Willis 2003). Backchannels, on the other hand, are utterances such as ‘uh-huh’ and ‘really’, which are used by the listener to acknowledge what the speaker is saying and encourage him or her to continue. Both fillers and backchannels are common in English conversation because they serve important conversational and interpersonal functions, and it would be both difficult and awkward to have a conversation without them (Willis 2003). Moreover, international students who underuse fillers and backchannels may have difficulty maintaining natural communication with native speakers.

To raise students’ awareness of fillers and backchannels, the teacher can explain their function and then ask students to categorise a group of words as either fillers or backchannels, as in the example below. Once the class has discussed the answers, the teacher can play a short video clip and ask students to count the number of fillers and backchannels they hear in the clip. This activity shows students how common these words are in conversational English.

**Directions:**

*Put the following words in the correct column below.*

| Fillers: words that give you time to think, create a pause, or indicate you’re not finished talking |
| Backchannels: words that show you are listening and understand what someone else is saying |

| oh, hmmm, ah, um, I see, uh huh, er, really |

Heads and Tails

Heads are a way to introduce and orient listeners to a topic before giving information on the topic. For example, in the question, ‘Your sister, does she speak English too?’, ‘Your sister’ is the question head that introduces the listener to the topic. Heads allow speakers to highlight the topic they want to talk about before commenting on it, giving both the speaker and the listener more processing time in real-time communication (Cullen & Kuo 2007). On the other hand, tails are comments that are added to the end of a phrase. Tails allow speakers to emphasise or evaluate their comments, and can also be used to clarify the subject of the sentence (Timmis 2009). For example, in the sentence, ‘She’s a very pretty girl, Amanda is’, ‘Amanda is’ acts as a tail that clarifies the subject ‘She’.

Some basic activities to teach students about heads and tails include questions and statements written with and without heads and tails, as in the examples below. The teacher asks students to decide which is more or less formal, or which is more likely to be found in written or spoken English. After discussing and explaining the use of heads and tails in spoken English, the teacher then asks students to underline the heads or tails in each of the example questions and sentences. In another possible activity the teacher gives students some sentences or questions that already contain heads and tails and asks them to rewrite them without the heads or tails. Then, the teacher gives students sentences that do not contain heads or tails and asks them to rewrite them with heads or tails. These activities raise students’ awareness of the function and use of heads and tails in spoken English.
Directions:

Which sentence or question below is more formal? Can you underline the head or tail in the sentences and questions below? Why does the speaker use them? Can you rewrite the sentences and questions without the head or tail?

a) Isn’t your brother a soccer player?
b) Your brother, he’s a soccer player, isn’t he?

Because heads and tails create two-part sentences and questions, the class can also be divided into pairs and create their own heads and tails together. If the first student starts with a head, the second student finishes with the rest of the question or sentence; if the first student starts with a statement or question, the second student finishes with an appropriate tail. This can be turned into a game in which students receive points for correctly completing their partner’s sentence or question.

Ellipses

Situational ellipses, used when omitting items that are apparent from the immediate situation, are common in spoken English and often result in the omission of subjects and verbs. Because speakers have a shared context, they are able to reduce the length and complexity of their comments by leaving out unnecessary information (Cullen & Kuo 2007). To teach students about ellipses, teachers can select a short video from a TV show where two friends are talking. The teacher gives students a script that includes all the omitted subjects and verbs and asks students to cross out words that they do not hear in the video clip. Once students have listened and crossed out the words, the class can discuss which words were omitted and why. Students can also discuss which words can and can’t be omitted.

In another activity, teachers can start with a short conversation that includes ellipses and ask students to write a long version of the conversation by filling in the missing words, leading to a discussion about which words can be omitted and why. Alternatively, teachers can ask students to write out two identical conversations with a partner: a long version and a short version. This activity helps students incorporate ellipses into their spoken production.

Finally, ellipses can be incorporated into short games.

After dividing students into groups, the teacher writes a long question or sentence on the board. The teacher then goes around the room, giving each team a point for every new, shorter question or sentence they create. When no group can come up with a new, shorter question or sentence, the teacher writes a new question or sentence on the board, and the game starts over. Similarly, in groups of four, students can challenge each other. Pair A creates a long question and answer, and Pair B makes a short version of it. If Pair B creates an acceptable short question and answer, the pair gets a point; if Pair B does not, Pair A gets the point. The students can decide for themselves if the shorter version is acceptable or not, and if they are not sure, the teacher acts as a judge. After a few rounds back and forth, the game changes so that Pair A creates a shorter version of a sentence or question and Pair B must give a longer version. Again, the teacher monitors the groups and settles any disputes.

Conclusion

This article has presented some specific activities teachers can use to teach elements of spoken grammar in the ESL classroom, particularly fillers, backchannels, heads, tails, and ellipses. With the emphasis on communication and speaking, it is more vital than ever to teach features of spoken grammar in order to help students become more effective and natural speakers of English.

References


This article originally appeared in the July 2012 issue of HEIS News, the Higher Education Interest Section newsletter of TESOL International Association.

Amanda Hilliard teaches in the Intensive English Program at Kennesaw State University (Georgia). She holds an MA in TEFL/TESL from the University of Birmingham, England, and has taught English for over three years, including at YBM ECC and Duksung Women’s University, both in South Korea.
On Saturday 8th September, ATESOL NSW held its annual K–3 Grammar Workshop at Beverly Hills North PS. Erin Kitchin from Auburn West PS and Matthew Jones from Wiley Park PS presented an engaging and interactive workshop based on developing language and grammar using a range of ICT programs.

Erin first demonstrated how various interactive programs can be effectively used to develop oral language. These programs included Audacity, Photo Story, Google Earth and SAM Animation. For example, using Photo Story, students were able to record themselves doing different things around the school and focused on prepositional phrases. Once Erin had shown how these tools were being used in her kindergarten classroom, participants were able to ‘have a go’, trying out the different programs themselves.

Matthew’s presentation focused on using i-Pad apps to develop talking and listening skills in the classroom. Using the Art Maker app developed by Playschool, his kindergarten students were able to record themselves retelling stories, such as Magic Beach by Allison Lester, while manipulating characters on the screen. Matthew discussed the importance of play-based learning and providing opportunities for students to use oral language in a meaningful way within a literacy session.

Overall it was a fantastic morning exploring the multiple ways ICT can be used to support the EAL/D learner.

Interested in writing and/or reviewing items (questions) for a large scale ESL project? Please contact Glynis or Jelka on 02 8344 1041 or email ExecutiveAdmin@eaa.unsw.edu.au for more information.
EVERYDAY NUMERACY IN AUSTRALIA

This practical workshop will present an integrated, comprehensive approach to teaching numeracy skills to secondary and adult ESL learners and will showcase some of the teaching approaches featured in the textbook *Everyday Numeracy in Australia* published by APELS.

The session presenters will address fundamental everyday concepts and learning needs relating to ‘the literacy of numbers’. While the session will focus on maximising learning outcomes for pre-elementary and elementary learners in particular, the pronunciation elements in the resource have also proved beneficial at higher levels of proficiency. This workshop is a great opportunity to pick up new lesson ideas and to discuss issues relating to ESL and numeracy.

Presented by Theodora Lafkas and Nicole Brookes
Australian Postgraduate English Language Services (APELS)

Download a registration form at www.atesolnsw.org
The 6th Annual International Free Linguistics Conference will be held in the Eastern Avenue Auditorium Complex, University of Sydney, Camperdown Campus on the weekend of the 6th and 7th October, 2012.

The aim of this conference is to provide scholars, researchers, postgraduate and undergraduate students with current research issues from all fields of linguistics & TESOL an open and widely accessible forum.

The main feature that distinguishes this conference is its focus on freedom:

- freedom from linguistic subfield divisions;
- freedom from an established and rigid theme for presentations, and;
- freedom from fees.

There will also be a performance of ‘Reading Mandela: Genre Pedagogy versus Ancient Rhetoric’ written by Rob McCormack

Focus speakers will include:

Shirley Dita, De La Salle University
Angel Lin, University of Hong Kong
Karl Maton, University of Sydney
Ghil’ad Zuckermann, University of Adelaide

If you are interested in attending the Free Linguistics Conference in 2012, please log in as a website user (or first create an account at: www.freelinguistics.org/user/register) and submit the online form. Those who have not pre-registered online are still welcome to attend (on-the-day registration will be available), but we would appreciate an expression of interest.

The conference is free due to generous sponsorship from the University of Sydney.
The Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (ALAA) is pleased to announce details of its 2012 Annual Conference – *Evolving Paradigms: Language and Applied Linguistics in a Changing World*, at the School of Education Curtin University in Western Australia.

The Keynote Speakers and Keynote Themes

**Monday 12 November:**
**Language and Global Communication**
**Professor Ryuko Kubota**

Ryuko Kubota is a Professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia, Canada. She has previously taught in the United States and Japan. She has been involved in teaching EFL and Japanese as a foreign language as well as in second language teacher education. Her research is focused on issues of culture, race, multiculturalism, and critical pedagogies in second/foreign language education. She is an editor of *Race, Culture, and Identities in Second Language: Exploring Critically Engaged Practice* (2009, Routledge). She has also published in such journals as *Journal of Second Language Writing, Canadian Modern Language Review, Critical Inquiry in Language Studies, International Journal of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education, Linguistics and Education, Modern Language Journal, TESOL Quarterly, Written Communication,* and *World Englishes.*

**Tuesday 13 November:**
**Language and the Media**
**Phillip Adams AO**

Phillip Adams’ radio programme *Late Night Live* is broadcast twice a day over the 250-station network of ABC’s Radio National and around the world on Radio Australia and the World Wide Web. Adams has interviewed over 15,000 of the world’s most prominent politicians, philosophers, economists, scientists, theologians, historians, archaeologists, novelists, and scholars. Writing in The Monthly, Robert Manne has said that Adams is: “The most remarkable broadcaster in the history of this country.” For almost 50 years his columns in major newspapers (he currently writes for The Australian newspaper) have provoked discussion and outrage. He is also the author of over 20 books.

Honours awarded to Adams include two Orders of Australia, the Senior ANZAC Fellowship, Australian Humanist of the Year, Republican of the Year 2005, the Golden Lion at Cannes, the Longford Award (the highest award of the Australian film industry), a Walkley award, a UN Media prize, four Honorary Doctorates, and the Responsibility in Journalism Award at New York University. In 2006 he received the Human Rights Medal from the Australian Government’s Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission. In 2008 he was appointed an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

**Wednesday 14 November:**
**Language and Evolution**
**Professor Rob Brooks**

Rob Brooks is Professor of Evolution and Director of the Evolution and Ecology Research Centre at the University of New South Wales. He is an Evolutionary Biologist who thinks about sex for a living. Topics he has thought and written about include the evolution of mate choice, the costs of being attractive, the reason animals age, and the links between sex, diet, obesity, and death. Together with his research group and collaborators, Rob explores the evolutionary and ecological consequences of sexual reproduction. At the moment he is especially interested in the interactions between evolution and economics, the evolution of human life histories, the reasons for sex differences in aging and longevity, the unfolding obesity crisis, the relationship between evolution and equity feminism, the evolution of human bodies, the purpose of Rock ‘n’ Roll, and what we can and cannot infer about morality from studying the natural world. His first book for a popular audience, *Sex, Genes & Rock ‘n’ Roll: How Evolution has Shaped the Modern World* (New South Books) was published in 2011.
TESOL International Association and the U.S. Department of State Join Efforts to Aid English Language Teaching Worldwide

Alexandria, Va., and Washington, DC (14 November 2011)—TESOL International Association (TESOL) and the U.S. Department of State announce a joint effort to connect teachers and resources in the United States with English language teaching (ELT) needs and opportunities outside the United States. The goal of the partnership is to utilize each institution’s vast networks, expertise, and international resources to respond to the global demand for English language teaching and learning.

The partnership will focus primarily on building a multi-sector consortium focused on ELT, led by TESOL and the U.S. Department of State. With support from academic institutions, non-government organizations, private sector businesses, and other U.S. government agencies, this initiative seeks to:

• Provide quality information and networking opportunities for individuals and organizations in countries with growing needs for English language teaching and interest in accessing ELT expertise and cultural resources from the United States;

• Support the efforts of ELT institutions outside the United States in their pursuit of domestic strategies that promote effective English language learning and capacity building;

• Work in coordination with U.S. companies, universities, publishers, and other ELT stakeholders to enhance their international outreach and operations; and

• Expand countries’ access to U.S.-based English language resources and expertise.

The initial consortium of U.S.-based groups will seek to extend collaboration with international organizations. Additional members can support the consortium and leverage resources to aid and advance ELT globally.

About TESOL International Association

Founded in 1966, TESOL International Association (TESOL) is a professional community of educators, researchers, administrators and students committed to advancing excellence in English language teaching for speakers of other languages worldwide. With more than 12,000 members representing 156 countries, TESOL fosters the exchange of ideas, research and peer-to-peer knowledge, and provides expertise, resources, and a powerful voice on issues affecting the profession. Through professional development programs, its international conference, special interest groups, and publications, TESOL engages tens of thousands of professionals to collaborate globally and create a world of opportunity for millions of people of all ages who want to learn English.
International Conferences & Events

September

6-8  (North America)  11th Symposium on Second Language Writing, “Graduate Study in Second Language Writing,” Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA. Email: tony@purdue.edu. Web: http://sslw.asu.edu/2012.

14-16  (Central and South America)  Panama TESOL, “Teaching to Learn: A Declaration for Success,” Panama City, Panama. Email: joannempyratesol@gmail.com. Web: www.panamatesol.org.

October

2-3  (Asia and Oceania)  The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Department of English, “2nd Conference of Applying (Putonghua/English) Language Arts,” Hong Kong, China. Email: egpela@inet.polyu.edu.hk. Web: www.engl.polyu.edu.hk/events/apela2012.

4-7  (Asia and Oceania)  TESOLANZ, “Emerging Opportunities in New Learning Spaces,” Palmerston North, New Zealand. Email: g.r.skyrme@massey.ac.nz. Web: http://www.clesol.org.nz.

11-13  (North America)  TESL Canada Federation, “TESL Interiors: Landscapes of Literacies and Language,” Thompson River University, Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada. Email: jdobson@tru.ca. Web: www.tru.ca/tc2012.


November

8-10  (North America)  40th TESL Ontario Conference, Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Email: conference@teslontario.ca. Web: http://www.teslontario.net/conference.

9-10  (Asia and Oceania)  ALTAANZ Inaugural Conference, University of Sydney. Pre conference workshops Thurs 8 Nov. Web: altaanz.org/altaanz-conference.html.


December


January

14-18  (Asia and Oceania)  UNSW Summer School in Education – Scaffolding ESL Learners in the Challenge Zone. Presenter: A/Prof Pauline Gibbons. Web: www.education.arts.unsw.edu.au/professional-learning-development/short-courses

ATESOL (NSW) Inc is a professional Teachers Association formed in 1970. It has a membership from early childhood to tertiary, adult, community and ELICOS. It also caters for colleagues in the related areas of Aboriginal and Maori education, bilingualism, linguistics, community and foreign language teaching.

ATESOL (NSW) Inc is affiliated with the Australian Council for TESOL Associations (ACTA) and TESOL International. It aims to strengthen the effective teaching and learning of English while respecting individuals’ language rights.

ATESOL offers:
- E-bulletin to update members on events
- Professional learning for teachers
- Regular seminars and workshops
- Reduced registration rates to the ACTA conference
- Reduced rates to ATESOL professional learning activities
- Regular newsletters
- TESOL in Context, journal of ACTA
- Affiliation with national and international associations
- Up-to-date information about TESOL opportunities

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Advertising rates for 2012 – space only (including GST)
- Full page
  182mm x 270mm $250
  4 issues $750
- Half-page horizontal
  182mm x 135mm $100
  4 issues $325
- Quarter-page vertical
  88.5mm x 135mm $65
  4 issues $180
- Inserts $300

Website: www.atesolsonsw.org