A Tad of Teaching and a Couple of Conferences

Margie Sainsbury’s account of how she made the most of her long service leave provides plenty of food for thought.

When I looked at my long service leave I was excited to find I could stretch it to almost three months. I had always been attracted by the idea of teaching overseas, but could never seem to see my way clear to leaving home for 1–2 years. I had three months and itchy feet, but neither a budget nor the inclination to just be a tourist floating around on the surface of things. I wanted that sense of ‘belonging’, to get to know the local cafes, markets, butcher, baker etc.

I couldn’t go anywhere expensive and I wanted any volunteer teaching I did to be perhaps helpful in some small way. Yet, not being a hugely intrepid type I needed some creature comforts, and a climate that was not too hot and not too cold.

Eastern Europe fascinated me because of our brush with so many refugees from the Yugoslav war in the nineties, and I was intrigued to know how they were doing ten years after the Dayton Peace Accords finally ended the horror. I contacted former students I had stayed friendly with who had come from Mostar in Bosnia. It fitted the criteria: not too big, about 90,000 people, scenically beautiful, great history, including a complex and tragic part in the war, temperate climate, and a fascinating blend of East and West. It seemed a place where I could learn a lot!

A key to the success of the experiment was the ex-student, who was delighted that I wanted to go to his hometown, and who had a number of contacts for me re teaching. He had a cousin and family to look after me and he arranged an apartment for me. So I’d settled on a destination. I then began to read some of the history. Another Bosnian friend...continued page 6
Welcome to the Spring edition of the ATESOL NSW newsletter. In this issue we explore voluntary work overseas: Margie Sainsbury and Sara Lyons share their experience of teaching EFL in Bosnia and Bangladesh respectively. Robert Jackson presents an update on the work of our national body, ACTA, an organisation which spends much time working on policies which are vital for our profession, our students and their families.

At its August meeting ATESOL NSW’s Council welcomed three new councillors: Dr Ahmar Mahboob, Dr Kerry Taylor-Leech and Ms Pornsawan Brawn. We look forward to a great contribution from all three, particular in working with other adult ESOL specialists on Council, Elizabeth Hotop and Marolyn Ninness, to provide further professional development opportunities to teachers in the adult ESOL sector.

Kath Brandon reports on the ELICOS sector and Jonny Wells contributes reviews of two new books. The deadline for our last issue for the year is 20 November. Your contributions are welcome.

Helen Fong
Executive Officer/Newsletter Editor
0427 536 897, email helenfong@bigpond.com

Cover photograph:
The reconstructed Stari Most (old bridge) Mostar, Bosnia
Created by Daniel Wabyick and licensed for use in the public domain under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0
Connie Mudge

When you read this, the APEC meeting will have come and gone and the effectiveness of these gatherings evaluated widely in the press. Whatever the outcomes, I feel that the effort of bringing heads of governments together to discuss matters that affect the region is a worthy activity. Affiliations are important to ensure commonality of understandings, to make a statement from a relatively unified base.

Our affiliations as a professional association are important as well, with representation on the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) giving us a national profile and access to federal government agencies. Representatives of the state TESOL associations are the ACTA councillors. As a member of ATESOL NSW, you receive the ACTA journal, TESOL in Context. ACTA is also the Australian affiliate of TESOL Inc with its highly-regarded advocacy initiatives both within USA and internationally.

In July 2008, in Alice Springs, ACTA will be staging its first international conference Pedagogies of Connection: Developing Individual and Community Identities, with the pre-conference seminar on indigenous languages supported by TESOL Inc. Start thinking now about planning a holiday next July to include this conference. Watch for the Call for Papers and consider submitting an abstract for a workshop to showcase something that you have done in your teaching context. Start asking your school or employer about support through Professional Learning funds for part of the costs, and talk to your accountant about the income tax deductibility of related expenses.

Our affiliation with the Professional Teachers Council (PTC) gives us a communication channel as well as administrative support. Recently a committee has been established to promote cooperation and coordination among professional associations in all key learning and interest areas with activities and serves targeting K–6 teachers.

PTC is also endorsed as a provider of registered professional learning for the NSW Institute of Teachers http://www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au/. As a member association, ATESOL NSW is able to offer registered courses that meet identified teaching standards to help ESL teachers in schools maintain their accreditation. PTC has provided the Institute of Teachers with advice which has helped to frame aspects of its Professional Learning framework.

At the national level, the Australian Joint Council of Professional Teaching Associations (AJCPTA) communicates with Teaching Australia http://www.teachingaustralia.edu.au/ta/go, the federal equivalent of our Institute of Teachers. As a member of AJCPTA representing many NSW professional associations, PTC is able to ensure that our voice is heard on national issues about teachers and teaching.

So, you see that your membership of ATESOL NSW (Inc) gives you a voice at national and international levels on two fronts: TESOL (through ACTA), and teaching and teaching standards (through PTC). Encourage your ESL colleagues to join, taking advantage of the current offer for new members – join now and be financial to the end of 2008. Membership entitlements include ATESOL NSW newsletters, ACTA journals TESOL in Context, and member rates for professional learning activities.
The President Writes

I would like to welcome our newest additions to Council: Ahmar Mahboob, Pornsawan Brawn and Kerry Taylor-Leech. We encourage all members to consider joining Council to help determine the direction that our future activities take. Please contact any of the Councillors listed on page 2 for more information.

Our professional learning program continues successfully with recent offerings across all age sectors, including our Grammar workshops for K–3 and Years 4–8; the New Prescriptions workshop for the Stage 6 English/ESL course; the Stage 6 English/ESL Revision Day for students; Favourite Lessons for both schools and adult sectors; and ICT workshops targeting the adult sector. We are currently planning our program for 2008 and would welcome suggestions for topics and/or presenters.

Regardless of our affiliations at state, national and international levels, we still depend heavily on the contributions and involvement of our members – you. We are part of much larger pictures both in TESOL and teaching in general, but supporting your day-to-day work is a priority for this association. To do that well, we need your help. The more people we can involve, the lighter the burden on any one individual. Think about becoming actively involved with ATESOL NSW. You won’t regret it.

**ATESOL NSW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR 2007**

This calendar is up-to-date as of the beginning of September 2007. Check future newsletters and the website (www.atesolnsw.org) for updates.

**Saturday 22 September, 10am–1pm**

**Integrating Audio into E-learning**

**Presenter:** Dr. Padmini Sampathkumar

This workshop is aimed at ESL teachers who are interested in integrating audio to enrich the e-learning experience of their language students. The hands-on workshop will focus on the use of various simple voice tools available to teachers such as PowerPoint recordings, use of mp3 players and on-line software for recording and pod casting. We will also look at some exciting ways in which such recordings can be used in the language class room. No prior experience necessary but participants are expected to have some basic computer skills.

**Venue:** Granville College of TAFE (Computer Room A210), 136 William Street, Granville.

Free on-site parking available (enter via The Avenue). Granville TAFE is 10–15 minutes walk from Granville Station.

**Cost:** $45 members & students, $60 non-members

Phone contact on day of workshop: 0427 536 897

**Enquiries & bookings:** 02 9564 3322

Limited places available for this hands-on workshop, bookings essential

**Tuesday 2 October, 9am–3pm**

**HSC English (ESL) Course Revision Day**

For all STUDENTS of HSC English (ESL)

Presented by experienced teachers of the HSC English (ESL) course: Anne McIntyre, Jenny Newell, Patricia Paring, Janice Raynor, Jennifer Tierney, and Emma Vale

**Venue:** The Sydney Masonic Centre, 66 Goulburn St, Sydney.

**Cost:** $20 per student $45 per teacher (incl GST)

**Enquiries & bookings:** 02 9564 3322

**Closing date for bookings:** Friday 28/9/2007

**Program:**

9.00 – 9.30 Registration

9.30 – 11.00 Area of study Q1 and Q2

10.00 – 12.00 Listening

12.00 – 1.00 Lunch

1.00 – 3.00 Modules A and B Electives

**N.B.** The **Sydney Masonic Centre** is at 66 Goulburn St, (corner Castlereagh St), Sydney. The nearest railway stations are Museum Station (5 mins. walk), Town Hall Station (10 mins. walk) or Central Station (10 mins. walk). Attendees need to provide their own refreshments & bottled water. Lunch may be bought from food outlets nearby. The Sydney Masonic Centre is in a central city location, close to rail and bus transport and provides comfortable seating and amenities.
INTRODUCING A NEW ATESOL COUNCILLOR

Pornsawan Brawn

I am a new Councillor at ATESOL although I have been working in the ESL field for a long time. I have quite vast teaching experience to adult learners. I started my EFL teaching journey at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand but have been with NSW AMES since. In addition to classroom teaching, my area of interest and ESL experience are in material writing, professional development and curriculum development. I was seconded to work at a research centre to assist in planning and organizing PD programs for adult learners for the past three years and will soon return to my teaching position in NSW AMES in 2008. I have presented and co-presented at conferences both in Australia and at the TESOL Convention in the US.

Although I did my MA in Applied Linguistics, I found that my real learning opportunity comes from “doing it (trial and error)” in the classroom and “sharing it” with my colleagues. New teachers should tap in to collegiate discussions as often as they can. However as they have their long and illustrious careers ahead of them, they should maintain their enthusiasms and keep their quest for learning burning by way of PD, reading or engaging in action research. Feedback from learners is crucial to keep your teaching more relevant than ever.

AMEP National Conference 2007

Changing Identities: Changing Needs

Thursday 4 – Saturday 6 October 2007
Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE
Mooloolaba Centre 34 Lady Musgrave Drive, Mountain Creek Queensland

Program
This year’s conference will feature international and local speakers.
Plenary speakers: Tracey Derwing and Ingrid Piller
Featured speakers: Frank Hardman, Margaret Piper and Hayo Reinders

For more information, please contact the Conference Office at:
AMEP 2007
ICMS Pty Ltd
Level 3, 379 Kent Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
Tel: +61 2 9290 3366     Fax: +61 2 9290 2444
Email: amep2007@icms.com.au
Web: www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/conference
lent me “A Short History of Bosnia”, which was in fact rather long – but so informative, and I drew many times on the things I learned from it. Then an attempt to learn some words and phrases in Bosnian/Croatian... an embarrassingly pathetic outcome I have to confess. In addition I looked on the net to see whether there were any interesting conferences in the vicinity. I liked the sound of one called “Neglected Areas of ELT” to be held in Thessaloniki in Northern Greece, and, on my way home, “Best Practice in ELT” in Cairo.

Next was to purchase Lonely Planet Eastern Europe and start to plan excursions out from Mostar – Dubrovnik, Split, Budapest, Madjugoria, Sarajevo, Thessaloniki, Belgrade. I had a great start to my travels in Belgrade, staying with fellow teacher and consummate host Libby Oliver. Here I learned more of the background to political and social issues facing the region in the aftermath of war. The contacts from my ex-student were invaluable – it would have been more difficult without them. My arrival was expected, and before long three evening classes were set up. The concept of volunteering was not fully understood as I discovered when I tried to set something up outside my ex-student’s patronage. I tried a direct approach to a mosque, offering volunteer teaching in the madrasa there. Although two young tour guides I spoke to were very keen, when I met with the mullah I was treated with considerable suspicion, and he declined the offer.

On the Croatian side of this divided town I taught a wonderful group of former professionals who had taken a drop in status since the war, and worked with them on Monday and Wednesday nights – usually followed by ‘English Conversation’ in the Irish Pub! On Tuesday night I worked in various classes at a Cultural Centre in the Muslim sector. This gave me free time in the day to plan lessons, explore the town, meet new friends in lovely cafes overlooking the river, sit in the sun, read books and plan my four-day weekends in this beautiful part of the world. At other times I was spirited out of town to take a class with some engineers at a hydroelectric plant, and was treated to a magnificent lunch of spit-roasted lamb by way of payment. I took another class in a school in a village out of Sarajevo where I spent some days with a Bosnian friend from Australia who happened to be visiting her family when I was over there. That class became a little noisy – they weren’t used to having fun with English, and the principal came to see what was causing the disturbance! Teaching with fewer materials and aids – back to chalk and blackboard in the Cultural Centre – forced me to re-think some teaching strategies and prompted me to be more resourceful and creative.

The conferences were stimulating and informative. This particularly applied to the Thessaloniki conference. I gave a paper there entitled “Introducing Voice Techniques for Actors to the Pronunciation Classroom”. Although somewhat nerve-wracking, giving a paper provided a broader entrée into the conference as a whole and this made it well worth the effort and nervousness. It was so interesting to see a European perspective on English teaching. There was much talk of International English with enthusiastic support from UK guest speakers who seemed keen to offer up English to other nations to do with what they will – I wondered if it was a sort of expiation of past Imperial arrogance. It was left to the ‘non-native’ teachers to mount some defence of standardized English! In another session the presenter from Cambridge exams outlined a convincing case for increased emphasis on Speaking skills to appear in their new exam format. At all sessions spirited discussion flowed through question time and on into the breaks – the Greeks and Turks being particularly lively. Also dinner at a Greek Taverna with everyone up dancing proved a highlight of the not-so-highbrow variety.

In conclusion, I can’t convey adequately how rich and rewarding this whole experience was for me. I gained a great deal, both personally and professionally, from this blend of work and travel. For those who may consider this option, my Professional Development money from CIT helped with my fare and I will claim tax deductions for local travel to conferences and conference costs. This experience has provided a store of unique memories, wonderful travel, a great learning curve and a cast of remarkable characters.

Highly recommended!

Margie Sainsbury is a teacher and home tutor co-ordinator AMEP, Canberra Institute of Technology. She is happy to talk with teachers who are contemplating teaching overseas and may be contacted at: Margaret.Sainsbury@cit.act.edu.au
I am two months into an 18 month placement in Dhaka, Bangladesh, with Ahsania Mission Secondary College and Khan Bhadur Ahsanullah Teachers’ Training College. The first three months will be spent as an English Foreign Language co-teacher in the Secondary College (classes 6 to 12). The purpose of this three month period is to understand how English is currently being taught in this particular Bangladeshi secondary school, how Bangladeshi English teachers view their role, the materials being used, the strengths and weaknesses of the current system, and any factors that are hindering the development of a communicative approach.

I work as a team teacher with either one of the two Bangladeshi English Language teachers. The Secondary College is a Bangla-medium school situated in a low-income outer suburban housing estate. All the students study English as a foreign language. The English Curriculum is strongly exam-driven and is divided into English text study and English grammar, because the exams are divided into Test Paper 1 (text comprehension and response) and Test Paper 2 (grammar and writing). The current teaching method is a very traditional teacher-focussed approach and I am the first native speaker of English to work in this school. The maximum number of students per class is 55. As a comparison, rural schools usually have 70 to 80 per class. While the school has new buildings, there is no library, no Internet, no computers for the teachers, no photocopier, and minimal paper. There is one white board plus six overhead fans per room. The rooms have fixed benches and tables for the students. In the context of Bangladesh, the school is considered very modern and well equipped.

I and my two co-teachers are jointly working on lesson plans. The input of the Bangladeshi teachers is essential in this process and my aim is to help them realise a more flexible and a student-responsive approach. So far we have identified the following objectives:

1. To enhance the learning environment by:
   - increasing active student participation in all aspects of the lesson and by all students,
   - developing a cooperative learning environment where students work in pairs or groups to complete an activity and check each other’s work, and
   - sourcing cheap materials that could stimulate students' learning – butchers’ paper, coloured markers, old calendars, vocab cards and drawings by students.

2. To increase students’ confidence in speaking English by:
   - encouraging the development of speaking skills through dialogue builds, debates and role plays,
Teaching EFL in Bangladesh

The students are keen and enthusiastic. Staff have been very welcoming to me as a native English speaker and I have made good friends with a number of the teachers. Bangladeshi teachers have very limited staff development opportunities but are open-minded when it comes to trying out new techniques. The Bangladeshi English Language Teachers Association (BELTA) is an active professional association which provides a newsletter and workshops to support local English teachers. Some work has been done to rewrite the textbooks within a communicative approach. While teachers understand the benefits of student-centred learning, they need practical, simple ways in which to implement this methodology.

There are many challenges but also many rewards in working in education in Bangladesh. I haven’t regretted my decision to come here for a minute!

Sara Lyons is a volunteer teacher with VIDA.

are you an EFL/ESL teacher with teacher training experience?

are you looking to extend your cultural and educational experience?

are you keen to make a contribution to the Bangladesh school sector?

If so, the Bangladesh English Language Teacher Training Program might be for you...

VIDA is a volunteer program supported by the Australian Government that will assist you to be a part of this exciting new initiative.

VIDA is looking to place 11 volunteer EFL/ESL teacher trainers to spend up to 24 months in Bangladesh making a difference to the English language teaching skills of primary and secondary school trainee teachers in 6 locations throughout the country.

We’ll support you

VIDA provides volunteers with airfares, living and accommodation allowances, medicals, comprehensive health insurance, Pre-Departure Training and in-country support for you (and your family).

Assignments now online.
Applications due by 24 September, 2007

For further information contact Freecall (in Australia) 1800 995 536 info@vidauniversity.com.au www.vidauniversity.com.au

VIDA is supported by the Australian Government

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The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) is the national coordinating body for all state and territory TESOL associations in Australia. On the strength of our current state membership numbers, ATESOL NSW is entitled to representation by four Councillors. Currently, your representatives are Judith Mee, the outgoing secretary, Connie Mudge, Jim Richardson* and myself.

One of the most important recent developments has been the employment of an ACTA Executive Officer. ATESOL NSW was the driving force behind the establishment of this position; we made a recommendation on the strength of our positive experiences and increased productivity and achievements in the time Helen Fong has been our Executive Officer, and our Roles and Responsibilities Statement and procedure for employment provided the model for ACTA’s process. Sophia Sabatier, who is the Course Project Officer for English as an Additional Language/Dialect with the Western Australian Curriculum Council, has recently been appointed to the position.

One of Sophia’s first tasks has been to produce an ACTA response to the Senate inquiry into the Citizenship Bill (included in this issue). She has also been at work on an ACTA Position Statement responding to the proposal to implement a National Education Framework. Helen Fong and I have both had extensive input into the drafting of this document and it will hopefully be available by the time the year’s final Newsletter goes to print.

You will also notice included in these pages an advertisement for TESOL in Context editor positions. I'd encourage any of our members with the requisite skills and experience (and an interest in editing a refereed TESOL journal) to put in an application for one of these positions. The rationale for the editorial board has shifted to ensure representation of all the states, and it is important that our voice and our priorities in TESOL in New South Wales are heard.

Keep abreast of current issues and all the latest initiatives at the ACTA website: www.tesol.org.au/index.html

* Jim Richardson has since resigned for family commitments; Sue Bremner has been nominated to be the fourth ATESOL NSW Councillor on ACTA.

ACTA President:
Misty Adoniou
Tel: (02) 6201 2471
Email: misty.adoniou@canberra.edu.au

July 6th 2007

Submission to: the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Inquiry into the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Citizenship Testing) Bill 2007

From: the Australian Council of TESOL Associations

The Australian Council of TESOL Association’s (ACTA) submission to the inquiry regarding the Australian Citizenship Amendment Bill 2007 is based on its members’ expertise and experience working directly with migrants to Australia, both in teaching the English language, but also more generally in their settlement into the Australian community.

Minister Andrew’s speech commending the Bill to the Senate clearly foregrounds a desire to define an Australian identity and a set of values that all Australians can call their own, and the implication is that the introduction of a citizenship test would achieve these aims.

ACTA agrees English language proficiency and an understanding of, and commitment to, how Australian society functions are the two key factors in ensuring citizens are able to participate as empowered members of the Australian community. However, ACTA questions the capacity of a test to achieve the dual outcomes of both assessing English proficiency and ‘citizenship
education’. It is certain that a test of 20 multiple choice questions could not measure English language proficiency, and it is also doubtful that a ‘basic knowledge of English’ would be sufficient to demonstrate meaningful understanding of citizenship concepts. Finally, successful completion of such a test would in no way be any evidence that the candidate actually holds the values the test may allude to.

Citizenship is a concept, and values are abstract, they are not a collection of English language words to be learned by heart and recognised in a series of twenty multiple choice questions. Indeed passing such a test can be achieved by anyone who receives sufficient coaching or with sufficient memory. Factual recall does not provide a measure of ‘loyalty to Australia’ or those identified common values of ‘commitment to the equality of men and women and the spirit of a fair go, of mutual respect and compassion for those in need’. Equally, the ability to understand values intrinsic in what it means to be an Australian citizen is not linked to an ability to speak English. And, if these values are to include respect for the dignity of the individual and all races and cultures, then this should be explicitly modelled by our government to those new to our society.

The Minister points to the use of tests in countries such as the UK, Canada and the US as evidence of the need to have one in Australia. These tests require basic recall such as the colours on the flag (US), the names of the aboriginal languages (Canada), or which court uses a jury (UK). We have no evidence that the use of these tests provides these countries with a greater sense of shared identity and values than ours. Indeed, there are quantifiable statistics to suggest that it is just the opposite. Moreover, the Bill’s provision for “flexibility to approve more than one test should different arrangements need to be made …for certain prospective citizens,” serves to exacerbate our concern. Traditionally, leeway has been granted to those possessing qualities deemed desirable by the government of the day. What guarantee is there that these prospective citizens are more worthy than others with a ‘lower’ profile or qualification?

Quite apart from the concern about a test’s ability to either assess or instil abstract notions such as values and citizenship, is the fact that the proposed test also purports to test English language proficiency. The integrity of a multiple choice test in ascertaining literacy is, at best, questionable. The measurement of English language proficiency requires a test that does so in a valid and reliable way. There are many such tests, some of which are already available to international students in Australia eg. the IELTS and Cambridge ESOL exams. Enormous amounts of research go into making these valid measures of English language proficiency. They are necessarily long and complicated exams because of the complexity of what it is they are assessing. It is our conviction that the proposed citizenship test is in no way a meaningful or valid test of language proficiency and should not claim to be one.

ACTA is particularly concerned that refugee and humanitarian migrants are the groups most likely to be negatively affected by an English language citizenship test. The Bill suggests that many settlers will be waiting the four years before applying for Citizenship, thereby implying that they will have achieved both English language proficiency and citizenship knowledge to complete the test. However, for many of our refugee and humanitarian entrants that is still not long enough for them to reach English language proficiency levels that would allow them to reach the standards set by the proposed test. Most refugees and humanitarian entrants have special needs. Many of them have little or no education. Many suffer from the after effects of trauma and poor living conditions. Consequently, even with high levels of motivation and access to high quality teaching, they are likely to take much longer to reach whatever standards are set, than educated migrants. Yet, these migrants are well able to appreciate the advantages of living in a society with the kinds of freedoms which are fundamental to Australia. Indeed, throughout her history, Australia has reaped great benefits from such migrants. With a need and a strong desire to feel secure, the opportunity to become Australian citizens as
early as possible is very important to them. Delaying it for whatever reason would unnecessarily prolong their feelings of insecurity and alienation and this perceived rejection may reduce their desire to contribute to their new society. A feeling of belonging and acceptance is key to a cohesive, united and loyal society, and tests that by their very nature are exclusionary are not the way to a united society.

Citizenship and values do not need to be presented in English to be understood. They are much better understood via the language that the migrant is most competent in. It is far better that these concepts are thoroughly explored as early in the migration process as possible rather than waiting until the learners have the English language proficiency to engage with them. This may assist in reducing cultural misunderstandings that can so often lead to disharmony in a society. Resources could be spent training respected community members to achieve this aim in the migrant’s own language. This would facilitate a meeting of ways and engender trust rather than leaving new arrivals to fend for themselves until they are linguistically able to learn aspects of culture in a foreign language. On this point ACTA wishes to express concern over specific provisions within the Bill, specifically the ambiguity created in Sections 23A, paragraphs 1 and 6 (“any other matter”) and amendments to subsection 21 (paragraph 4, 2A) which would leave open the possibility that the citizenship aspect of any test be administered in any language, which may indeed work in favour of the candidate if the language was their mother tongue, but does not preclude the use of a language in which the applicant has no knowledge at all.

In conclusion, ACTA does not believe that the proposed test can reliably measure both English language proficiency and citizenship knowledge. Testing isn’t teaching and some things can’t be tested.

We are opposed to endorsing a test that relies upon learning set responses to predictable questions in order to get a piece of paper. We harbour grave concerns that current English language programmes may have to abandon good language teaching practice to simply ‘teach to the test.’

We believe values are something you live and are demonstrated by the ways in which you interact with those around you, not by the way you answer a multiple choice test.

All Australians want a cohesive and unified Australia but a test won’t achieve that outcome. We must be very careful to match the means to the end – and not pursue a citizenship test simply because others do, or because it may placate the media.

Resources earmarked for test development and administration would be better spent on

- funding extended English language programmes which will give prospective citizens full entry to all that Australia has to offer,
- supporting communities in sharing citizenship values, rights and responsibilities with migrants as early in the migration process as possible, including the development of mother tongue resources

We believe that in doing so, the Government would be truly demonstrating commitment to “uniting all Australians while respecting their diversity.”

Misty Adoniou  Sophia Sabatier
President ACTA  Executive Officer ACTA

On behalf of all members of the Australian Council of TESOL Associations

ATESOL NSW  ATESOL NT  VATME (Victoria)
WATESOL  ATESOL ACT  ESL Educators of SA
QATESOL  TASTESOL

ATESOL Newsletter • Vol 33 No 3 • September 2007
ELICOS Update - September 2007

ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students) is the name given to programs for international students studying English in Australia. Other countries may refer to it as EFL.

ELICOS Strong

The ELICOS sector is booming at the moment according to a research report published in July by English Australia, the peak professional association for ELICOS colleges in Australia. The English Australia Survey of Major Regional Markets in 2006 reveals that just under 125,000 students studying on all visa types (student, working holiday, visitor etc) took part in ELICOS courses last year, an increase of 21% from the previous year. For the first time South Korea replaced Japan in 2006 as the country contributing the largest number of students to ELICOS and numbers of students from China and India are increasing strongly. Around 60% of students on a student visa are on a pathway to further study at a school, VET college or university in Australia once they finish their English studies (30% of all ELICOS students). DEST reports that growth for ELICOS this year is continuing strongly, with an increase of 35% in student visa commencements compared with the year to date May 2006.

New National Code

Australia is the best regulated country in the world when it comes to looking after its international students. Along with all other organisations providing courses to international students, colleges in the ELICOS sector have been responding to the requirements of the new National Code of Practice (2007). This Code sets down regulations for the delivery of programs and services to international students. The Code covers areas such as marketing and recruitment; the use of agents; student support services such as counselling and the welfare of students under the age of 18; complaints and appeals; and monitoring and reporting on course attendance and progress.

EL Symposium

Representatives from ELICOS colleges joined schools, university and VET providers and employer peak bodies in a national symposium on The English Language Competence of International Students in Sydney in August. Sponsored by AEI, the symposium examined issues such as levels of English proficiency for students entering schools, VET and higher education institutions; language support offered to students while they are studying; and the employment of graduates. This was the first time such a forum had taken place and participants agreed it was a great opportunity for increased understanding between all sectors.

Kath Brandon, EA Project Officer
kathbrandon@englishaustralia.com.au

Australian Council of TESOL Associations
Inaugural International TESOL Conference
Hosted by ESL Educators (South Australia) Pedagogies of Connection
...in Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia

10–12 July 2008

Pedagogies of Connection

Developing Individual and Community Identities

following a TESOL Symposium

9 July 2008

Keeping Language Diversity Alive

Deadline for abstracts: 30 November 2007
Further details: www.tesol.org.au/conference
Book Reviews
by Jonny Wells, TAFE Ultimo, Languages

Professional English in Use Medicine (Paperback)
By Eric H. Glendinning & Ron Howard. Cambridge University Press; 1 edition (May 7, 2007)

The book ‘Professional English in Use Medicine’ is part of the excellent ‘Language In Use’ series from Cambridge Press. Primarily designed as a vocabulary and knowledge builder for ESL students in medically related fields, this book, contains 60 individually themed units which introduce essential medical terms, key vocabulary and medical terminology. As the book features advanced vocabulary and some very difficult pronunciations (a sphygmomanometer anyone!, p76) it would be well suited to intermediate to advanced students. Following the familiar teacher/student friendly layout of this book series, explanations and definitions feature on the left hand side, with vocabulary exercises on the right. As such, this book would be well suited to self study or reference material for individual learners; however, it would still make a useful aid in classroom teaching also. The textbook includes topics such as diseases and symptoms, investigations, treatment, examining and prevention as well as the all important subject of ‘giving bad news’ which as we all know, is a must for every medical professional! The book introduces general medical vocabulary related to many essential areas of modern medicine including, parts and functions of the body, medical and paramedical personnel, education and training, and medical research and diagnostics. As always, the vital answer key and glossary are featured in the back of the book to help the medically challenged amongst us ‘teachers’. Moreover, a comprehensive medical abbreviation list, make for a useful student glossary towards the back of the book.

The 176 page vocabulary and language exercises are frequently illustrated by colour photos and illustrations which make for an attractive inclusion to this text, although, at times it does seem rather text heavy and more of a reader than vocabulary builder. With this in mind perhaps, the authors have made some (albeit small) attempt to make each unit more communicable and practicable with a suggested role-play or speaking activity at the end of each unit, designed to recycle and reinforce the key terms; however more experienced teachers in this area could probably think of better extension activities and role-plays. This book would be ideal for teachers and students with prior medical knowledge and/or training, as the novice would often have insufficient expertise to know the full answers and deal with students vocabulary related questions etc. that would crop up in each unit of this book.

Professional English in Use Law (Paperback)

Here is yet another offering in the popular Language In Use vocabulary building series from Cambridge Press. Professional English in Use Law contains 45 units and 128 pages, covering a wide range of legal vocabulary and terminology. This edition covers legal topics ranging from commercial and contract law, intellectual property, liability and the judiciary system in its familiar two page spread format. The left page giving vocabulary in context, short readings and explanations; whilst the opposite page offers students’ practice and reinforcement. At this level of vocabulary, obviously the book is well suited to high intermediate and advanced learners of professional English. These books are also well suited for self study or as a reference text; however private tutorials and group lessons would also benefit from using this resource.

Due to the nature of the content, it should be recommended that teachers have above average knowledge of legal matters/jargon before teaching from this text, as a complete novice would soon become unstuck with its rather complex subject matter. The units seem rather text heavy with long readings of selected vocabulary highlighted throughout. The associated exercises that follow them however, seem rather short in comparison and how truly effective they are in getting students to use the taught language may be somewhat limited. With this in mind, as in some of the other books in this mostly excellent series, each end of unit offers extension speaking exercises, mini role-plays and further chances for students to recycle the vocabulary that they have studied. Again, however the teacher will be required to have a good working knowledge of the law in many cases, to ensure that the students are correct with their answers. Unfortunately the answer key and glossary in the back are of no help at all in these instances! Overall, this book may be a good supplement to a legal ESL course, but it does rather seem to lack character, be somewhat heavy and take itself a bit too seriously and not be as interactive or enjoyable as others in this professional ESL series (um, sounds like a solicitor I once knew!).

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The book *Taboos and Issues* consists of photocopiable lessons on controversial topics. Although there are 40 topics of discussion, they may be classified under five major social and cultural categories (some may be overlapping):

- **Gender and sexuality** (Nudity, Sex for sale, Gays and jobs, Cheating on your partner, Changing sex; Gay families; Vanity)
- **Law and society** (Abortion; Compensation culture; It should be banned, Animal rights, Legalizing drugs; The death penalty; It should be banned! Bribery and corruption; Nobody needs a gun; Sexual harassment; Children who kill; Big Brother is watching! The right to die; Turning the other cheek)
- **Social decorum** (Not my type, Taboo conversation topics, Swearing, Politically incorrect jokes)
- **Cross cultural & Social issues** (Immigration and racism, National stereotypes; Begging; Old enough to be her grandfather, AIDS, Death, Designer babies; Marriage—for better or worse; The sale of human organs; Sport and money)
- **Mental health** (Anxiety and depression, Torture; Addictions)

Each unit consists of a reading material which sets the scene for the learners by building the field, preparing learners with lexical items and context of situation. According to the authors, the two pages of each unit have their own function—that is the left hand page provides the basic material for a lesson, while the right hand page provides extension or follow up. The authors expect that this material will be used by experienced teachers and the sensitive nature of many of the topics has been taken into consideration; therefore only short teachers’ notes are provided in the introduction. The layout of the book is well formatted and simple and at the same time allowing the learners to think and learn new linguistic features.

Although the authors stated in the introduction that the material was in no way to shock as its contents resembled what we read in daily newspapers, teachers need to exercise judgment and cautions especially on certain topics that may offend or ‘open wounds’. Learners have a choice in real life not to confront or be reminded of the matters that still traumatize or taunt them, such as in the topic of Torture, but they are not able to avoid it in such a confrontational situation in the classroom. This may cause some hostility or some uncomfortable feeling among learners and teachers alike. Teachers should be selective as we are dealing with sensitive issues. An unintended opportunity for learners of some cultural backgrounds to deride, degrade, belittle or mock the culture of the target language (or other non western cultures for that matter) should be avoided. For example the discussion on nudity may cause embarrassment and dismay in mixed company, where as the topic “Are you happy with your body?” should engage learners in the discussion in a light-hearted fashion. Teachers should to be circumspect and culturally sensitive of their learners’ cultures and offer them preamble and rationale in using of these topics in discussion.

This above comment is not in regard to an issue of cultural assimilation but it is referring to “striving for the third place”. According to Liddicoat (2000:11), “Successful learners should be able to incorporate awareness of cultural difference into effective communication. The modern language learner needs ‘intercultural competence’ in order to be an effective language user. When the learner reaches the position of informed, emphatic understanding between the learner’s own culture (‘First place’) and the target culture (‘Second Place’), he/she then has attained the ‘Third place’. It is essential that learners make their own informed decisions in arriving at their ‘Third Place’. Language skills are essential in the development of intercultural competence and so the greater use of the target language enhances the Intercultural Language Teaching (ILT) classroom input and learning”.

In addition, among various cultures in the classroom, the book *Taboos and Issues* may serve as a launch pad for learners to familiarize themselves with open discussions and debates on
issues before concertedly reaching a conclusion or ratification of an agreement. The language and pragmatics of discussion can be plentifully explored. According to Meier (2003:195) “This understanding first of all entails a recognition that language behaviour, both one’s own and others’ is culturally conditioned and that differing values and beliefs can thereby affect expectations regarding what is appropriate for a particular context. Thus the starting point and first component of a culture general approach is an awareness of the language-culture connection in one’s own communication. The second component is the development of an intercultural imagination of intercultural sensitivity, which I interpret as the ability to assume an emic or insider’s perspective. Instead of being constrained by an ethnocentric view that measures others’ linguistic behaviour in terms of one’s own yardstick, one suspends judgement, remaining open to the possibility of alternative interpretations. This requires an attitude of respect and acceptance of the validity of a world view different from one’s own. Thirdly, language learners need to learn to attend to variables (e.g., status, age, gender, education) that are especially sensitive to different cultural interpretations, which in turn, may result in miscommunication.”

The book Taboos and Issues has been in circulation for a while and according to the feedback I received from one of my colleagues it has been well received at her teaching centre as the topics allowed learners to ponder on the matters and therefore they are conducive to debate and discussion. Language activities in each unit also provide support to assist the learners in their discussion. Nevertheless teachers need to be circumspect about their learners’ readiness to embrace and engage in the “discussion” genre. They should also exploit the text potential and scaffold the writing tasks such as Exposition genre and/or discussion texts. The materials are challenging and stimulating for teachers who are prepared to act as a moderator in a debate and for the learners who welcome a healthy discussion without cringing.

Reference:

Free Linguistics Conference 2007
Department of Linguistics,
University of Sydney on Saturday 6 & Sunday 7 October

The aim of this conference is to provide scholars, researchers, postgraduate and undergraduate students with current research issues from all fields of linguistics and TESOL in 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
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• Anne Burns, Macquarie University
• Jim Martin, University of Sydney
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• Alastair Pennycook, University of Technology Sydney
• Helen Tebble, Monash University
• Michael Walsh, University of Sydney

Enquiries: freeling@arts.usyd.edu.au
ATESOL (NSW) is a professional Teachers Association formed in 1970. It has a membership of education system: 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.

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Contributions to the newsletter
The Editor, ATESOL (NSW) Inc
PO Box 223, Leichhardt NSW 2040
Phone: 02 9564 3322
Fax: 02 9564 2342
Email: helenfong@bigpond.com

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