Free Linguistics Conference
Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 October 2008

You are invited to attend the 2nd Annual Free Linguistics Conference to be held at the University of Sydney.

This conference has been established for all who are interested in language and/or are language teachers/educators. The papers included in the conference range in topics and cover most current issues in language studies. Registration for the conference is free and the focus speakers include: M.A.K. Halliday, Ruqaiya Hasan, Liz Ellis, Trevor Johnston, Linda Barwick and Aek Phakiti.

More information on the conference is available at: www.freelinguistics.org.
You may also contact the organizers at freeling@arts.usyd.edu.au
The theme of this newsletter is Conferences. If you have ever thought that conferences were not for you, please read Misty Andoniou’s opening address to the ACTA TESOL Conference in July (page 10).

Board members Connie Mudge, Robert Jackson, Kathy Rushton and I have recently returned from ACTA’s inaugural international conference. It was costly to travel to Alice Springs for the conference but it was worth raiding my piggybank to experience Central Australia, participate in conference presentations and to meet colleagues from around Australia and other countries. This newsletter features reports on the conference. In later issues of the newsletter I hope to include articles by conference presenters.

Bronwen Dyson reports on the SLA (Second Language Acquisition) Colloquium which took place at the University of Sydney on July 4. The annual SLA colloquium is one to look out for next year.

For anyone who feels they can’t afford conference registration fees, please come to the Free Linguistics Conference which takes place at the University of Sydney on 11–12 October and is convened by Board member Ahmar Mahboob and Naomi Knight. ATESOL NSW will present a “sampler” workshop at this conference featuring mini presentations from our workshops through the year. You are all invited to attend. I will give you updates on this conference in our monthly e-bulletin. If you are a member, but not on our e-bulletin mailing list yet, you may be missing out on valuable information. Please contact me on helenfong@bigpond.com and I’ll add you to the mailing list.

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

### ATESOL NSW INC – COUNCIL MEMBERS 2008

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Cover photograph: Yipirinya Mural courtesy of Robert Jackson
Visiting Alice Springs, the site of the inaugural ACTA Conference, Pedagogies of Connection: Developing individual and community identities, is an experience that I will never forget. The unexpected desert backdrop of spinifex, desert oak and red, red soil was perfect for the theme of the conference, and of the preceding TESOL Symposium, Keeping Language Diversity Alive. The conference dinner, on the set of the uncompleted movie The Drover’s Boy, was a magnificent event complete with formal dining settings (with chair covers, even), a dance floor and live band. Had we not been dependent on the buses waiting to convey us back to our hotels (a half hour trip largely on unsealed road), I believe that some of our contingent would have been there all night, bopping away happily!

New South Wales was well-represented on the conference program, including ATESOL councillor and Sydney University lecturer, Kath Rushton, presenting a workshop session on Margaret Cossey’s Indij Readers; academic friend of ATESOL NSW, Bev Derewianka from Wollongong University, delivering an inspiring keynote presentation; and the team from Marrickville Intensive English Centre sharing their service learning project, Once Were Migrants, in a concurrent workshop. Alastair Pennycook from UTS collaborated in the delivery of another keynote, and Jenny Hammond, also based at UTS, presented a concurrent workshop focusing on the findings of her work around high challenge programs for first phase ESL learners in schools. Pam McPherson from Macquarie University, Jacqui Widin (UTS) and Anthony Butterworth (NSW AMES) all presented workshops on research, programs and resources in adult settings. Anne Burns (Macquarie University) and Helen de Silva Joyce continued their long history of collaboration with their workshop on pedagogy in adult ESL classes.

It was particularly rewarding to see presentations by classroom practitioners in both schools and adult contexts. I would encourage other teachers to consider documenting successful initiatives and to submit abstracts in response to the Call for Papers for future conferences at both state and national levels. The next ACTA conference will be held in July 2010 on the Gold Coast of Queensland.

The pre-conference symposium, Keeping Language Diversity Alive, was a TESOL Inc event investigating reasons for language decline and extinction, as well as exploring language maintenance processes and their relationship to community, culture and identity. Featured speakers included Joe Lo Bianco (University of Melbourne) and Professor Lo Bianco drew on his vast experience with language policy to sketch the global context of language loss and to describe the conditions that contribute to the decline of languages. He labelled diversity and bilingualism as “fragile, unstable and fading” with factors such as globalisation placing different values on language skills as the nexus between language and state is weakened.

He argued that language shift is difficult to reverse, with loss of language being a “late order indicator of cultural loss”. Language maintenance requires supportive social structures, as well as recognition and rewards for its use in a range of interactions. Because indigenous and immigrant bilingualism in Australia tends to be subtractive, education becomes the main transmission
system. However, "…schools are unreliable allies of language maintenance, frequently and appreciably leading to language shift…” (Fishman).

Professor May considered the rights, roles and responsibilities around first language maintenance, encouraging us to acknowledge the monolingual bias of TESOL and the deficit orientation of its terminology. He argues that teachers need to learn more about bilingualism so that students’ language competence can be recognised and valued. Schools need to develop additive bilinguals, where English language skills are built on students’ prior language knowledge, especially in addressing academic language valued in school learning.

The overwhelming message from the symposium was one of achievable challenge, with a role for each of us in advocating for language maintenance as a human right.

Connie Mudge
President, ATESOL NSW Inc

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**TESOL SURVEY**

**Interested in finding out more about ESL teachers in NSW?**

Dr Liz Ellis (UNE) and Pauline Baylis (formerly UWS), two respected researchers, are conducting a survey of NSW TESOL teachers to develop a profile of the profession. This anonymous survey is not an ATESOL NSW project but we hope you will participate. More details on page 9.

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**A land of opportunity for teachers**

The Northern Territory is seeking teachers to fill positions in urban and remote schools.

Teaching in the Territory gives you a range of benefits:
• Excellent salary and allowances, especially in remote areas
• Great professional development and experience (especially in ESL)
• IT facilities including a laptop for every teacher in an NT Government school
• A fantastic lifestyle.

Obligation-free trial (remote)

To help you decide whether you want to live and teach in the Territory, the NT Department of Education and Training is offering a non-obligation trial. We will pay your return travel to the Territory and assist with accommodation if you sign up for a trial period*.

Further incentive for remote teaching

If you are interested in teaching in early childhood classes in a remote community until December 2019, you will also have a unique opportunity to undertake paid professional learning in Darwin. The professional learning covers ESL, cross-cultural competencies, protective behaviours and Accelerated Literacy.

How to find out more

If you have a sense of adventure and want to experience the culture and lifestyle of the Territory call the Senior Manager Teacher Staffing on toll free 1800 464 391 now.

*Conditions apply
Professional Development

HSC ENGLISH (ESL) COURSE REVISION DAY 2008

How to make best use of study time for the HSC English (ESL) exams

Date: Monday 29 September 2008 from 9.00am to 3.30pm
Venue: Smith Auditorium, Shore School, William St, North Sydney
(one block from North Sydney Railway Station)
Program:
Registration 8.45am – 9.30am
Morning Sessions
Acknowledgement of Country & Welcome: Connie Mudge, President ATESOL NSW
Paper 1 – Area of study: Journeys. Presenter Shannon Hutchison, Taylors College
Listening paper: Jo-Anne Patterson, Wyndham College
Afternoon Sessions
Module A
Elective 1: Telling Stories: Janice Raynor, Burwood Girls High School
Elective 2: Dialogue: Susan Lack, Tara Anglican School for Girls
Module B
Elective 1: Living and Working in the Community: Jennifer Tierney, Merrylands High School
Elective 2: English for Study: Anne McIntyre, Tara Anglican School for Girls
Cost: $20 per student and $45 per teacher (includes GST)
Enquiries: Yvonne Little at Professional Teachers’ Council NSW, Phone: 02 9564 3322
Bookings: Schools and individuals may book by completing the registration form and mailing, together with the names of participants and payment to:
ATESOL (NSW) Inc. PO Box 223, LEICHHARDT NSW 2040
or by fax to 9564 2342.

Please note registration closes: Thursday 25 September 2008
Professional Development Program 2008

LOW-LITERACY LEARNERS: SHARING AND CARING WORKSHOP

This workshop will commence with a review of the recent research and shared practice before moving on to course planning for preliterate and low literacy learners, issues in reading and writing, viewing exemplary sample lessons captured on DVD and examination of sample materials.

Date: Saturday 25 October 2008 from 9.30am to 12.00pm
Venue: Professional Teachers’ Council NSW Conference Centre, Leichhardt PS grounds, corner Norton and Marion Streets Leichhardt
Presenter: Pornsawan Brawn is a Project Officer, ESL teacher, material writer and curriculum developer for NSW AMES. She was awarded an MA in TESOL from Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA. During her secondment at the AMEP Research Centre, Macquarie University, Pornsawan was actively engaged in the organization of Professional Development programs. She has also presented papers and workshops at conferences in Australia and overseas. Apart from holding a membership in the USA based TESOL Inc., she currently serves on the ATESOL Council in NSW.
Cost: $30.00 members/students $50.00 non-members (inc GST and refreshments)
Enquiries: Yvonne Little at Professional Teachers’ Council NSW. Phone: 02 9564 3322
* School teachers also welcome at the workshop

DO YOU USE MUSIC IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

Do you have favourite songs for teaching grammar or to introduce lesson topics?

Do you use music in other ways with your students?

Music in the Classroom is the theme for our December newsletter. Your ideas, lessons and activities are welcome.

Please send your contributions to:
Helen Fong,
ATESOL Newsletter Editor
helenfong@bigpond.com by Saturday 15 November
SLA and pedagogy: bio-social approaches
A colloquium

As I read and give feedback on students’ writing in my position of Postgraduate Academic Writing Advisor, I am reminded of my indebtedness to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research. I’m able to assess this writing from a developmental – not just an accuracy – viewpoint, for example by checking where international students fall within acquisition trajectories for verbs, nouns, relative clauses and so on. I’m also able to focus my instruction on aspects the students seem ready for. So, while my teaching requires more than an SLA perspective, these and other concepts are core tools in my kit.

With this in mind, I recently convened a colloquium on SLA and pedagogy as part of the multi-conference event Lingfest 2008. The colloquium attracted the sponsorship of two Schools of the Faculty of Arts, University of Sydney, and the NSW Adult Migrant English Service (AMES), as well as the attendance of around one hundred delegates from the annual conferences of the Australian Linguistics Society and the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia. They included representatives from NSW AMES, the NSW Department of Education and Training and ATESOL NSW. As part of Lingfest’s celebration of linguistic diversity, the speakers at the colloquium spoke about the acquisition of Chinese, English and French as second languages. As well, they explored a debate about the relevance of SLA to language teaching, arising from criticisms that SLA’s cognitive orientation does not mesh with the social emphasis of communicative language teaching (for more on the debate see the Modern Language Journal 1997, 2007).

Professor Rod Ellis (University of Auckland) opened the colloquium, taking as his topic Problematizing the Investigation of Corrective Feedback in the Second Language Classroom. His goal was “to provide a basis for discussion of corrective feedback (CF) as an important phenomenon in SLA research”, and one – it could be added – which has aroused controversy and yet is practised by many language teachers. Defining CF as “responses to learner utterances containing an error”, Rod then argued that the identification of CF cases is not straightforward. The paper gave examples showing how difficult it can be to decide whether a learner has made an error and how teachers sometimes provide CF when there is no error. Three different methods for investigating CF – descriptive taxonomies, discourse analysis and conversational analysis (CA) – were assessed for their ability to capture CF instances. The paper described problems with the more cognitive approaches (descriptive taxonomies and discourse analysis) and the more social approach (CA) and concluded that a fourth type of framework – the socio-cultural – has much to offer. Studies using this approach “remained faithful to the complexity of CF… but they also examined how CF practices can affect acquisition”.

The next speaker in the colloquium – Professor Gillian Wigglesworth Ellis (University of Melbourne, co-authors Liana Tan and Neomy Storch) – presented the findings of research on whether the medium of communication affects pair interaction and Chinese L2 use. Gillian contextualised the study by pointing out that pair or small group work is experiencing a shift from face-to-face (FTF) to computer mediated communication (CMC). In the study, six pairs of university beginners completed seven tasks via both media, and the data was then analyzed according to the patterns of pair interaction in Storch’s (2002) socio-cultural model. The study found that, contrary to the common assumption that FTF and CMC communication are equivalent, the medium of communication affected the pattern of interaction: “In CMC some pairs became more collaborative, or cooperative. However, the study found that learners used the L2 and deliberated over the L2 more frequently in FTF communication than in CMC”.

Following Gillian, Dr Jenefer Philp (University of Auckland) ‘looked behind the scenes’ of focus on form sessions in a French foreign language classroom to examine “how researchers investigating the interaction-learning relationship from a cognitive perspective might begin to explore the many and varied social factors at play during interaction”. The study collected a variety of classroom data from a group of seven intermediate to advanced university learners over three weeks. From the cognitive data on the effectiveness of the teacher’s focus on form, the study found that prior knowledge and the incidental nature of the focus – although not the source (teacher or student) – impacted on correct recall. The interaction data uncovered a range of factors – including learners’ perceptions about their relationships with the teacher and each other – which influenced interactions and learning. As the following example shows, the comments are a reminder of how learners experience classroom interaction:

Y:=ah= I just want to raise my hand and speak… he (the teacher) didn’t understand me… I was so embarrassed I didn’t want to do

The final presentation by Honorary Associate Professor Geoff Brindley (Macquarie University) revisited the issue of Language Testing (LT) and SLA, a decade after a range of interfaces between these areas was identified.
in Bachman and Cohen (1998). Geoff found that SLA has informed LT in a number of ways; for instance, research on oral interview discourse has been used in construct definition and task specification. He then surveyed two additional areas in which SLA research could improve testing – one cognitive (developmental stages) and the other social in orientation (classroom-based formative assessment). Geoff drew on Norris (2005), a pilot web-based English grammar test aimed at distinguishing between general ESL ability levels, to show how research into developmental stages (Pienemann 1998) could be incorporated into tests. He then cited Black and William (1998) which found that “effective use of formative classroom assessment yielded improvements in student achievement between 0.4 and 0.7 standard deviations”.

In sum, the colloquium explored SLA’s value to pedagogy as well as ways in which the field is being reconceptualized. The colloquium did so by bringing together researchers and teachers interested in the relationship between SLA and pedagogy. I would like to thank all those who supported this initiative and encourage teachers to attend such events so that the exchange between teaching and research can flourish.

Dr Bronwen Dyson
University of Sydney

References


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National Curriculum Consultation Begins

Professor Barry McGaw launched the National Curriculum Board’s extensive consultation process when he opened the Into the Future Forum in Melbourne on 27 June with over 200 participants.

“Today is the first of many consultation forums to inform the Board’s task of developing national curriculum in English, mathematics, the sciences, and history,” he said. “A wide range of national professional teaching organisations, state and territory agencies, universities, business and industry representatives, and the general community, including a large number of practising teachers, are engaged in key discussions here today.

Professor McGaw explained that the National Curriculum Development Paper which was used as the basis of forum discussions will be critical to the successful implementation of national curriculum and importantly a broad range of views on its content will be canvassed.

He explained that the curriculum development process will not start with a blank slate as there is already excellent practice across Australia and valuable lessons will be gleaned from international experience on which to build national curriculum.

“A world class curriculum cannot however be built just by stitching together good elements from different existing curricula,” he emphasised.

Professor McGaw went on to state that curriculum should be based on the assumptions that all students can learn and that every child matters. Curriculum must take account of the different rates at which students develop.

“National curriculum documents will make clear to teachers what has to be taught, what students should learn and what achievement standards are expected of them. It must be feasible and be based on reasonable expectations of time and resources available to teachers. The needs of local school and regional differences and priorities and teachers’ professional knowledge will be valued and significant in its development,” he said.

The Board’s development paper also explores a collaborative model for developing writing and quality assurance processes to develop national curriculum.

The development paper can be viewed at – www.ncb.org.au
Towards a profile of the NSW TESOL profession

Who are we, the teachers of ESOL in NSW? We have virtually no information about the make-up of the TESOL profession in NSW.

Liz Ellis (from UNE) and Pauline Baylis (recently retired from UWS), are conducting a survey of NSW TESOL teachers in order to develop a profile of the profession. This will provide a basis for discussion of how best to plan for the development of the profession in the future.

Why do we need a profile of TESOL teachers in NSW? Two reasons: firstly, TESOL has always struggled to be recognized as a profession, and secondly, to help us plan as a profession to meet the challenges inherent in the growth of English as a lingua franca.

TESOL practitioners are familiar with attacks on their professionalism, and with the ongoing need to establish and reinforce credentials as a profession. One of the key ways to do this is to show that the profession gathers and maintains accurate information on the profile of its members and uses that information to promote appropriate professional conduct and plan future development in response to the needs of its members.

The New Zealand TESOL Profession (NZTESOL) completed such a profile in 1998 and has used it to inform proposals for teacher training and for programs of professional development (Haddock 1998, Haddock, nd).

Information on members’ qualifications, skills, languages and aspirations has so far been lacking in Australia (Ellis 2004) and could provide us with a foundation for planning the needs of the profession through this century.

The second reason why we need to know about our members’ skills is that the context in which we do our work is changing. It is now well accepted that English has become a global lingua franca. As a result, its use, status and role in the world today is changing. It is thought that today English is used between speakers of other languages more frequently than it is used between native and non-native speakers. The implications of this change in the use, status and role English for the TESOL profession are wide ranging (Baylis 2008). We need to build a teaching profession which is attuned to its potential to promote cross-cultural and cross-linguistic understanding and which does not, even inadvertently, contribute to cultural and linguistic marginalisation through the promotion of a narrow and ethnocentric view of English.

One of the ways to develop the profession’s capacity to embrace these challenges and prepare for the future is to encourage teachers who have both a professional and personal understanding of what it is to be a learner and user of an L2 to use this knowledge in the classroom and to disseminate their understanding through the broader profession. There is increasing recognition that it is not essential to be a native speaker to be an excellent teacher; and that in some cases non-native speakers have an advantage in that they have had similar experiences to their learners (Ellis 2002).

Ascertaining the profile and composition of current NSW ESOL teachers is good practice in general and an important contributor to the strategic planning for teacher education and professional development. We’d like as many TESOL teachers (members or non-members of ATESOL) as possible to complete the survey, and we are particularly keen to hear from our non-native speaker (bilingual) colleagues, whose voices are sometimes not heard.

About the survey

We invite you to participate in the ANONYMOUS ONLINE SURVEY, which will take 15–20 minutes, and which will map information about respondents in the following areas:

Demographics; Educational qualifications; Teaching experience; Native/non-native/other status and related issues; Language background and experience; Views on professional development.

The Information Sheet for Participants and the Consent Form is contained in the first page of the survey, providing assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. If you do not wish to participate after opening it, you can simply quit and no record will be kept.

The survey is constructed using the widely-used and respected service of SurveyMonkey and is on a secure site. As the link to our survey is very long, we have reduced it to make it easier for you to type it in to your browser, via the TinyURL service. If you prefer to go directly to the survey, the full link will be published in the next ATESOL e-bulletins, and you will be able to click directly on that.

To take the survey, please go to the website:

http://tinyurl.com/5q5fr8

If you have any trouble, please email liz.ellis@une.edu.au

We thank you in advance for your time in providing this important information!

Liz Ellis and Pauline Baylis
The inaugural international ACTA Conference ‘Pedagogies of Connection’ held in Alice Springs on 10–12 July was a great success with over 250 delegates in attendance. A range of reports and papers from the conference will be made available to ATESOL NSW members in the coming months. Briefly, however, the following is a summary of actions which ACTA has committed to undertaking as a outcome of the conference.

From the TESOL International Symposium ‘Keeping Language Diversity Alive’ held prior to the conference, there was a strong call for ACTA to be at the forefront of a renewed push for the recognition of the benefits of bilingual education and to make this clear in the public and political arenas. We will aim to get this underway in the next couple of months. If bilingual education and the maintenance of Indigenous and Community Languages is a particular interest of yours then please contact one of your ATESOL NSW Councillors so that we can include you in the consultation and drafting process for this ACTA initiative.

From the ESL Managers’ meeting which ACTA hosted during the conference, we made a commitment to write to the federal government outlining the concerns around the devolving of Special Purpose Payments upon State Treasury departments – a move which essentially leaves ESL funding unearmarked and languishing in General Revenue within State Treasuries.

ACTA will do this; however, it will be even more important that each state and territory association also writes to both their state Education and Finance Ministers as well as their Premiers – as this issue will essentially play out in the state arena rather than the federal one. The letter which ACTA constructs in the next weeks will be useful for our own state submissions.

From the Councillors meeting and subsequent communications ACTA has prepared a Position Statement regarding the place of ESL and Multicultural Education within the National Curriculum. This Position Statement has been provided to all state and territory associations and their members as background information for attendance at local National Curriculum forums and consultations, as well as for passing along to others who will also have input; e.g., in your education departments, your principals, your parent associations and even local MPs.

On July 17 the National Curriculum Board held a consultation forum in Brisbane. To acquaint you with the current state of play with the National Curriculum, a vodcast of the Chair’s opening address from that forum is available at www.ncb.org.au/communications/vodcasts.html

Finally, ACTA would like to alert you to the review of the AMEP which was released by the Parliamentary Secretary recently, along with a discussion paper for consultation. The discussion paper provides an opportunity for all stakeholders to provide input to the review.

We have many AMEP members and will be relying on their expertise to help us understand the issues in the sector and inform us of the best way that ATESOL NSW can assist ACTA in providing a representative national response to the review. Of course, state and territory associations as well as individual members are also able to give input on the review.

The discussion paper can be found at www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/delivering-assistance/amep-review-paper.htm

The Department prefers to receive submissions by email to AMEPReview@immi.gov.au

If you are interested in helping to formulate an ACTA response to the review, we in the ACTA Executive would greatly appreciate your input and guidance as to the issues in the sector.

Robert Jackson
Vice-president ACTA
Explicit language instruction in all subjects and for all students is essential for achieving and improving educational standards on national and international testing, such as PISA, TIMMS and IEA. This can be achieved through the:

- specific provision of Standard Australian English (SAE) language instruction to students who are first language speakers of SAE;
- specific provision of SAE language instruction, through targeted programs, for learners of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D);
- inclusion of explicit statements about English language requirements and anticipated English learning outcomes within each curriculum area; and
- retention and consolidation of existing state-based English language programs and resources such as those designed for bilingual education, literacy development and English as an additional language or dialect.

To uphold the centrality of human dignity and improve social cohesion, community harmony and educational standards within Australian society it is essential that the National Curriculum is both reflective and inclusive of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Australian student cohort. This can only be achieved through

- identifying the place and role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the history, culture, languages and future of Australia;
- developing syllabus content which is inclusive of all perspectives and fully and explicitly reflects and represents Australia’s cultural diversity and history;
- initiating partnerships with culturally-diverse parents and communities, in the development of the syllabuses and subsequent programs; and
- augmenting existing values education and civics and citizenship education programs, and implementing generic and targeted programs which include a focus on human rights and social justice.

A National Curriculum that is inclusive of specific language and culture outcomes will assist all sectors within the Australian education system to provide learning and support programs to enable all learners and in particular those from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds - including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from new arrival migrant and refugee students, and temporary residents including international fee-paying students – to achieve the standards required for successful engagement with Australian society and the Australian workforce.

Effective and strategic provision of such programs will improve Australia’s ranking on national and international testing, such as PISA, TIMMS and IEA, elevate Australia’s human rights standing on formal and informal UNHRC indices, and enhance the profile of education within the Australian community.
Welcome speech to the inaugural international ACTA TESOL Conference, Alice Springs

Misty Andoniou, ACTA president, set the tone when she welcomed delegates. Her down-to-earth address struck a chord with all ESL teachers in the room.

It’s my pleasure to welcome everyone to this inaugural international TESOL conference here, on the lands of the traditional owners the Arrente people, in Alice Springs. When ACTA envisioned the conference the aim was to provide a place where people working in all areas and contexts of TESOL, from across Australia but also from around the world, could meet and share ideas.

I remember when I first started out as a classroom teacher I didn’t think conferences were a place for me. I imagined they were places where very wise people said very wise things and that it would probably be much too wise for the likes of me.

And then I attended my first conference, simply because my education department was offering some funding for classroom teachers to attend. And from that first experience I was hooked, and I was hooked for two reasons.

The first reason was because of the things I learned. There was indeed a lot of wisdom at conferences! But I realised I too was wise, and that there was much I knew about the practice of ESL teaching. More significantly I realised how important it was that people like me – classroom teachers – were at conferences, not just for our own growth, but for the crucial contributions we must make in the development of practice and the application of theory. Researchers and policy makers need to hear the voices of classroom teachers and conferences are the perfect place for this to happen.

The second reason I became hooked on conferences, ESL ones in particular, is that everyone ‘gets’ me. I don’t have to explain or justify what I do. Instead people understand what I do, they value what I do, they nod and they empathise with my challenges and my successes because they do what I do or something very like it.

When you work in ESL you often work in isolation, or close to it. And its hard work being a professional minority, if nothing else it gives us a glimmer of empathy for our own marginalised students :-) As an ESL teacher in the mainstream I had to explain to my principal that, yes, he would have to replace me whilst I was on maternity leave because as an ESL teacher, what I do for the school and its students is…

And I also had to explain to the year 3 mainstream teacher that I wasn’t in her room to tidy her book cupboard or cover the children’s writing books, that what an ESL teacher does is…

When I moved overseas and taught English as a Foreign Language I had to explain to the school’s Director that ‘native English speaker’ was not a particularly useful job criterion because what an English language teacher does is…

When I came back to work in a tertiary education faculty I found myself explaining to my learned colleagues that we wouldn’t adequately prepare primary teachers for the ESL realities of their classrooms by simply putting a dot point about diversity in the Literacy unit outline. They would need a dedicated TESL unit in their degree because TESL is…

And no doubt you have just as many stories. And of course we will continue to justify, explain and advocate for the profession because we passionately believe in the social importance of what we do. But I wonder if we realise just how wearying these constant explanations are, how exhausting it is that almost all our professional conversations revolve around justifying your existence. But also how stymieing it is for the profession to have devoted so much of its energy to simply treading water rather than growing the profession.

And that’s what I love about TESOL conferences – everybody ‘gets’ me, and all my conversations are about growing as an ESL professional. So, these next few days in Alice Springs are your time. Your time to affirm and learn and share, and to celebrate being a TESOL professional. Enjoy!

Misty Adoniou
President, Australian Council of TESOL Associations

President, Australian Council of TESOL Associations
ACTA TESOL Conference

Pedagogies of Connection

Left: Hanya Stefaniuk, Marilyn Noonan, Bev Deriawanka and Connie Mudge

Rosie Antenucci, Chair of Conference Committee, and Andrea Harms

Above: Display by Aboriginal craft cooperative

Above: Yvonne Brady, conference delegate

Shelly Wong, President Elect of TESOL Inc., Connie Mudge, Robert Jackson and Helen Fong
ACTA’s inaugural international TESOL Conference was hosted by ESLE and held in Alice Springs from 10–12 July. It was immensely gratifying to hear ACTA’s own Dr Kate Cadman deliver the Opening Plenary Address on Thursday morning.

Kate used the famous ‘Only connect … ’ quotation from E.M. Forster’s novel, Howard’s End, as her touchstone when she introduced the Conference theme, ‘Pedagogies of Connection: Developing Individual and Community Identities’. Just as appositely, Professor Beverley Derewianka showed excerpts from Chris Lilley’s enormously-popular television comedy series Summer Heights High in her Friday morning Keynote Presentation on Appraisal Theory and techniques for teaching review-writing.

One of the major feats of the Conference was the ESL Managers’ Meeting held on Thursday afternoon. The meeting was chaired by ACTA President, Misty Adoniou, and the discussions around various current issues in our profession were wide-ranging and spirited. Educational bureaucrats from all states, territories and sectors were in attendance and there was an enormous spirit of good will and shared purpose between the ESL managers and our professional association representatives. Further information from this important meeting is recorded in the ACTA Report, see page 6 of this issue.

Interesting reflections emerged also from presentations by two of the international Keynote Speakers. Dr Shelley Wong, President Elect of TESOL International, reiterated the leading position which Australia occupies in ESL theory and pedagogy. Shelley provided an overview of theoretical appropriations of the Vygotskian Zone of Proximal Development – in particular the ‘scaffolding’ metaphor. She made a valid observation about problematic hierarchical connotations in the notion of ‘apprenticeship’, and deferred to Dr Pauline Gibbons’ image of Asian bamboo scaffolding – both strong and flexible – as the most apt description of the temporary support provided to learners by teachers and peers.
However, another variation on the ‘scaffolding’ theme which might prove even more effectual is the notion of ‘trellising’, which effectively moves the focus of the metaphor onto the student learning which is taking place. More organic and eco-friendly in its connotations, it evokes the image of a flowering vine rather than a finite edifice, and with it the implication that language proficiencies and conceptual understanding will be supported by, but will also grow around and through those educational structures put into place by teachers and students’ more able peers. Above all, it is essential that the learner’s repertoires of language usage, of skills, and of knowledge, are permitted to extend beyond those delineated and defined by the teacher or peer – that she or he is given free rein to embellish, to improve upon, and to critique the educational raw materials and support structures which are provided.

On Saturday morning, Pan-Africanist Dr Sinfree Makoni from Pennsylvania State University gave a thought-provoking Plenary Session on what he referred to as ‘vagues linguistique’, an analysis of the multilingual discourses evident in both the music and the home-made decals and bumper stickers adorning South African and Ghanaian ‘trotros’ (taxi-vans). The flexibility and fluidity of language and modes of expression in the taxi inscriptions was stunning in itself, as was the fact that it is the apparent impoverishment of the various owner/drivers’ education and linguistic proficiency which actually proves to be extremely liberating. Ironically, the authors of these slogans and logos do not feel restricted by nor bound to accepted conventions of spelling or grammar or syntax or even of particular languages (e.g., ‘Ungathi kealebokga driver, mina ngithi, kebatla tshelete yaka’ – If you say ‘thank you’ driver, I will say I want my money; ‘If you are late don’t rush me, cos I’m on time’; ‘Only women with nice legs sit in front’; etc.)

More than this, however, the inscriptions are a way of ‘marking their turf’ for the taxi-van drivers, of asserting power over their ‘space’. Language in this instance (and, by inference, in many other comparable discourse situations) is used as a mechanism of control. Most notably, many of the slogans are framed as commands using the imperative mood. The visible surfaces of the taxi (both inside and out) are crowded with text; this is done to disorient the passenger and destabilise or subvert the ‘normal’ power relationship which exists between the driver and his paying customer. The inscriptions overturn the inherent notions of servility which attach to the vocation and enact a note of caution or threat to the ‘intruder’ – as if to say, ‘this is my space’.

Sinfree’s presentation provided an intriguing insight into the role of language in the dynamics of power and control, and reminded me of how habitual taxi-users in Sydney will often ask the driver to turn to a particular radio station or decrease or increase the volume as a particular song, news item or discussion airs as a way of wresting back control over the space/discourse/situation/moment.

Some of the major highlights of the three days came outside the Convention Centre. There were the ‘Cultural Tours’ organised by the Conference Secretariat (APAPDC Events): a visit to Alice Springs Telegraph Station and surrounds with tour guide Jungala Kriss, a local Arrente man (www.jungala.com.au); a Dot Painting workshop conducted by Aboriginal artists Veronica and Megdaline Lynch; and a visit to Yipirinya School which provides Indigenous language classes for students in four traditional Aboriginal languages. A screening of Rolf de Heer’s award-winning movie Ten Canoes on Thursday evening was also very timely and well-attended. The Conference Dinner was held on Friday night at ‘Ooraminnia Homestead’, a hotel and township movie set built for an unfinished film project entitled ‘The Drover’s Boy’, located at Deepwell Station, an hour’s drive into the dusty red desert from Alice Springs. Finally, our visit to Alice Springs coincided with the running of the annual Imparja Camel Cup at Blatherskite Park on the Saturday afternoon, which was a rare treat to see.

All in all, it was a successful and productive conference signalling a new era for ACTA and Australian TESOL. The next international ACTA Conference will be hosted by QATESOL and held on the Gold Coast in July 2010. Make a note in your diaries now!

Robert Jackson
ATESOL NSW Councillor, Vice-president ACTA
Reflections on the ACTA Conference 2008

As with many conferences, the academic titles of sessions gave little clue to the warm and entertaining aspects of the actual presentations.

Dr Kate Cadman
Pedagogies of Connection: A Personal Introduction

It was fitting that Dr Kate Cadman of the University of Adelaide gave the opening plenary address as the conference’s theme came from a paper previously presented by Kate. Kate started with a memorable visual hook – a photo of a pair of salt and pepper shakers in the form of two amorphous human figures embracing, looking somewhat like the symbols for MSN Messenger. The figures are widely sold in tourist outlets in Thailand and Kate noted when buying them how they attracted the interest of travellers from around the world. The loving figures well illustrated her theme – the need to prioritise the development of warm relationships, connection, even love as the basis of learning over content, material and curriculum. Kate argued that development of ‘connection’ whether among students and across languages, between teachers and students, and between students’ in-class and out-of-class learning contexts, their learning goals and the learning materials, creates the educational conditions that increase the effectiveness of students’ language learning. Most significantly, by connecting we actively promote language practices which embody inclusion, tolerance and inter-racial harmony. Kate’s theme is expressed in the quote from Howard’s End by E. M. Forster, “Only connect…towards the building of the rainbow bridge that should connect the prose in us with the passion. Without it we are meaningless fragments, half monks, half beasts, unconnected arches that have never joined…With it love is born, and alights on the highest curve, glowing against the gray, sober against the fire.”

The personal journey which has led Kate to prioritise connection is described in an article in the February 2008 edition of TESOL in Context, “From correcting to connecting: A personal story of changing priorities in teaching English as an Additional Language,” which was recently sent to all members of ATESOL NSW.

Professor Marcia Langton AM
Language and culture in the Indigenous education system

Professor Marcia Langton of the University of Melbourne told us that indigenous children were alienated from school systems and provided uncomfortable statistics: in 2006 21% of 15 year old indigenous people were not participating in school (compared with 5% in the general population); the majority of Aborigines (53%) are teetotallers but a small minority both drink and abuse, leading to great problems including negative stereotyping for their communities; there is a burgeoning youth population (in 2006 60% of the Indigenous population was under 25) and by 2016 people (and voters) of Aboriginal background will be in the majority in remote areas of Australia.

Marcia introduced the principal of Yipirinya School, Ken Langford-Smith and the school’s Cultural Principal, Rhonda Inkamala, who told us about the school which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, its 20th on its present site in Alice Springs. Yipirinya School was founded by a group of Aboriginal elders who felt that schools as conducted by government and independent systems did not connect with them or their children. The school caters for Indigenous students by keeping traditional Indigenous culture and language alive. It offers “two-way education”, following the Northern Territory curriculum but also teaching Indigenous languages (Central Arrernte, Western Arrernte, Luritja and Warlpiri) and culture. Rhonda informed the conference that most of her students arrive at school as multilingual speakers usually speaking 3 – 4 Aboriginal languages at home. Alice Springs Indigenous people who have lost their language tend to send their children to government schools; Yipirinya attracts the children of people from the town camps who retain their languages. As many students come for a while and then “go bush”, the school struggles to maintain 60% attendance. There are currently around 200 students.

Aboriginal staff create books in each of the four Aboriginal languages taught at the school. Alice Springs Public Library recently purchased 84 of these books. Ngkwarte Mapa Kerte (Sweet Bush Foods) and similar books will now be available for use in town.

As a successful the Yipirinya approach was, Ken Langford-Smith responded that there are many criteria for success at school. His school services arguably the most disadvantaged students in the Territory (children living in town camps and communities, some travelling up to 120 kilometres a day by school bus to attend school). Having children who willingly attended school, were happy,
improving their nutritional status through participation in the school breakfast program and achieving something could be counted as success.

Ken told us that Yipirinya now faces the greatest challenge since its inception. “Four years ago the Commonwealth Government introduced the word “Transitional” into its NIELNS funding agreement for the School’s Language and Culture Programs. In 2004 funding was only assured for two years until the end of 2006. After extensive agitation by the School the funding was eventually extended to 2008. The School has no guarantee beyond this year. Effectively that means the end of the Indigenous Language and Culture Programme at Yipirinya School, the end really to the main reason for starting the school.”

(The school’s website is www.yipirinya.com.au/ Contact may be made at yipirinya@yipirinya.com.au.)

Marcia argued for more independent schools run by Indigenous people, telling us that such schools were more acceptable to Indigenous children and their parents. Providing lessons in traditional language and culture can motivate the elders in the community to increase school attendance. One model is that of the charter schools in the USA which are publicly funded elementary or secondary schools that have been freed from some of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools in exchange for some type of accountability for producing certain results. In the proposed Australian version of these schools, non-Indigenous teachers would be welcome as teachers in these schools provided they are willing to stay at a school for a significant period of time (at least five years) and are willing to train Aboriginal professional staff; one current problem is that most teachers at schools with Indigenous students do not stay long enough to participate in capacity building.

Marcia expressed concern that the move to a national curriculum may mean that there may be less flexibility to include an Indigenous component to the curriculum; this may lessen the opportunity to engage with Indigenous communities and allow children to leapfrog from their own languages into English.

During the question period at the end of the presentation, Adriano Truscott of the Irra Wangga-Geraldton Language Program informed the conference that Western Australia has 14 independent Aboriginal run schools where Aboriginal languages are taught and that Western Australia now has a secondary school syllabus for Aboriginal languages. The link for this syllabus is: http://www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/internet/Senior_Secondary/Courses/Aboriginal_Languages/

**Professor Vaidehi Ramanathan & Professor Alastair Pennycook**

**Shifting identities; shifting languages**

Of all presentations at the conference, this one by Professor Ramanathan of the University of California and Professor Pennycook of the University of Technology was most self-consciously structured as a presentation; this element has since stimulated me to think further about interesting ways to convey information on stage or podium. The speakers used images of historical family photos and snippets of interviews (and would have had the text on screen had technology not failed them). They each stood at opposite ends of the stage reading the text of emails they had sent each other from different countries discussing the proposed paper. They then took turns to read from their paper from the centre of the stage. Vaidehi wore a striking, short Indian style kurti or tunic in a lustrous red fabric with slim black pants, her ensemble a fusion of Indian and western fashion. (This seemingly irrelevant detail about dress was raised by
Reflections on the ACTA Conference 2008

Vaidehi herself in answer to a question about the concept of “fluid identities.” Many ideas and concepts were referred to in this paper which I hope will be published in TESOL in Context so that delegates and others can follow the arguments at a more leisurely pace. Asked the take home message from the paper for teachers, Alistair suggested that teachers should remain non-judgmental toward students. He added that conference delegates should dip into the presentation and take what interested them. The central discussion was about identities – whether essentialised, mixed, hybrid or fluid. Alistair stated that most people have many identities but with the easy talk of hybridity, not all can afford to have mixed identities.

Professor Beverly Derewianka
Moving between discourse communities: Self-representation in the writing of response genres

Professor Derewianka of the University of Wollongong and author of “A Grammar Companion for Primary Teachers” published by PETA, provided an exemplary presentation combining pedagogy and immediately usable information while at the same time being fun and highly entertaining. The paper focused on the challenges facing NESB learners as they move from identities forged in the oral, everyday communities of family and schoolyard to establish the kinds of identities needed for successful participation in the discourse communities of schooling. The paper drew on appraisal theory, appraisal being concerned with “how writers/speakers construe for themselves particular authorial identities or personae, with how they align or disalign themselves with actual or potential respondents, and with how they construct for their texts an intended or ideal audience.” (Martin & White, 2005)

Using the TV series Summer Heights High and commentary found on such community building and social networking sites as Myspace, as well as blogs and reviews by professional reviewers, Beverly illustrated how students can be led from oral comments to the more “academic” structured essays. She provided examples of “reviews” at each of the three levels. At the community building Myspace and Youtube level, comments which are similar to oral comments can be found: “I LUV SUMMER HEIGHTS HIGH”, “Kieran is a fag. He does just make sh** up.” “Chris Lilley is talented. “Chris Lilley is a genius’; “LOL” (laughing out loud), “ROFL” (rolling on the floor laughing), “LMAO” (laughing my a*** off).

Blogs are more considered, their language is more sophisticated, nominalisation is used and reasons are given for opinions. Blogs sound relatively more academic and can be used to move students from the more simple responses at the community building level. Some examples from blogs are: “real tenderness”; “twinge of sadness”; “a state of pure and innocent happiness”. Chris Lilley’s understanding of teenagers…” Chris Lilley is a comic genius”, “He is deserving of accolades”.

The professional reviewer style is familiar to teachers. For example, “There are some very poignant moments.” Beverly explained how the language of evaluation can be taught explicitly by guiding students to identify features of reviews at all three levels-community building sites, blogs and professional reviews.

Elsewhere in this newsletter Robert Jackson writes about keynote papers given by Dr Sinfree Makoni and Dr Shelley Wong. Sinfree’s paper gave us valuable insights into the world from which some of the 8000 or so African immigrants Australia receives annually come. Africans who are exposed to taxi cultures may, like the drivers, learn African American vernacular by listening to songs eg “It’s me against the world” from Perfect Circle, a hip hop band, or “Bad to the Bone” from George Thorogood and the Destroyers, (bad means good in Africa). According to Sinfree, it is important to look at sites which do not appear important eg taxis. The experience of these sites may be what students bring to the classroom. To find out what the sites mean, ask those who experience them. At the end of this presentation a teacher asked Sinfree why one of her male students always signs his written work with his name then, “King of the World”. By the end of her question, she realized that she already knew the answer and had learnt it from Sinfree’s paper.

ACTA and the organizing committee from ESLE, the South Australian counterpart of ATESOL NSW and all sponsors particularly DEEWR are to be thanked for this exemplary conference. The location, conference, cultural events and conference dinner were all outstanding. Thank you to Misty Adoniou (ACTA president) and all on ESLE’s ACTA conference organizing committee – Rosie Antenucci (Chair), Jenny Barnett, Kate Cadman, Alison Cheetham and Andrea Harms.

Helen Fong
The first thing a visitor to downtown Alice Springs notices is the presence of Aboriginal people. Speaking a variety of Aboriginal languages they can be seen working in local shops, strolling along Todd Mall, examining goods in the shopping centres, visiting art galleries which represent them or sitting on sunny lawns or roadside verges chatting with family and friends or selling their paintings. For many of these Australians, English is not even a second language but an additional language to the several Aboriginal languages they also speak. For many conference attendees, a highlight of our visit to Central Australia for the ACTA TESOL conference was the opportunity to meet and learn from and about Aboriginal people.

Hearing the Voices: Workshop with Glenys Collard and Margaret McHugh

Glenys Collard is a South West Nyungar woman, a matriarch within her family of 300 people and Senior Consultant, Aboriginal English in Western Australia who works with adult literacy manager Margaret McHugh on the Hearing the Voices-Aboriginal Story Books project. Stories for this project are written or told by Aboriginal people. The stories are edited, illustrated and published in books. Teachers’ materials provide guidance in the use of the books. Aboriginal English is used for these stories as this dialect is more familiar to Aboriginal people than Standard Australian English (see below).

Glenys explained that stories by Aboriginal people are not usually made up; rather they are drawn from remembered or shared events or reproduce stories told by other individuals and are kept alive by retelling in families and cultural groups. There is usually a didactic aspect. Throughout Indigenous history, stories have provided vital information such as how to find food and water in a seemingly hostile land. It is important to acknowledge the source of stories. Some traditional Aboriginal stories may seem incomplete to non-Aboriginals. This is because one part of the story is owned by one cultural group which does not feel free to tell the next part of the story which is owned by another cultural group.

To illustrate the differences in the way a text may be used by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal readers, Margaret and Glenys both read the same short book from Hearing the Voices series aloud to us. For Margaret, as with most non-Aboriginals, reading is a solitary activity which among other things can provide pleasure and distraction. In her reading we noted the way the language was used in the book, the musical rhythm, as well as the beliefs and values expressed in the simple story. Glenys’s reading was social and didactic, the text not being treated as complete in itself but as a starting point for oral storytelling and teaching. She demonstrated a reading which commenced with inviting the “grannies” (grandchildren and other young children) to gather around her and was marked by elaboration on the text as she paused to draw the moral out and give examples from her own experience. The literary features we had noted in Margaret’s reading were not prominent in Glenys’s reading.

Her Indigenous background enables Glenys to communicate in a deeper way with other Indigenous people. Glenys described an experience of working with an Indigenous man from Wonka Jonka. The non-Aboriginal teacher had given the man a storyboard showing people fishing as stimulus to a writing activity. The man had sat at a computer for twenty minutes and typed just one word—“hunting”. Questioning him, Glenys found that the man’s people were “desert mob” and did not fish. Responding to Glenys’ encouragement, he expressed interest in recording his experience of hunting kangaroo. The man talked of what was involved in such an excursion—drinking tea, all the men laughing together then going hunting together, later roasting kangaroo kidneys and so on. Some parts of the story were repeated and emphasised. After hearing about drinking tea three times, Glenys deduced the man was
signalling that he came from a dry community. The man was then able to type a list of keywords for his story and to correct Glenys’ spelling of his country. Using the keywords, Glenys helped the man to write his story.

As Glenys put it, “You have to know what you’ve got to catch. You have to make sure that what you write down is the story they want to tell.”

To Aboriginal people who have expressed their sorrow in no longer knowing the language of their ancestors, Glenys offers this comfort, “If we keep our stories alive we can bring our language back.”

**Aboriginal English**

Glenys Collard and other Indigenous people advocate the use of Aboriginal English in reading materials as the dialect is familiar to Indigenous people and can be used as a bridge to Standard Australian English.

Ian Malcolm and Farzard Sharifian report that many teachers think that Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English differ mainly in accent and that many standard speakers view Aboriginal English as simply ‘substandard’ English. In contrast, Malcolm and Sharifian consider that Aboriginal English is a “rich linguistic system that reflects cultural meanings associated with Aboriginality.”

Ian Malcolm also says, “...it cannot be compared with other dialects of English spoken in Australia, because, unlike them, it is not the inheritance passed down by an unbroken succession of native speakers, but the result of a complex process of adaptation in a situation where, in many parts of Australia, Aboriginal people had to make a bridge to the English of the settlers by way of an intermediate language of which their children were to become the first native speakers. Aboriginal English is a unique form of English in Australia because it is both the evidence and the living record of 200 years of unequal contact between Aboriginal people and those they had to talk to in English. It bears some features which, in general Australian English, are now archaic, some which represent a streamlining of English grammar, some which lend to the way of English works and is interpreted on alternative logic.”

The lexical system in Aboriginal English is made up of the following categories of words:

1. Aboriginal words with Aboriginal meanings (eg moritj);
2. Aboriginal words with new meanings (eg ‘monach’ originally meaning ‘black cockatoo’ is used for ‘policeman’);
3. Aboriginal words suffixed with English morphemes (eg ‘yorgas’ composed of ‘yorga’ (woman) + s);
4. English words with English meanings (eg say);
5. Modified English words with English meanings (eg unna (isn’t it?!))
6. English words with additional meanings (eg ‘learn’ meaning learn as well as teach).

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2 Op cit p 519

3 From document on Aboriginal English distributed at the ACTA conference. The reference given is Ian Malcolm, May 1993.

4 Op cit p 519
Indij Readers is a not-for-commercial-profit educational publisher. We develop and publish contemporary Indigenous stories, accompanying lesson notes and audiovisual materials that help Indigenous and non-Indigenous students of all ages, in schools across Australia, learn to read. Indij Readers has DGR and ITEC status, and a majority Indigenous board. Profits generated from our business activities support literacy and other initiatives in Aboriginal communities. Our business operations – sales, marketing and administration – are in a sound financial position, demonstrating long-term sustainability. Specific funds are raised for new story development, due to the intensive nature of this work.

Indij Readers authors and illustrators are all Indigenous Australians. Our objectives are to support emerging authors and illustrators, to showcase contemporary Indigenous art and artists, to create materials that inform all Australians about contemporary Indigenous culture and to engage in the Reconciliation process. We collaborate and consult with our stakeholders: Indigenous people, organizations and communities; literacy academics across Australia; and consultants, education officers, teachers and students, in government and Catholic schools in all states.

Indij Readers was established in November 2002 and began commercial operation in July 2003. To date we have published 29 stories, three teachers' guides, six big-format books, an audio CD and a 10-minute DVD. The work to develop these literacy materials was initiated in 1993, in Cootamundra, NSW, by Margaret Cossey, and was originally known as The Aboriginal Book Project. Margaret was a special needs literacy teacher for over 20 years; the literacy needs of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous students she taught have informed the project from the beginning.

Through all our materials, we aim to address culturally relevant issues and themes that have a universal resonance: Australian literature that meets some of the needs and challenges of Indigenous Australians, and helps to advance literacy standards among non-Indigenous Australians too. Our target audiences are 'little fullas' aged five to seven years, and 'big fullas' aged eight to 14 years plus.

Indij Readers is different from other educational publishers. Our stories are mostly developed with first-time authors and illustrators; the Indij Readers team works with each author and illustrator through all steps to develop their books; our creators are paid a fee in lieu of royalties; and we focus on the quality of the publishing experience for each author and illustrator, and the further employment opportunities this can create for them, as well as the ultimate outcome – the books themselves.

**Literacy and Indigenous communities**

Literacy levels vary between communities and the issues involved are complex. They reflect a long history of discrimination, neglect and inadequate education programs, which fail to equip Indigenous Australians with the literacy levels that form the basis of lifelong learning and employment. More than 30 per cent of all students in schools across Australia experience varying degrees of difficulty in acquiring appropriate literacy skills. Often these are minor and quickly addressed; sometimes they require more careful attention. Difficulties occur for a number of reasons including illness at critical times, regular absenteeism, poor or unhelpful teaching, lack of understanding by teachers of the special needs of some students and family dysfunction, plus myriad other circumstances and conditions. Indigenous students, particularly boys, are over-represented in this problematic 30 per cent. The educational inequality that stems from this literacy delay in the early years of schooling can impact every part of their lives thereafter.

Indij Readers develops stories in three genres that engage Indigenous students and all reluctant readers, and set the scene for literacy success: yarns (narratives), biographical recounts and raps (poetry). The yarns are funny and clever, with interesting illustrations. The biographical recounts are mostly about high-profile Indigenous sporting stars such as Michael O'Loughlin and Preston Campbell. The raps are about subjects and issues relevant to the Y generation. Our stories and accompanying lesson notes have been well received by teachers and students alike, with approximately 15 per
cent of all schools in Australia using them as part of their literacy resources. This percentage will increase as more schools become aware of our materials.

In late 2004, we decided to apply new thinking to our development model. After much discussion with stakeholders, we decided the way forward would be to provide communities with a writing kit that uses Indij Readers stories and ideas as templates, and incorporates user-friendly software to support the story making process for Aboriginal education assistants, teachers and community members. The overall idea is that Indigenous communities — and later other communities as well — can develop and desktop publish their own stories for their own classrooms at the local school level. It seems obvious, given what we have observed in the communities where we have worked, that subject familiarity is a hook for children to enjoy the process of learning the basic skills of reading and writing.

A critical mass of stories about the local footy team, neighborhood, well-known community members, school swimming carnival and so on, supports children and their teachers, as they negotiate the skills and concepts of reading and writing. We are sure that subject familiarity helps students to achieve reading success.

We sought opinions from a range of Indigenous and non-Indigenous advisers about the efficacy of our Community Writers’ Kit idea, and were assured that it was pedagogically sound and an important project to complete. We approached Dr Robyn Ewing of the Education Faculty at the University of Sydney, to advise on and evaluate the process to develop the project. Her research assistant for this work, Kathleen Rushton, is one of the writers of our teachers’ guides. Throughout 2006, we worked on all aspects of research for the Community Writers’ Kit. The work took place at two sites in Melbourne, at Dareton in far south-west New South Wales, at Mt Druitt in western Sydney and more recently, at two sites in the Northern Territory. The input from participants at each site has ensured that the components of the kit will be relevant and meaningful to Indigenous communities, and will be useful for the long term. Stories were developed at each site, as part of our research work. Some of them were published recently as Indij Readers Series 3.

Indij Readers must now raise the substantial funds needed to produce and pilot the Community Writers’ Kit project. Through experience, plus hours of discussion, we know what is required for this to be a successful initiative. Indij Readers will build the kit specifically for Aboriginal education assistants, as they are the glue between the school and the community in most places. The kit will be adaptable for other settings and ethnicities as well. The kit will be virtual and training will come with it too. Stories developed at the local level, which have a national reach, could be published by Indij Readers in the usual way or possibly released online.

Although Indij Readers has been a business entity for a short time, the work of establishing the protocols and procedures needed to develop stories in Indigenous communities has been going on for more than 14 years. The result is a cultural organisation that is collaborative, supports literacy acquisition and empowers Indigenous Australians, who under other circumstances may not have the opportunity, to work as authors and illustrators.

Dr Ewing has released her initial report on the research stage of our Community Writers’ Kit project. She will publish her final report after we have completed the trialling and production phases, and training is in place. Dr Ewing’s initial report is very pleasing and gives us confidence to proceed.

Further information is available on our website at www.indijreaders.com.au.

Margaret Cossey
ELICOS Update – August 2008

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 programs are offered by government and private institutions around Australia.

ELICOS numbers

English Australia recently published the outcomes of a DEEWR funded survey on the numbers and profile of students undertaking ELICOS programs in Australia in 2007. The report tells us that 137,019 people came to Australia to study English in that year: 60% held student visas; they studied for an average of 12 weeks; and they contributed around $1.515 billion to the Australian economy. The highest numbers of students come from South Korea (the same as 2006) but the current growth has been driven in particular by rising numbers of students from China and India. The report shows people from a wide variety of countries in South America, South East Asia, the Gulf region and Europe are contributing to diversity within ELICOS classes.

Figures released recently by AEI on June data from student visa holders show that growth continues to be very strong, which is reassuring news for teachers in English colleges around Australia! The demand for teachers and other staff is still also very strong, and there are several positions in all levels of ELICOS on the English Australia website, www.englishaustralia.com.au.

English Proficiency Examinations

A major drawcard to studying English in Australia is the opportunity to prepare for and take internationally-recognised proficiency exams.

IELTS

IELTS recently marked examining more than one million candidates in one year. The exam continues to be extremely popular, with several new examination centres recently set up in Australia. Website: www.ielts.org

Changes to Cambridge ESOL exams

From December this year the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL) will run updated First Certificate in English and Certificate in Advanced English exams. Candidates will be able to get a better understanding of their proficiency level, with results given on a standardised score out of 100 as well as the grade. Website: www.cambridgeesol.org

Pearson Test of English

Pearson Language Tests have been conducting field tests to ensure their new proficiency exam is valid and reliable. The computer-based Pearson Test of English will assess reading, writing, speaking and listening and is set to be launched late 2009. Website: www.pearsonplt.com

TOEIC

For students wanting some practice in TOEIC, ETS Australia is offering opportunities to access online practice tests that will give them information about their weak areas. Website: www.pro-match.com/toeic/

Cambridge ESOL Teacher Training

Cambridge ESOL is also changing the format of its Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA) from October this year. Comprising three modules, (Understanding Language Skills for Teaching; Developing Professional Practice; and Extending Practice & English Language Teaching Specialisation), the new DELTA is designed to be more flexible, thus more accessible. Candidates will be assessed through a combination of written exams, practicum and coursework. Website: www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/index.htm

English Australia Conference 2008

We’re delighted with the way registrations are going for the 2008 English Australia conference, to be held 18 – 20 September at the Hotel Realm in Canberra. Features of the new-focus program include an ELT research colloquium; a panel on IT and ELT; a networking breakfast for Directors of Studies; plus plenary presentations by Professor Mike McCarthy and Scott Thornbury as well as a strong program of delegate presentations. The program, with abstracts, is now available on the conference website, www.eaconference.com.au, and you can register online too.

Kath Brandon
Professional Development & Support Officer
English Australia
kathbrandon@englishaustralia.com.au
Call to Action: Asia literacy for every young Australian

“It is impossible to conceive of a future Australian education system that does not take the study of Asia seriously.”


Prime Minister Kevin Rudd wants Australia to become “the most Asia literate country in the world.” The National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools (MCEETYA, 2005) sets out the skills and knowledge required to equip young Australians to:

- **boost productivity** through working with the world’s largest economies including China, India and Japan
- **collaborate** with our neighbours in Asia to resolve global issues including environmental sustainability and poverty
- **strengthen our social capital** through understanding Australia’s rich, diverse heritage and what it means to be Australian today.

Urgent action is required by Australia now to achieve Asia literacy for all.

- No education system explicitly requires schools to teach about the Asian region. Data indicates that 50% of our schools are not equipped to teach about Asia.
- Less than 25% of our students have the opportunity to study an Asian language. Only 5.8% of Year 12 students choose to study an Asian language - this decreases to 3% at University.
- The majority of our teachers have had no opportunity to learn about Asia in their own education. There is no plan to ensure the Asia literacy of new teachers.
- No education system monitors student learning about Asia.

Achieving Asia literacy requires increasing the cohort of students who can study an Asian language, combined with embedding studies of Asia as a core element in Humanities and Social Sciences, English and The Arts for all students.

The Asia Education Foundation has formed *Australia’s Asia Literacy Alliance* of peak education stakeholders who call for:

1. The **Council of Australian Governments** to act by December 2008 to develop and resource a National Action Plan to implement the National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools and to monitor improvements in Asia literacy through system progress measures
2. The **National Goals for Schooling** to state the necessity to equip every young Australian with Asia skills and knowledge
3. The **National Curriculum** to embed studies of Asia as core elements in English, History and Geography
4. The **National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program** to designate funds to enhance Asian languages teaching and to increase studies of Asia in Humanities and Social Sciences, English and The Arts
5. Digital Revolution initiatives to connect teachers and students with schools in Asia and provide Asia resources on-line
6. **Quality Teaching** initiatives to develop teachers’ knowledge and skills in teaching Asian languages and teaching about Asia
7. **Teacher Education** initiatives to equip new graduates with knowledge and skills to teach about Asia and provide incentives to attract Asia-literate graduates, including those with Asian languages, to teaching
8. **School Leadership** initiatives to expand the Leading 21st Century Schools: Engage with Asia principals’ program
9. **Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau** to promote the need for Asia knowledge and skills for every young Australian and promote support from parents to achieve this
10. **Business** to support Asia literacy for all students.

This Call to Action is an initiative of the AEF Advisory Board, endorsed by representatives of peak education bodies at the AEF National Forum, Adelaide 19-20 May 2008. www.asiaeducation.edu.au

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Working with Students from China

In 2005–6 Geoff Millar, lecturer at ADFA, University of NSW, was seconded to Monash University to create a website which would help staff at the university who teach and/or interact with students from mainland China or countries with similar cultural traditions. Geoff had spent over ten years teaching students in the People’s Republic of China and was well placed to develop this resource.


Three major topics are offered: The Chinese Student Experience, Learning in a Foreign Language, and Teaching International Students. There are several sub-topics including Studying in China, The Use and Abuse of the IELTS test, Obstacles to Effective Learning, and Strategies for Teaching International Students.

Centre for Multicultural Youth

On 1 July 2008, the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues dropped ‘Issues’ and from its name and officially became the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY). Their web address has changed too, and is now: http://www.cmy.net.au. The website is a rich source of information and news.

YouthSpeak: A Conversation for the Future

YouthSpeak: A Conversation for the Future, the report on the implementation and findings of the YouthSpeak consultation project was launched by the Hon Kate Ellis MP Minister for Youth on July 25, 2008 at the University of Western Australia. The report is the culmination of consultations that occurred between young people across every State and Territory in Australia over the past six months, comprising people from urban, rural and remote areas and representing 110 ethnicities.

YouthSpeak is the most comprehensive consultation of young people by young people ever undertaken in Australia and the report captures the experiences, challenges, aspirations and ideals of over 12,000 young people between the ages of 12 and 24.

For more information, or to download individual chapters of the YouthSpeak report, visit the UNYA website: http://www.youthspeak.org.au

Mentoring Young Horn of African People

This article, written by Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) research officer Megan Griffiths, outlines an SPRC research project investigating how mentoring services can be tailored to effectively provide support and meet the needs of young Horn of Africans. The research, commissioned by the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) through the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS), involved phone consultations and focus groups with service providers, mentors, mentees, policy makers, representatives from community organisations and 33 young Horn of Africans living in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.

Findings indicated a number of general principles and practices that facilitate effective mentoring for all young people (such as extensive mentor screening, effective mentor training and the supervision of mentor relationships) and principles and practices that apply more specifically to the effective mentoring of young people from the Horn of Africa (such as family support for the mentoring relationship, age-appropriate mentor matching and linking the mentoring program with local Horn of African communities). For further information about the report, please email Megan Griffiths: megangriffiths[AT]unsw.edu.au (Source: ‘SPRC Newsletter’, n.99, July 2008, p.13.)

myfuture

Student Video Competition

Entries extended to 30th September 2008

The 2008 Competition is now well underway, with registrations coming in from across the country. Many schools are using the competition as a class project giving their students the opportunity to explore their career pathways in a creative, motivating and innovative way.

The competition, with a prize pool valued at over $5000, invites students to submit a 2–3 minute video profiling an occupation.

FREE CLASSROOM PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Register online to receive free video production resources including two DVDs that take you step by step through the process of constructing your entry. These DVDs are also a valuable resource for any curriculum area engaged in video production in the classroom.

Registration is free, go to www.thecrew.net.au

Tune into THE CREW, 5.00pm Mondays on SBS Television for competition updates, production tips and careers stories. Enquiries: Al Ellis, Phone: 02 9522 8855, Fax: 02 9545 4637, Mob: 0402 076 866, Email: admin@thecrew.net.au
Health Issues

Self-Harm Factsheet now available

ORYGEN Youth Health, the lead agency behind headspace, the youth mental health foundation, has issued a fact sheet on self-harm. It asserts that “self-harming is a behaviour and not a mental illness. Self-harm often begins in teenage years and can be a way of communicating or coping with distress.” The fact sheet is available as a PDF download at: http://www.headspace.org.au/_uploads/documents/Fact%20sheets/Self%20Harm.pdf

“Now what...?” Dealing with your parent’s cancer

This new and innovative resource has been developed for young people by CanTeen, the youth cancer charity. The resource is intended for use by 12 to 24-year-olds who have a parent diagnosed with cancer. The book and online resource provide information, practical tips, support and advice on a wide range of areas that affect the lives of young people in this situation. In the past 18 months, CanTeen researched the needs of this group of young people and found that they have considerable unmet needs, especially regarding honest and accurate information. The resource is available free of charge online at: http://www.nowwhat.org.au or by calling 1800 669 942 or SMS 0420 363 189. There is a limit of five copies per organisation. Posters and postcards can also be ordered online.

(Source: Australian clearinghouse for youth)

Recipe for Date Squares

We do not usually include recipes, but a number of people who attended the My Favourite Lessons for Adult ESOL Learners workshop requested the recipe for Date Squares brought by Sue Bremner for morning tea. For the next newsletter, Sue will chase up the recipe for the fruit loaf participants enjoyed several workshops ago.

Filling
2 cups chopped dates
1 cup water
1/2 cup of fruit conserve (or any sweetener, including honey)
Optional: chopped glazed ginger
Mix in a pot, put on low heat, stirring occasionally. It is cooked when it is mixed and almost mushy. Set aside.

Combine
1 ½ cups flour
1 3/4 cups rolled oats
3/4 cup soft butter or margarine
½ cup of sweetener (can be Splenda, or brown sugar)
Mix until completely combined (it will be crumbly). Press half the mixture into a greased square baking tin. Spread the filling on the oat base, then cover the filling with the remainder of the oat mixture.
Bake at 375 degrees F (190 degrees C) for 45 minutes.
They last for ages, and can be frozen.

Your guide to social e-learning

The Australian Flexible Learning Framework has released a new resource about social e-learning for teachers, trainers, educators and facilitators working in vocational and educational training within adult training organisations, universities and schools. There are guides, case studies, strategies, tools and activities that explore the opportunities and challenges offered by social e-learning in practice. See the Australian Flexible Learning Framework website, at: http://socialelearning.flexiblelearning.net.au/social_elearning/index.htm

September 2007
Note: Events which take place in Australia are highlighted.

18–20 English Australia Conference 2008
“Engaging with the many dimensions of ELICOS: learning, teaching, supporting, marketing, leading”
Hotel Realm, Canberra, ACT
www.englishaustralia.com.au/, Email: easec@englishaustralia.com.au

October 2008

2–4 ANUPI-TESOL Mexico, “Teaching Learning Leading”
NH Krysal, Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico, Email: cristinasegui@anupi.org.mx. http://anupi.org.mx

3–4 ARTESOL, 21st Annual Convention, “Building Communities of Inquiry, Practice, and Creativity: Voices of the South”
Universidad Nacional Del Nordeste, Chaco, Argentina.
Email: artesol@bcl.edu.ar. http://www.artesol.org.ar

3–4 WITESOL, “Cross-World Puzzle: The Interconnectedness of Language, Culture and Community”
DWD, 201 E Washington Ave., G-100, Madison, WI 53707
Email: irina.zelenskaya@dwd.state.wi.us. http://www.witesol.org

3–4 OKTESOL & OABE, “Joining Hands for Success in Language Learning”
University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, OK.
Email: HuffmanCL@aol.com. http://www.oktesol.com

4 Washington Area TESOL, “Communities of Discovery: Creating Knowledge Through Language Learning”
Northern Virginia Community College, Annadale, Virginia.
Sylvia Maranon, Email: chairpersonfall08@watesol@gmail.com
http://www.watesol.org

11–12 Free Linguistics Conference 2008
University of Sydney
Ahmar Mahboob and Naomi Knight
Email: freeling@arts.usyd.edu.au

Note: Events which take place in Australia are highlighted.

16–19 MEXTESOL, “New Ways for New Needs in ELT”
Poliforum Leon Conferences y Expos, Leon, Guanajuato, Mexico. Email: rosaemex@hotmail.com.
www.mextesol.org.mx

23–25 INGED, “Putting the best foot forward”
Anadolu University, Eskisehir, Turkey
Prof Dr. Aydar Eroz, Email: aydanersoz@yahoo.com.
http://www.inged.org.tr

24–25 Michigan TESOL
Kellogg Center, Lansing, Michigan, USA
Email: kgelardi@sbcglobal.net.

24–26 Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers (SPELT), “We are we share – we’re the ELT world”
Pakistan, Huma Thaver, Email: tmhuma@yahoo.com.
Email: spelt@cyber.net.pk http://www.spelt.org.pk

Radisson Denver; Southeast Hotel and Convention Center, Denver Colorado, USA.
Larry Fisher, Email: Larry.Fisher@colorado.edu
http://www.colorado.edu/iec/cotesol

24–25 Intermountain TESOL, “Empowering Students and Teachers with Language Learning Strategies”
Dixie College, Email: heidi@readinghorizons.com
http://www.itesol.org

25–26 Korea TESOL, “Responding to a Changing World”
Sookmyung Women’s University, Seoul, Korea
http://www.kotesol.org

25 Three Rivers TESOL, “Moving Forward”
Franklin Regional High School, Murrysville, Pennsylvania, USA, 15668
Email: vp@3rtesol.org http://www.3rtesol.org
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:
• positive support for teachers
• practical classroom assistance
• regular seminars and workshops
• reduced registration rates to ACTA/ATESOL Conferences
• reciprocated membership of the UTS library
• regular newsletters
• relevant publications
• up-to-date information about TESOL opportunities
• special interest groups (SIGs)

Contributions to the newsletter
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Deadlines for Issue 4 2008
21 November

Advertising rates for 2008 – 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.atesolnsw.org