“Bright Head” revisited: diary of an adult learner
by Pornsawan Brawn (NSW AMES)

Background
During my recent trip to visit my family in Germany, as a mature adult language learner, I made a mental note of my “Learning Journey” in the German language. My own learning experience served as an eye opener, inviting and challenging me to review my pedagogical approach to teaching my adult learners. At the same time, my experience has reinforced some theoretical issues that I had previously read about on the subject.

Profile
After my tertiary education in Arts and Languages and subsequently in TESOL, I decided to learn German out of personal interest in language and culture. At the time, as a younger person in my late twenties, I learned some basic German grammar at a language and cultural institute for six months – the class intensity was three hours once a week on Saturdays. Since then I have hardly had any opportunity to practise my German language skills except for a few short visits to Europe. While I am still almost at a functional level in French, having been fully engaged in studying French for a longer period of time at the university level, my knowledge of German has inevitably not been sustained at the same level.

This European trip was rather like a “Bright Head” revisited as it woke me from my linguistic slumber and pushed me out of my comfort zone. It challenged me to revisit my road to language learning and forced me to reactivate my ‘bright head’ and to give it a kick start...
Welcome to the Summer edition of the newsletter.

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Have a Happy Christmas and a relaxing, safe summer break. I look forward to your company at one of our events in 2010.

Kind regards,
Helen Fong
Executive Officer/Newsletter Editor
0401 819939
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From the editor’s desk

Helen Fong

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As another busy year for your ATESOL councillors rushes to a close it is timely to pause for a moment to reflect on our initiatives and achievements over the past twelve months and to look ahead to our priorities for the new year. 2009 saw our professional development program reach out to some of our country cousins around the state. Nicknamed the ‘ATESOL Roadshow’, our ‘Conference on the Move’ workshops in Coffs Harbour, Armidale and south-western Sydney were extremely well received, and the council has decided to extend the program into 2010. Special thanks go to Kathy Rushton and Sue Bremner for their efforts in convening the regional workshops, and to Connie Mudge and Gill Pennington for organising the session at Prestons. Keep an eye out for forthcoming dates and venues in the Newsletter and the ATESOL e-bulletins.

Our 2010 Annual General Meeting has been confirmed for Saturday 6 March. The AGM is scheduled to start at 9.30 am and will be followed by a Teaching English for Academic Purposes workshop presented by Cintia Agosti to run from 10.30 am to 2.00 pm. This workshop is a repeat of a highly successful half-day presentation given by Cintia for ATESOL at the Free Linguistics conference held at the University of Sydney on October 10-11 which was coordinated by Eva Bernat. Cintia’s workshop is relevant to all ESL teachers and will address academic writing with a focus on critical thinking, paraphrasing, plagiarism and referencing. Please see the flyer and information on page 5 of this Newsletter for more details.

Rounding out our professional development program for the year were Kathy Rushton’s ever-popular grammar workshops for primary and junior secondary teachers, another instalment of Sue Bremner’s ‘Our Favourite Lessons’ series focusing on the primary and secondary schools sector, a wonderful pronunciation workshop presented by new ATESOLers Marina Pearce and Glenice Aiken, and the HSC English (ESL) Revision Day hosted by Shore School in the September school holidays. All of these fantastic PD opportunities are on the agenda again in 2010, so keep an eye out for dates and times. Please also check the relevant PD flyers for details of NSW Institute of Teachers accreditation for selected ATESOL workshops.

On the communications front, one of our more urgent initiatives for next year will be to change or upgrade our website, in order to make it easier to maintain and update. Our executive officer, Helen Fong, is on the lookout for advice and expertise in this area, so if you have any leads please get in touch. Our monthly e-bulletin to members provides news, reminders and useful links, and our ATESOL Facebook page is up and running as well, so please take advantage of these important TESOL information resources.

ATESOL has been active nationally as well, and I am very pleased to advise that we have signed on as one of the major sponsors of the forthcoming 2010 ACTA Conference. The conference is entitled ‘Redefining “TESOL” for the 21st Century’ and will be held from 7-10 July at the Holiday Inn in Surfers Paradise. The Conference Sponsorship Prospectus has been launched recently and is available to download from the conference website at: www.astmanagement.com.au/ACTA10/ and the keynote speakers for the conference have also been announced. Professor Martin Nakata, Chair of Australian Indigenous Education and Director of Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology Sydney will join Professor Allan Luke, Professor Chris Davidson, Associate Professor

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Introducing a new Councillor
Maya Cranitch

I am currently teaching both undergraduate and postgraduate students in courses which include applied linguistics and literacy across the curriculum in the School of Education at The Mount Saint Mary Campus of the Australian Catholic University. I am also coordinator of the Graduate Certificate in TESOL. Working with teachers in both primary and secondary schools is extremely rewarding not just because my students are so motivated but also because they bring a wealth of knowledge and experience which is shared. During my career in the area of TESOL, I have worked as a Director of Studies in an ELICOS Centre, taught English for Academic Purposes for short periods in China and Vietnam and even prepared course materials for Nursing English. In the last five years, my focus has been in the area of refugee education. Since 2004, I have been coordinator of the Australian Community Futures Project which has supported over 25 Sudanese refugee students studying in various degree programs at ACU. This project won an award in 2007 from the Australian Teaching and Learning Council. I also completed a research project in 2008 for Catholic Education Office Sydney on an intervention program designed to meet the literacy needs of adolescent Sudanese students and written a professional development course for the NSW Department of Education and Training: Teaching Refugees in my Classroom.

I have always been impressed with the work of ATESOL not only for its contribution to ESL pedagogy but also for its advocacy of ESL teachers and students.
MEMBER NEWS

Professional Development Program 2010

TEACHING ENGLISH for ACADEMIC PURPOSES

This workshop focuses on the skills that teachers require in order to teach English for Academic Purposes programs effectively. Special attention is given to the teaching of critical thinking (including looking at activities that work) and writing skills within the framework of an academic literacies approach to program design and implementation. Samples of materials used to scaffold the acquisition of these skills are showcased.

Teaching English for Academic Purposes is particularly relevant to teachers of students who are studying or intending to study tertiary level courses where issues such as critical thinking, paraphrasing, plagiarism and referencing are important. These include teachers of students planning to study at university or Diploma and Associate Diploma courses at TAFE.

This workshop is of value to current teachers of EAP and interested teachers without experience in teaching EAP.

Date: Saturday 6 March 2010 from 10.30 am to 2.00 pm

Venue: Professional Teachers’ Council NSW Conference Centre
101–105 Norton Street, Leichhardt (corner of Marion Street).
In the grounds of Leichhardt Primary School

Presenter: Cintia Agosti M.A.App.Ling.(TESOL), P.G.Cert. (Ling. Res), the coordinator of Language for Specific Purposes within the Linguistics Department at Macquarie University.

Cost: $30 members/students, $50 non-members (Cost inc GST)

Enquiries: Yvonne Little at Professional Teachers’ Council NSW, Phone: 02 9564 3322, Fax: 02 9564 2342

2010 Annual General Meeting
Saturday 6 March, 9.30am

Programme

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To nominate for Council

Complete the nomination form which is included with this newsletter or contact Yvonne Little at 02 9564 3322 for a nomination form.
MEMBER NEWS

Professional Development Program 2010

OUR FAVOURITE LESSONS

Come and join experienced ESL teachers who share some favourite lessons that have worked for them. This session is a practical array of ESL strategies that have proved effective in supporting ESL students, as they learn and practise English while learning the content of the NSW Syllabus documents. Primary and secondary ESL teachers will share some of the practicalities of teaching the primary curriculum and favourite strategies for the secondary school setting. We may also hear from an adult ESL educator (TBC).

This is the fourth time the Our Favourite Lessons Workshop has been convened by Sue Bremner. The workshop provides a great opportunity to pick up new lesson ideas and to discuss ESL strategies with other teachers. As one attendee later commented, "I taught the lesson (I saw presented) the next day!"

Convenor: Sue Bremner

Date: Saturday 13 March 2010 from 9.30am to 12.30pm
Cost: $30.00 members/students $50.00 non-members (inc GST and refreshments)
Venue: Professional Teachers’ Council NSW Conference Centre, 101-105 Norton Street Leichhardt (corner Marion Street) in the grounds of Leichhardt Primary School
Enquiries: Yvonne Little at Professional Teachers’ Council NSW, Phone: 02 9564 3322

New Executive Officer Wanted

After four years as Executive Officer with ATESOL (NSW), Helen Fong will be leaving the position after the Annual General Meeting on Saturday 6 March 2010. Helen’s efficiency and enthusiasm in the time she has worked for the Council have ensured that ATESOL has gone from strength to strength, and she leaves a terrific legacy behind her. We wish Helen every success in her future ventures.

In light of Helen’s departure, ATESOL will be seeking a new Executive Officer to take on the Executive Officer role. The position is currently conducted on a casual basis for the equivalent of five days per month and the work is done in the officer’s home. The hours are flexible apart from an expectation that the Executive Officer attends the ten Council meetings that are held through the year. These meetings are generally scheduled on the last Tuesday of the month (February to November), from 5.30 – 6.30 pm at the PTC NSW Conference Centre in Leichhardt.

As all ATESOL Councillors are volunteers, the Executive Officer’s role is to assist Council to implement its program. This is done in conjunction with the Professional Teachers’ Council NSW which handles routine administrative work such as registrations for workshops, production and distribution of print materials and book-keeping for ATESOL on a fee-for-service basis.

A job description is currently being prepared. Please contact Robert Jackson on 0414 554 216 or at – robert.jackson44@hotmail.com if you are interested in finding out more information.
MEMBER NEWS

ATESOL NEWSLETTER

You are important to us.
If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2010, please do so now.
You will find a membership renewal form on the back cover of this issue.
You will continue to receive:

- Discounts on all professional development workshops
- Discounted conference registration fees
- Four informative newsletters annually
- Eight e-bulletins a year
- Two issues of TESOL in Context journal
- Good fellowship and collegial support.

All enquiries to PTC NSW on (02) 9564 3322 or admin@ptc.nsw.edu.au

Australian Council of TESOL Associations
International TESOL Conference
Redefining ‘TESOL’
for the 21st Century
7 – 10 July 2010 at Holiday Inn Surfers Paradise

Conference Strands –
- Pedagogy (inc. classroom practice, teacher education)
- Assessment and Evaluation
- Learners and Learning (inc. Second Language Acquisition, identity, literacy development, culture)
- Curriculum and Policy

Visit the conference website –

Sponsored by –
In 2009 ATESOL (NSW) conducted eight workshops with 24 presenters. The workshops included our new initiative, Conference on the Move, and a sponsored presentation by Cintia Agosti at the 3rd Free Linguistics Conference held at the University of Sydney. ATESOL (NSW) thanks all presenters for generously sharing their expertise with their ESL colleagues.

My Favourite Lessons Workshop
For the third consecutive year, in March I convened a Saturday workshop presented by a range of talented teachers. Herlina Massing began with Drama activities that have been effective with New Arrivals and Humanitarian Refugees in an Intensive English Centre. Elizabeth Muldoon took us through an effective reading lesson which has been successful with high school ESL students. Naginder Kaur, a visiting scholar from Malaysia, treated us to ways of teaching grammar and comprehension through song. The morning finished with a practical lesson on editing from Lisa McNamara, an experienced teacher and consultant. Everyone who attended left with ideas to try out and new ways of tackling higher order thinking skills with their students.

K–3 Grammar Workshop
This year at our annual K-3 Grammar workshop, three young teachers participating in the 2009 Grammar and Teaching course shared their strategies and expertise for teaching grammar in context. They were supported by Joanne Rossbridge and Kathy Rushton who coordinate and present the grammar course for the Multicultural Programs Unit of the Department of Education and Training NSW. Arianna Cansdell from Blaxcell St Public School, Laura Wilson from Belmore South Public School and Jasmin Choy from Auburn West Public School gave the participants some excellent practical strategies for teaching grammar in the early years. Thank you, Laura, Arianna, Jasmin and Joanne.

HSC English (ESL) Revision Day
This year we returned to Shore School for HSC English (ESL) Revision Day which was convened by Robert Jackson. This venue is ideal for an HSC revision day, being conveniently located a few minutes walk from North Sydney Station and providing a tranquil, relaxed setting. We were pleased that over 400 students and teachers came to the biggest event in our Professional Development calendar. It was good to see so many teachers taking time out from their holidays to attend this day with their students or for their own professional development. Some networking also took place over cups of coffee in the teachers’ tea room.

Pronunciation Workshop
This workshop presented by Marina Pearce, a Council member, and Glenice Aitken was attended by over 60 people. The completed evaluations forms showed that attendees considered the workshop to be of an extremely high professional standard. These were some of the comments made: “A most interesting ‘missing link’ for our course.” “It has made me rethink how I can better structure/incorporate pronunciation in my lessons so as to improve listening and speaking skills.” “It was very comprehensive, touching on a variety of issues relating to difficulties with pronunciation and teaching strategies.” “Very, very useful.”

The workbook which was prepared by Marina and Glenice and provided to all attendees was particularly appreciated. Marina and Glenice will shortly publish a resource for teaching pronunciation and we look forward to reviewing this in our newsletter. Thank you, Marina and Glenice for this most illuminating workshop.
2009 Reports on Professional Development

Thanks also to Council member, Marolyn Ninness, who arranged a much appreciated display of ESL books.

English for Academic Purposes Workshop
This workshop was convened by Eva Bernat and conducted by Cintia Agosti at the 3rd Free Linguistics Conference at the University of Sydney. Although Cintia was hampered by some technological glitches in the auditorium, she presented a session which was most informative. This session assumed no special knowledge of EAP but proved valuable for both newcomers to the field and experienced EAP teachers who contributed to a lively discussion. Cintia discussed the various models (skill-based or subject content based, generic, discipline specific or hybrid: EAP/IELTS preparation) and various methodologies. Particular attention was given to the teaching of critical thinking and writing skills within the framework of an academic literacies approach to program design and implementation. An excellent handout and bibliography were provided.

ATESOL Councillors Eva Bernat, Sue Bremner, Marolyn Ninness and I attended this workshop and we felt it was such an informative, well conducted session that we wanted more ATESOL members to have this opportunity for professional learning. As many people were disappointed that they could not attend, I am delighted to let you know that Cintia has agreed to present the workshop again on Saturday 6 March 2010, just after our AGM. Many thanks to Cintia.

Helen Fong
Executive Officer, ATESOL (NSW)

Our first event took place at Tyalla PS in Coffs Harbour and we are grateful to Sue Mackay, Principal, and Fiona Spooner, former council member, for hosting the workshop. We would also like to thank Joanne Rossbridge, independent consultant, and friend and member of ATESOL who made the journey to Coffs Harbour with Kathy Rushton. We were pleased to welcome teachers from schools across the sectors and also to welcome Lynda Moulder from the DET Regional Office who came to encourage our support for teachers in the area.

Our second event took place at Armidale High School, Armidale. We thank principal Anne Mately and Judith Mee (former Council member and Sydney-based co-convenor) as well as Jan Johnson and her committee for all their work in planning and facilitating this workshop. We also thank Sue Bremner, ATESOL’s vice-president, who drove from Sydney with Judith Mee, to assist with this event. Over 30 people attended, including some international students from the University of New England, and people from as far away as Taree, Narrabri and, of course, Sydney. We thank all speakers for their illuminating presentations: Dr Susan Feez, Associate Professor Mary Macken-Horarik and Sara Bioletti.

Our last event was held at Prestons Public School in the South West of Sydney. For this workshop we would like to thank our keynote speaker Dr Katina Zammit from the University of Western Sydney, Kim Cootes from the DET NSW and again Joanne Rossbridge. Many of our council members supported the workshop this day but we would especially like to thank Gillian Pennington who presented a parallel workshop with Kim Cootes on strategies for working with refugee students.

We are looking forward to meeting our many members across the state at our next conference. We would like to visit you all from Coffs Harbour, Armidale and South Western Sydney to... where are you? If you would like to host a workshop or conference for ATESOL in the coming year or even 2011 please email our Secretary Kathy Rushton at krushton@tpg.com.au and we’ll see you again soon!

Kathy Rushton, Secretary ATESOL (NSW), Sydney convenor of the Coffs Harbour and Prestons Conference on the Move events in 2009.
for language learning again. Following is the account of my learning experience after my three week visit to Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

My experience can easily be divided into three phases:

**Phase I: Preparation**

Two months prior to my trip, I prepared myself through a self-taught program. As a language teacher I felt confident enough to face this challenge. My strategy included reading two or three books on German grammar while sitting on the commuter train to and from work. I also tried searching for “free” language programs on line. This learning strategy proved to be rather unsuccessful and unfulfilling due to lack of feedback and support from teachers. According to Littlewood (1981), feedback provides learners with knowledge of how successful their performance has been. I then paused to examine the following aspects in my preparation process:

- **Motivation:** Was I highly motivated to learn? The answer was – not really. This is due to the fact that I was aware that English had now been a lingua franca for decades. Like most of my students, I was not pushed to learn if I felt confident that I would be able to “function” in English by spending time in my own English speaking community. In this situation I believed almost everyone in my German family spoke English well.

- **Complicated and complex syntax and semantic features of the German language** demand that a mature-aged learner (like me) be always ‘on guard’. The German language has more flexible word order than English. As a speaker of English I had difficulty comprehending, and interpreting the sentences due to the German word order. According to Meisel, Clahsen and Pienemann (1981) the sequence of development for features of syntax and morphology is affected by how easy they are to process. This explained how I gave up my preparation stage so easily.

- **Preferred learning style:** I considered myself to have both Communicative and Authority-oriented learning styles. While I enjoy and can effectively learn by listening and talking to native speakers, I also want to have a teacher to explain things to me. (Willing: 1989)

- **Suitable textbook or learning materials:** One book that I initially used was too advanced – beyond my linguistic ability and therefore I did not find it useful. According to Vygotsky (1978) learning should occur when learners are in their zone of proximal development (ZPD). Even though this first grammar book was challenging, while learning independently I lacked support from a teacher to guide me through my learning. Learning in isolation without any input or collaboration from an interlocutor, I found that this learning experience was rather uninspiring.

Meanwhile the second book I used was not relevant and did not reflect ‘real-life’ situations. For an adult learner, some examples in the book were not relevant and bordered on being comical and patronizing.

- **Age factor and passive knowledge:** Now that I am a mature aged learner, retaining the acquired knowledge (which was not so relevant in the first place) proved to be a difficult task. However during...
“Bright Head” revisited: diary of an adult learner

my attempt to process new information, I discovered one phenomenon in regard to cognition – I always resorted to my previous learning experience of yesteryear and my passive knowledge of German to assist me. As my long term memory is vivid I managed to restore the lexical items and syntax that I required for various situations. On the other hand, I realised that it was harder to acquire and memorize new words and structures.

Phase 2: Real-life situation – being there
Once I arrived in German-speaking countries, my progress became more evident owing to the following factors:

• Social Perspective – Interaction opportunity: According to Vygotsky (P47), cognitive development arises as result of social interactions. I was motivated to ‘swim’ rather than to ‘sink’ in the deep end I was thrown into. Some of my German relatives were not able or were reluctant to communicate with me in English. In order to maintain relationship and to communicate with them effectively in social situations, it was imperative that I learned fast and I tapped into my “passive knowledge “ which timely came to the fore. This phenomenon provided some understanding into how, as a language learner, I stored and retrieved language. The old saying that rule learning should be followed by practice became tangible to me. I had an opportunity to interact with German relatives, getting corrective feedback from them during our interaction and I found this to be very useful for my learning progress.

• Hands-on experience – Learning in context: During my sightseeing with my German friends and family, words were explained to me. Some I readily understood, about others I was without a clue. The best thing that I discovered was that by “seeing and experiencing”, the new words and structures effectively registered in my cognition. I will never forget that the word “Die Brücke” means “a bridge” because I had seen the actual bridge and the word on the road sign (A description and the exhaustive gesturing by my German relative had previously failed to give me the meaning of the word). According to Blaxton (1989 as quoted by Lightbrown and Spada) when we learn something our memories also record something about the context in which it was learned and even about the way we learned it.

• Exposure – signs and social sight words: As a language learner, I paid attention to social signs and billboards, eg “Die Abteilung” which subsequently was heard again during a conversation with my German relative. These sight words enhanced my learning through exposure. According to Nick Ellis (2002) (as quoted by Lightbrown and Spada) in skill learning “the emphasis is on the frequency with which learners encounter specific linguistic features in the input and the frequency with which features occur together. The learners gradually build up their knowledge of language through exposure to the thousands of the linguistic features they eventually hear (or see)”. Also according to Lightbrown and Spada (2006:39) “Exposure to, and comprehension of, a language feature may also be counted as practice.”

• Fatigue: During my first few days of living with my German family, I was constantly exhausted. Later I realised that the fatigue was brought on by my intense concentration in order for me to comprehend and follow the interaction in German. I was ‘hanging on to every word’ I heard. Making serious attempts to participate and respond to questions to keep the conversation going with my limited language skills was hard work. I also realised that my receptive skill was much better than my ‘productive skills’.

• Sense of self and identity: Being less than competent in the German language resulted in the waning of self confidence. Unfamiliarity with ‘the way things are done’ such as using public transport, shopping, socializing and culture forced me to become more dependent on my English speaking relatives. Lack of “functional German” was mistaken and hence equated with “lack of basic education”. In one incident at a family get-together, a well meaning guest made a well-intended compliment and assessment in regard to my German proficiency in this manner: “Your German...
“Bright Head” revisited: diary of an adult learner

is better than that of my cleaning lady who has been here for seven years. She still can’t use the past form but you can!”

Phase 3: Post trip self-assessment
After the trip I made a self-assessment of my learning progress and discovered the following aspects:

• **Retention:** After the trip, I returned to my work mode and social life in Australia – devoid and totally removed from any situations that would require me to perform in German. In this English speaking environment, the German language skills acquired during the trip quickly faded away. However, the lexical items and grammatical structures that remain intact are the items that are connected to the experience that I had, or seen or interacted in a certain situation during the trip.

• **Language and culture:** Having lived with three German families (all relatives and friends) during the trip, the joy of learning was interconnected with the pleasant learning experience and my positive attitude to learning. I was immersed in the way the German families live, eat and play and this rewarding real-life experience assisted and enhanced my learning like no textbooks ever could.

• **Learning strategies:** As a good language learner I “have a strong drive to communicate, or to learn from communication.” (Rubin: 1975) I also am willing to do many things to get my message across.

Reflection
There are a number of issues related to this learning experience such as:

a. **Personality:** Although there is no conclusive proof as to whether there is any correlation between an extroverted personality and the ability to learn language well, Wong Filmore (1979) (as quoted by Lightbrown and Spada) argued that in certain learning situations, the learner who is quite observant may have greater success. One thing I am certain of is that I have no learning inhibition. Inhibition tends to discourage risk-taking which is essential in making progress in language learning.

b. **Anxiety:** During my trip I was free of anxiety – free from work commitments, deadlines and other demands of daily living. According to Lightbrown and Spada (2006:61) some anxiety serves to enhance performance and therefore has a positive effect and facilitates learning. Even with my education
background and personal interest I felt frustrated and incapacitated quite often when I was unable to express my thoughts and wishes in German.

c. **Motivation:** As indicated in my phase 1 – pre-trip preparation, I was not entirely motivated to learn due to many elements, such as time constraint, complexity of the target language, lack of input and finally the sense that I would not need to use the German language skills while I was there because English was the lingua franca. In the second phase of my learning journey my motivation and attitude changed dramatically because:

- I perceived the value and the necessity to communicate in German in a wide range of social situations e.g. family get togethers, sport (playing tennis on a clay court), social functions e.g. parties and so I became more motivated and had a better attitude towards the German language and the German people and their culture.
- I gained more “instrumental motivation” as I became aware that my purpose of language learning was for more immediate and practical goals and integrative motivation. I was learning the language for personal growth and cultural enrichment (Gardener and Lambert (1972) (as quoted by Lightbrown and Spada).

d. **Road to stabilisation:** It is easy for a learner who has no formal linguistic education and skills in the target language to slip and slide down the road to stabilisation due to the urgency to express oneself without observing grammatical rules, especially where the rules in the target language are vastly different from those of the their L1. Being aware of this problem I was circumspect about the rules and in spite of this, errors were frequently made on pronunciation, cases, word order, verb tenses.

e. **Self assessment:** According to Lewis (1990) “Those (self-assessment) tools which assessed the difficulty of a task or situation, whether real-life or imagined, were more readily completed by the learners than those which asked learners to analyse their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers should exploit this fact by having learners write their own self-assessment tools assessing their real-life encounters outside the classroom. This could lead to individualisation of learning goals and greater motivation.” (Lewis 1990:203)

f. **Real word English:** We should encourage our learners to become even more aware of the culture of their adopted country. According to Macarthur in his interview by Rubdy and Saraceni (2006) “I tend to be ill at ease with pedagogy that can’t handle the real world. I suppose drilling according to graded syllabuses is easier than helping students develop their own coping strategies while becoming more and more accustomed to real English.”

**Conclusion**

Through this brief learning experience, I gained more empathy for my adult learners and their plight in language learning in Australia. I took time to review my ESL teaching approach. Have I done enough to address some metalinguistic issues such as learners’ anxiety, their identity and self esteem? Have I performed some pre-emptive teaching against stabilisation? Have I taken into consideration how they retain their knowledge and skills and other learning issues such as cultural differences (or similarities), learner’s fatigue and demand imposed upon learners to interact?

I realised more than ever that by giving my learners an opportunity to see and engage themselves in real-life situation, like me, they might be able to retain the language skills if they ‘connect’ them with their experience in society.

Teaching and promoting learning in mature aged adult learners are a challenge but they should not be too big a challenge to overcome. The Alps have been crossed and so this task of supporting our learners can also be achieved by caring teachers with a great deal of empathy.

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CREATING A SHARED EXPERIENCE

by Jenny Beatty

For the past three years I've been teaching refugees and other migrants in the Intensive English Centre (IEC) at North Lake Senior Campus in Perth. In July 2008, thanks to a WATESOL scholarship, I had the opportunity to attend the ACTA Conference in Alice Springs. Together with Kath Moore, the Deputy Principal of the IEC, we presented our ideas on particular strategies and processes that address the social, emotional and academic needs of students from a refugee background. Important research into the psychosocial needs of African refugee youth was recently published by Haig and Oliver 2007. This report refers to the 'frustrations' experienced by ESL teachers in addressing the broad needs of these students (Haig and Oliver 2007, 70). In this article I will outline some creative methods involving music and drama that have been used successfully to address these needs.

In 2004, I made the transition from being an English and drama teacher to being an ESL teacher. The incorporation of music into the language classroom has been a totally natural one, since music has been an important part of my life for as long as I can remember. Soon after my arrival at the IEC it became obvious that the students were also passionate about music – mobile phones, i-pods and MP3 players being a common student accessory. It seemed worthwhile to harness this student passion to facilitate the transmission of language and culture. I was lucky to be led by Kath Moore in the IEC. Her strong faith in the use of artistic processes to teach and inform students from other cultures (particularly refugees) has been the greatest inspiration to me since I have been at North Lake. I know there are many pedagogies that can connect students to a new culture, but music and drama are particularly successful in bringing people together in a shared learning experience.

Creating a positive shared experience in the ESL classroom is possible in many ways. Common methods include the class novel, an excursion or an incursion. But the most powerful methods of all involve music, drama and art processes because they have the power to totally engage the student and to further develop interactions and connections within the group. Something as simple as a call and echo song at the end of a lesson can bring about cohesion and shared enjoyment. Whilst this is probably the simplest strategy to incorporate, as it does not require instruments (beyond the voice) or any specialist musical knowledge, there are more complex cross-curricular ‘projects’ that have the power to cover a wide range of ‘intelligences’ for the learners and create a lasting memory of the experience.

Two years ago I recorded a song in the classroom to broadcast on our lunchtime IEC radio show. The song, The War Is Over, by Marron Cassell from Liberia, was sung by three female Liberian students and I'd like to quote from this song to paint the picture of their refugee experience. “After many years of suffering/carrying bundles on our heads / from place to place / no food to eat, no clothes to wear, / no shelter, no security…” At the time, and to this day, these lyrics serve to remind me of the enduring nature of refugee trauma. The study by Haig and Oliver (2007) documents the experiences and wide-ranging needs of African refugee students in Western Australian schools. The study also identifies the common characteristics of these learners, i.e. illiteracy in their first language, fragmented families, disrupted schooling and significant trauma and emotional distress. Other features, such as unfamiliarity with academic English, low performance levels and high expectations, were also noted. Refugee students can exhibit a range of attitudes and behaviours that are frequently associated with ‘low attainers’. These include ‘low self-esteem, poor concentration and reading and writing difficulties’ (Taylor 1994, 15). However, identifying methodologies that cater for these particular ESL students is an important part of the Haig and Oliver (2007) study.

Taylor (1994, 15) identified several strategies to use with ‘low attainers’. These are: ‘routines and varied repetition’, ‘anything rhythmic’, ‘colour’, ‘games or physical activities’ and ‘simple challenges’. I have found that these strategies are particularly helpful when working with refugee students. The Haig and Oliver (2007) study, with its focus on African refugee students, also mentions the importance of addressing basic needs such as health and hygiene before further learning can take place. A relevant curriculum including sufficient oral language activities and real-life tasks is also considered important. With this in mind, I will dwell for a while on the importance of speaking and listening.

Due to time constraints and other pressures, speaking and listening are often given less attention than reading and writing. This is in direct opposition to what we know about the importance of speech in the development of language and in the development of higher order language functions such as informing, deducing and reflecting. It is my belief that drama offers
CREATING A SHARED EXPERIENCE

life-like contexts to develop these functions.

In 2008, a Western Australian theatre company, Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, began a project entitled ‘The Million Puppets Project’. This became the stimulus for a cross-curricula unit involving art, design and technology, and ESL. The IEC class engaged in this project had a large proportion of refugee students from an African background. By looking at the processes involved, it is possible to identify some important strategies that worked with this cohort of students. Puppetry, apart from having universal appeal, has the added advantage of providing anonymity to performers, which may be significant to individuals. Quite often, anonymity is of great importance to refugee students who have suffered persecution in their country of origin.

These are the stages involved, which I have adapted from Beyond the script – drama in the classroom (Ewing and Simons, 2004, 100–101).

1) Introduce the ‘picture’ (in this case a tortoise)
2) Name the characters
3) Build the field
4) Develop ideas (using improvisation)
5) Create a character profile
6) Develop the role
7) Do questioning in role
8) Do journal writing
9) Share drafts
10) Do play-building (e.g. What if… we lived in a world without humans?)
11) Collaborate on a scenario
12) Incorporate music (simple chords and melody)
13) Assessment
   a. Criteria discussed with students
   b. Reflection is important
14) Reflection tool: audio/video recording
15) Reflection – journal e.g. “I could sing behind the screen. No one knew it was me. I could use my voice and puppet – no one knew it was me. People found out afterwards – that was OK. My puppet had an earring like me. This was cool. The people laughed.”

Whether a puppet play is the chosen tool for engagement, or another genre, the product becomes an intercultural text that is shared by the participants. Intercultural texts can be spoken, danced, played or sung. The tasks can be real, but the content can be metaphorical or simply ‘fun’. It is important to choose the content carefully. Requests for anonymity also need to be respected. During the play-building process, the words chosen will be the words they want to share.

The puppet play was performed by the class for the IEC student body in the school auditorium. Two original songs (including a rap song), dance and drumming were part of the performance. The students reflected on the experience in their journals during and after the process. I found that the students quoted lines and sang songs from the play long after the unit was over.

I would like to finish with a case history from the IEC at North Lake. The student’s name is Richard. He is from Burundi. He is 17 years old and he came to Australia without any English after spending 10 years in a refugee camp in Tanzania. Richard has a particular passion for music and this passion has proven to be of great assistance to him in overcoming significant trauma from his refugee experiences. He has identified isolation as one of the hurdles he faced on arrival in Australia. “Everything was new for me. At that time, I was given a card from an interpreter who I could call whenever I needed help. That meant the world to me when things were so difficult for me.” Richard mentions the importance of music in his adaptation to Australia – both culturally and linguistically. “Writing songs in English was a help to me. I wrote songs for my guitar class in the IEC. We formed a group and started to sing songs at different concerts. I wrote the lyrics and music to some songs.” One song that Richard wrote is entitled ‘Everything is Cool Here’. The repetition of the line ‘I never saw a lovelier country than yours’ is particularly poignant.
EVERYTHING IS COOL HERE

by Richard Niyoyankuze

I’m so glad and I’m reminding you
That your country here is a beautiful place.
Just bring the best and the joy, hope and the peace.
I’m so glad and I’m reminding you
That your country here is a beautiful place.
Just bring the best and the joy, hope and the peace.
Just bring the best and the joy, hope and the peace.
Just bring the best and the joy, hope and the peace.

I’m so glad with the happiness
I still see in each face
And I’m so sick with the sadness
I still see in each face.

I think of the rounds I’ve been passing through
I never saw more friendly people than you
I never saw a lovelier country than yours
I think of the rounds I’ve been passing through
I never saw more friendly people than you
I never saw a lovelier country than yours
I never saw a lovelier country than yours
I never saw a lovelier country than yours

In conclusion, the use of arts processes in the ESL classroom is of great value in addressing the needs of refugee students. Engagement through music and drama leads to academic, linguistic and social progress, self-expression, assimilation, pride in culture of origin, exposure to broader communities and experiences different from one’s own, and a sense of healing and wellbeing. It is important to sustain a sense of inner stability and trust even in unwelcome and difficult situations (Dowrick, 2005, 4). Creative processes offer students the opportunity to develop or regain a much-needed sense of identity, stability and trust. This is a critical component which needs to be addressed in the early phase of a refugee student’s arrival in an Intensive English Centre.

References
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Dowrick, Stephanie 2005 Choosing happiness Sydney: Allen & Unwin
Ewing and Simons 2004 Beyond the script – drama in the classroom Sydney: PETA
Haig, Yvonne and Oliver, Rhonda 2007 Waiting in line: African refugee students in Western Australian schools Perth: ECU WATESOL
Levitin, Daniel 2006 This is your brain on music London: Atlantic Books
Taylor, Alison 1994 Teaching and learning grammar UK: MGP International

CREATING A SHARED EXPERIENCE

UNSW 2010 SUMMER INSTITUTE ON LANGUAGE TEACHING
18–22 January 2010, Mathews Building, University of New South Wales

The 2010 Summer Institute on Language Teaching aims to provide short courses for students, teachers and researchers who are keen on updating their skills or learning new ones. Headed by Professor David Nunan and Professor Chris Davison, the Institute provides intensive week long sessions, led by prominent academics in the field of language acquisition and learning. The Institute will run five courses, each course being handled by an expert in the field.

One course lasts for three hours per day, and will run for five days.

Courses available:
• Classroom-based Research for Language Teachers
• Teaching Speaking Skills
• Digital-Critical Literacies
• Learner Contributions to Language Learning

• Assessment for Learning

Registration closes on Wednesday 13 January 2010. Early bird registration ends on Friday 27 November 2009.

Registration Costs

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* This option is possible only if one of the three courses is Assessment for Learning.

For further information go to: http://education.arts.unsw.edu.au/news/archive/090811.html or contact Michael I Narciso, School of Education, University of NSW, Kensington, NSW 2052, Australia Tel. (+61 2) 9385 8004, Email: education.events@unsw.edu.au

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NSW ELICOS Update
- November 2009

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 is offered by government and private institutions around Australia.

English Australia Conference 2009

More than 480 people attended the 2009 English Australia Conference, held in September in Melbourne. Continuing the theme of ‘Engaging With the Many Dimensions of ELICOS: learning, teaching, supporting, marketing, leading’, the conference maintained a strong focus on the classroom while providing professional development and networking opportunities for other staff working in ELICOS as well as government stakeholders and promotional bodies.

Key topics of the program were assessment, technology and teaching EAP and sessions on academic writing and critical thinking were among the most popular, along with presentations on marketing and managing ELICOS as well as supporting students throughout their study. The program, some of the presentations, a report and photos are located at the conference link on www.englishaustralia.com.au.

We're already looking forward to next year’s conference from 16 – 18 September in the Gold Coast. Contact the EA Secretariat, easec@englishaustralia.com.au, if you would like your name on a mailing list for information updates.

Legislative Review

A number of government initiatives are currently being implemented that may affect ELICOS. Many of these initiatives have been set up in response to media reports of mistreatment of international students, mostly in the vocational education and training sector.

The most significant of these is a review of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act, the legislative framework set up to regulate the quality of Australia’s education and to protect the interests of overseas students. The ESOS Act regulates how education and training providers (private and state-run schools, vocational & ELICOS colleges and universities) deal with international students on student visas. It incorporates a National Code of Practice outlining standards for providers in areas including marketing; education agents; care and services for students; student visa compliance; and staff, educational resources and premises.

The Hon. Bruce Baird, former Member of Parliament, will head up the ESOS review, and English Australia is currently preparing a submission covering the key issues identified in the review. Go to: www.aei.gov.au/AEI/ESOS/default.htm if you are interested in finding out more about this review.

ELICOS Statistics

DEEWR recently released its statistics on student visa enrolments (ELICOS also has a significant number of students on tourist/working holiday etc visas) for year-to-date August 2009. ELICOS is still in a growth phase, with a 12.6% increase (an additional 8,411 students compared with the same period last year). Providers are still ‘cautiously optimistic’ regarding future enrolments. Although numbers from South Korea have been slowing through ’09, August showed the first increase (16%) since September last year. Indian student numbers have declined slightly but several countries including China, Brazil, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and Colombia are showing good levels of growth.

Katherine Brandon
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English Australia
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English Australia is the peak body and professional association of institutions offering ELICOS
Finding and reading blogs
From www.practicalparticipation.co.uk

For information, inspiration and professional development
A blog is a publishing platform. There are many different forms of blog on just about every possible topic. Blogs are organized with the newest content first, and are designed to be regularly updated. You can subscribe to see new blog content when it is created. The blog format encourages sharing insights and information in easily digestible chunks. Most blogs are interactive. You can add your comments and participate in discussions through the blog.

Reading a blog
• When you find a blog you are interested in following (reading each new post as it is created) you can subscribe to it.
• Some blogs let you subscribe by email, but for most you will want to subscribe to the blog RSS feed using a newsreader.
• If you have subscribed to a blog with a newsreader, any new content on the blog will be delivered to you through it. Check your newsreader regularly.

Get interactive
Read something on a blog you found interesting? Able to add to the insights? Got a question about a recent post? Visit the blog and use the comments feature to add your views.

To find blogs of interest
1. Search
   • Pick a topic of interest to you.
   • Use a blog search engine like http://blogsearch.google.com to find posts on that topic. (Remember, searching with quotes around your keywords helps find blogs mentioning an “exact phrase” only).

   • Look at the blogs you find to see if they post regularly on that topic.
   • If so, subscribe. You can always unsubscribe later if you find the blog does not speak to you.

2. Follow links
   • Once you are reading a couple of blogs, look to see which other blogs they link to. Follow the links and if you find other blogs of interest, subscribe to them.

Helen searches for blogs
Using the blogsearch search engine (http://blogsearch.google.com), I look for blogs on the topic of “boys and reading”, then “YA boys and reading”. (For anyone unfamiliar with the term, “YA” stands for “young adult”.) I do not find any blogs but do find websites with lists of books which are popular with boys and some good librarian sites which focus on this topic.

Then I search for blogs on Chinese culture, (a research interest) using terms such as “Chinese culture”, “Sze Yup”, “Sze Yap” and “Siyi”. (The last three terms are English alphabet versions of Chinese words.) I find a blog by a young Chinese student, websites and blogs which are part of websites. The student writes about a visit to an historic building which I am researching and I find her angle on this subject as a young person fresh and interesting. I also find some worthwhile websites and blogs but come to the conclusion that I don’t want to read regular posts from any of them. (So much to do, so little time…) Instead I save their addresses to Delicious, a great social bookmarking site which is ideal for tagging and collecting website addresses. I’ll return to these sites at another time when I have time to focus on this research topic.

Helen Fong
January 2010
28–30 (Asia and Oceania)
Email: ubon_s@hotmail.com. Web: www.thaitesol.org

February 2010
20 (North America)
7th TALGS Conference, “Research Meets Practice,” East Carolina University, Bate Building, Greenville, North Carolina, USA
Email: talgs@ecu.edu.
Web: www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/engl/talgs.

25–27 (Europe and Eurasia)
Hildesheim University and the Young Learner & Teenager SIG, IATEFL, Children’s Literature in Language Education, “From Picture Books to Young Adult Fiction,” Hildesheim University, Germany
Web: www.childrenslit.de/

26–7 (North America)
Email: convention@itbe.org
Web: www.itbe.org/convention.htm

March 2010
4–6 (North America)
Tennessee TESOL (TNTESOL), “All Aboard for ESOL,” Downtown Chattanooga Marriott and Convention Center, Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA
Email: tntesol2010@yahoo.com.
Web: www.tntesol.org

12–14 (Europe and Eurasia)
Email: convention2010@tesol-spain.org.
Web: www.tesol-spain.org/convention2010

13–14 (Europe and Eurasia)
TESOL Greece, “Living and Learning in a Brave New World,” Hellenic American Union, Athens, Attika, Greece
Email: chair@tesolgreece.org. Web: www.tesolgreece.org

June 2010
24–25 (Central and South America)
MATE-TESOL Haiti, “Strengthening English Language Learners Success,” Haitian American Institute, Port Au Prince, Haiti
Email: jeanfranois_vilmenay@yahoo.com.

28–30 (Europe and Eurasia)
FEELTA, “From Broadcasting to Narrowcasting: Global Englishes, Local Contexts,” The Far Eastern State University of Humanities, Khabarovsk, Russia.
Email: ilm_conf@mail.ru.
Web: www.feelta.wl.dvgu.ru/info/htm

Study the English (ESL) Preliminary course by distance education in 2010

For the first time in 2010, the Open Training and Education Network (OTEN) will offer the English (ESL) Preliminary course only. The English (ESL) HSC course will be available from 2011.

The English (ESL) course is open to any student who has been educated using English as the language of instruction for five years or less prior to the beginning of the Preliminary year of study.

In their Preliminary year studies with OTEN, students can also choose to do two additional units of English by taking the Fundamentals of English course. This course is particularly recommended for students enrolled in English (ESL) who lack confidence in essay writing, spelling and comprehension.
ATESOL Newsletter • Vol 35 No 4 • December 2009

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

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

ATESOL offers:
• e-bulletin updates on events
• positive support for teachers
• practical classroom assistance
• regular seminars and workshops
• reduced registration rates to ACTA/ATESOL Conferences
• reduced rates to professional development activities
• affiliation with national and international associations
• regular newsletters
• relevant publications
• up-to-date information about TESOL opportunities
• special interest groups (SIGS)

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Deadlines for Issues in 2010
15 February 16 May
15 August 16 November

Advertising rates for 2010 – 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