ELICOS college closures

What’s going on with ELICOS? With two internationally owned groups of English colleges closing in the last six months, English language training for international students is in the media for all the wrong reasons. How can this happen and what’s being done to address the situation?

Let’s look at the most recent closures of the seven GEOS colleges around Australia in early February. GEOS is an international chain of English schools/colleges with its head office in Japan. It has been a respected provider of English language for a number of years, with an experienced and highly-qualified staff in the Australian colleges. Although there is considerable speculation as to why the colleges closed, no one knows for certain except the Japanese business managers.

As for the 2000+ students left without a course, they will all be offered a place at another college. Under the legislation set up by the federal government, all colleges providing education to international students on student visas must belong to a tuition assurance scheme (TAS). ELICOS colleges have a number of choices, including applying for membership of the peak body and professional association, English Australia, of which the

Leading light: Maria Gray-Spence

When Maria Gray-Spence was appointed Regional Director of Illawarra and South East Region in May 2009 she became one of ten regional directors in DET NSW and the highest ranking former ESL teacher in DET NSW. Describing herself as a ‘proud ESL teacher’, Maria has been guided by a commitment to ESL teaching and social justice throughout her career.

Initially trained to be a social sciences teacher, Maria Gray-Spence found that when she graduated in 1979 there was an over-supply of social science teachers. After retraining as an ESL teacher, she was initially appointed the sole ESL teacher at Liverpool Boys High School. She recalls,
From the editor's desk

Helen Fong

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the newsletter

This is my last newsletter as I will leave ATESOL on March 6. Looking back over the past four years there are many highlights, ranging from seeing dedicated ESL teachers being recognized for their achievements to applying successfully for ATESOL (NSW) to be an endorsed provider of training with the NSW Institute of Teachers. One outstanding highlight was attending the ACTA conference in Alice Springs in 2008. For anyone who hasn’t been to Alice Springs, explored the region and met some of the indigenous people, I can recommend it as a deeply life-enhancing experience. For anyone who hasn’t been to an ACTA conference, consider going to the next one on the Gold Coast in July 2010. The organisers will no doubt draw on the best of the Alice Springs experience to give us another wonderful opportunity to learn from informative speakers, meet fellow teachers and explore another fascinating part of Australia.

It has always been a humbling and inspiring experience to meet so many innovative and dedicated teachers through our workshops, other events and even virtually through the internet. In this issue you will hear from or about some of these teachers including Maria Gray-Spence, Joe Clark and Scott Habeeb.

If you have ever wondered what ATESOL (NSW)’s Council does behind the scenes, you are welcome to attend meetings as guests. The meetings are short, sharp and can be wide-ranging. (To ensure that people are not deterred from joining Council because of meetings that drag on for hours, ATESOL’s meetings are scheduled to last just one hour. While additional time may occasionally be needed, no-one is expected to stay beyond one hour so there is no embarrassment if a Councillor needs to leave to meet another commitment.) I would encourage anyone who seeks a long career in ESL education, to consider nominating to join Council. There are roles for everyone, whether you are a skilled practitioner or just starting out. Jobs range from contributing to policy development and making submissions to government to assisting with administration at our workshops. All roles involve making a valuable contribution and also provide opportunities for much learning.

Any voluntary organisation relies for its success on its board members or managing committee. At ATESOL (NSW) you will find a dynamic, friendly, happy team of people who are focused on achieving its objectives—whether they be workshops or newsletters for its members, not on futile internal politics.

In closing I would like to thank everyone who has assisted me in my role as Executive Officer over the years— all councillors, staff at our secretariat PTC NSW (Professional Teachers Council NSW), our consultants, workshop presenters and members. For their particular assistance with this newsletter I thank all contributors, Robert Jackson, Dorothy Hoddinot, Diana Simmonds and Jill Sillar.

With best wishes for 2010,
Helen Fong

ATESOL NSW INC – COUNCIL MEMBERS 2010

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Robert Jackson</td>
<td>0414 554 216</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:robert.jackson44@hotmail.com">robert.jackson44@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-president</td>
<td>Gill Pennington</td>
<td>0402 104141</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:gill.pennington@gmail.com">gill.pennington@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-president</td>
<td>Bess Wassman</td>
<td>0422 989 838</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:besswassman@yahoo.com">besswassman@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Kathy Rushton</td>
<td>0437 135 128</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:krushton@tpg.com.au">krushton@tpg.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer and Public Officer</td>
<td>Connie Mudge</td>
<td>9793 4926 0419 232 662</td>
<td>9793 4938</td>
<td><a href="mailto:connie.mudge@optusnet.com.au">connie.mudge@optusnet.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Members</td>
<td>Eva Bernat</td>
<td>0425 368 767</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:eva.bernat@unsw.edu.au">eva.bernat@unsw.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maya Cranitch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:m.cranitch@mary.acu.edu.au">m.cranitch@mary.acu.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elizabeth Hotop</td>
<td>9217 3811 9850 7849</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:elizabeth.hotop@det.nsw.edu.au">elizabeth.hotop@det.nsw.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kathryn McLaughlin</td>
<td>0414 460 115</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:kathryn.mclaughlin@det.nsw.edu.au">kathryn.mclaughlin@det.nsw.edu.au</a></td>
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<td>Marolyn Ninness</td>
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<td>Marina Pearce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:mpearce@optusnet.com.au">mpearce@optusnet.com.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Julie Georges</td>
<td>0407 842 778</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:Jgeorges7@hotmail.com">Jgeorges7@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretariat</td>
<td>Professional Teachers’ Council NSW</td>
<td>9564 3322 9564 2342</td>
<td></td>
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Twenty-ten, or Two-oh-one-oh, or Two-thousand-ten, or, indeed, MMX – depending on your language background, preferences, choices and/or habits – is shaping up to become another significant milestone for TESOL in NSW. New federal initiatives and policy changes are exerting a tremendous impact on state and territory ESL programs within all sectors. ATESOL will continue to collaborate with agencies and departments in NSW, and with affiliated organisations and associations nationwide, to seek to ensure that the provision of timely and appropriate ESL support programs for EAL/D learners does not fall victim to economic rationalisation or educational broadbanding.

On the schools front, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has recently relocated to Sydney. Consultation on the draft K-10 Australian Curriculum in English, mathematics, science and history is now open and will continue until 23 May 2010, while the draft senior secondary years curriculum for English, mathematics, science and history will be open for consultation from April to June 2010. For more information visit www.acara.edu.au/consultation.html

In adult ESL, the successful tenders for the next round of Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) contracts will be announced in the middle of the year and new Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme (LLNP) contracts will also be in place. The AMEP Research Centre, which was the hub of professional development for the AMEP, no longer exists (as of last December) and an external reference group is in the pipeline.

ATESOL NSW will continue to address the most pertinent and pressing matters affecting ESL education in the state through our advocacy and professional development initiatives. As always we invite you, the members, to set the direction for ATESOL's work in these areas by providing suggestions and feedback to your ATESOL Councillors. I'd particularly urge each of you to consider coming along to the 2010 ACTA International Conference, to be held at the Holiday Inn on the Gold Coast from 8-10 July, in order to find out more about the national policy frameworks which will impact directly on ESL guidelines and programs in NSW in the coming months, and to give voice to your opinions and share your own insights drawn from a wealth of expertise and experience with the policymakers and academics who will be in attendance there.

Our AGM and the election of ATESOL's 2010 office bearers will have been conducted by the time you receive this issue, and I'd like to thank, pre-emptively, our new councillors on behalf of the membership and to wish them well for the year ahead. Our professional development agenda for the year will include a continuation of the highly-successful 'Conference on the Move' workshops initiated in 2009, with Wagga and Queanbeyan mooted as possible venues. Workshops on English for Academic Purposes, pronunciation, grammar and effective ESL strategies will round out our PD schedule, and we will again produce a Trial HSC English (ESL) examination paper and facilitate the ever-popular HSC Revision Day for HSC English (ESL) students. It is a rich bounty indeed, and well worth the price of admission.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to extend our deep appreciation and gratitude to our departing Executive Officer, Helen Fong. Helen took on the role in Term 1 2006 and the energy and initiative with which she has approached her work for ATESOL in the time since then have been nothing short of remarkable. Helen has been an invaluable asset to the association and we wish her every success as she forges ahead with her own research and writing ventures in the future.

Robert Jackson
MEMBER NEWS

ATESOL RENEWAL REMINDER

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

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING COUNCIL?
Members are welcome to attend any of our Council meetings.

The meeting dates for 2010 are on the following Tuesdays:

- March 30
- April 27
- May 25
- June 29
- July 27
- August 31
- September 21
- October 26
- November 30

All meetings take place from 5.30 – 6.30 pm at the Professional Teachers’ Council NSW Conference Centre, 101 – 105 Norton St, Leichhardt which is located in the grounds of Leichhardt Public School on the corner of Norton and Marion Streets Leichhardt, NSW.

Light refreshments are provided during the meeting.

Please contact the PTC NSW office on (02) 9564 3322 or admin@ptc.nsw.edu.au to advise that you will be attending.

You are also welcome to discuss Council membership with any of the ATESOL NSW Councillors

See contact details on Page 2.
In 2010 you can’t afford to miss…

**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

**Sponsored by –**

Conference program now available –

**Early Bird discount for registration by 30 April 2010**

**TERM 3**

**Grammar Workshop for K – Year 3**
Saturday 21 August, 9.30am – 12.30pm

This workshop presents ways of teaching grammar in context and literacy strategies for NESB students. This workshop is convened and facilitated by Kathy Rushton, with other teacher/presenters to be confirmed. Accredited with the NSW Institute of Teachers. (Standards: 1.2.1, 1.2.3 and 6.2.3)

**Grammar Workshop for Years 4 – 8**
Saturday 11 September, 9.30am – 12.30pm

This workshop presents ways of teaching grammar in context and literacy strategies for NESB students. This workshop is convened and facilitated by Kathy Rushton, with other teacher/presenters to be confirmed.

Accredited with the NSW Institute of Teachers. (Standards: 1.2.1, 1.2.3 and 6.2.3)

Venue for above workshops: Professional Teachers’ Council NSW Conference Centre, 101-105 Norton St, in the grounds of Leichhardt Primary School

Cost: $30 members/students, $50 non-members
Bookings: Professional Teachers’ Council NSW.
Phone: 02 9564 3322, Fax: 02 9564 2342,
Email: y.little@ptc.edu.au

**HSC English (ESL) Revision Day**
Monday 27 September 9.30-4.00pm

A day for students of HSC English (ESL) and their teachers. Experienced teachers and markers present on every paper. Venue and cost to be confirmed.
Leading light: Maria Gray-Spence

“I inherited the withdrawal model. Parallel English was just becoming the flavour of the month. Because I had trained as a social sciences teacher, I decided to teach ESL through geography. I was a bit novel. Most other ESL teachers had English or LOTE as a second teaching subject.”

When Maria was invited to join the Multicultural Programs Unit (MPU) as a consultant, she decided to devise ways of teaching ESL through other subjects. She developed materials for teachers to teach English through history, geography, maths and commerce. After a stint teaching in New York she taught at Beverly Hills IEC (Intensive English Centre). By then communicative activities were popular. Together with other consultants and teachers, Maria introduced communicative activities across the curriculum.

Maria was then appointed the first Head Teacher at Holroyd IEC. Starting with five teachers and 54 students, she left the school with well over 200 students. Seconded to the then Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs as an adviser on multicultural education Maria found she, “missed school so much” that she returned to Holroyd. She says, “I loved teaching at Holroyd IEC. There were absolutely fantastic teachers, teachers’ aides and admin staff. It was a dynamic and innovative school geared toward doing the very best for the children. It was exciting to work with the kids – there were so many different ethnicities. It were so vibrant.”

There was one particularly memorable excursion for children of refugee background, all of whom had had no previous education and were illiterate.

“We took the kids Christmas shopping in the city. We took them to look at the windows at David Jones and up to have pictures taken with Santa. We looked at the Christmas tree at the QVB building. Then we had lunch at Hyde Park and visited Circular Quay. I wanted the kids to see Sydney and learn something about Christmas.

When we got to Town Hall I realized that they couldn’t get on an escalator. The kids didn’t know when they should step onto the escalator. After that I made sure we went up and down lots of escalators!”

Many students from that time still keep in touch with Maria. Now their children speak to her and naturally, “their English is perfect.” Her former students include doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers, office workers, bakers, shop assistants, trades people, information technology workers and engineers.

Dorothy Hoddinot, principal of Holroyd High School, was a valued mentor to Maria and encouraged her to apply for promotion. Maria found it difficult to do so as she loved teaching at Holroyd IEC but she eventually applied for a promotion and was appointed Leading Teacher (equivalent to Deputy Principal) at Maroubra High School. At this school Maria worked on restructuring teaching for years 7 and 8, introducing a management model from Holroyd IEC. All classes in years 7 and 8 were taught by a teaching team which met each week to discuss the progress of the students as groups and individuals.

Ten years ago Maria was appointed Principal of Granville Boys High School. At this school 98% students were of NESB background, with 62% Arabic-speaking and 18–19% of Pacific Islander background. One challenge was that a lot of students were Third Phase ESL learners*. After closely analyzing student performance using the instruments of the time including ELLA and SNAP, Maria arranged for the timetable to be reorganized so that students had increased time for additional literacy and numeracy help.

Maria was then appointed to the position of School Education Director at Granville working with 25 schools extending from Auburn to Holroyd. Here she found that schools had large numbers of NESB students, refugees and students requiring ESL support. She says, “What I tried to do was to link schools up so that they could look at best practice-what worked and what didn’t work. I got schools to visit other schools and principals to talk to other principals and teachers to other teachers.”

Maria also focused on improving outcomes at K–2, believing that success in K–2 set children up for success later in school.

Appointed Regional Director in 2009, Maria is now responsible for 232 schools from Helensburgh in the North to Eden in the South and Crookwell and Yass in the west. To achieve her goal of giving each student every chance to achieve the best education possible, she focuses on the importance of teachers and says, “The main difference happens in the classroom. Most support needs to go to the teachers.”

Asked how teachers can avoid burn-out Maria suggests, “Teachers need a good work-life balance. They need...continued from page 1
Leading light: Maria Gray-Spence

to keep excited about the profession and to keep up to date. There is so much change. While it can be tiring, it may be best to see this as ‘exciting’. Teaching is the most wonderful, exciting profession.”

Maria Gray-Spence’s career has seen many changes but some things do not change. She recalls, “I started with this thought and it has deepened over time. This has been the constant – the view that education could change people’s lives. This was underpinned by a strong sense of social justice. For these (NESB) kids, English is the key to education in Australia.”

*Third phase ESL learners are students who generally function fluently and competently in English, but who occasionally need assistance in meeting the particular language and literacy demands of English in specific social and educational situations…Students at the end of third phase will normally have extended their English language and literacy skills in both formal and informal situations and be able to learn and participate effectively in the mainstream classroom. As a general guide, an ESL student will have moved beyond third phase after a period of seven years of instruction with ESL support. From English as a Second Language- Guidelines for Schools – www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/student_serv/equity/comm_rela/d04_23

Maria Gray-Spence was interviewed by Helen Fong

CLOSING THE GAP ON INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE REMAINS A KEY FOCUS (QLD)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships Minister Desley Boyle released the Queensland Closing the Gap Report 2008-09: Indicators and Initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Ms Boyle said the report shows there is evidence some progress has been made in closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage but acknowledged there was much more work to do. Saturday marked the second anniversary of the Rudd Government’s historic National Apology to the Stolen Generation and the release of this report shows how the Queensland is going in closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage against agreed performance measures, Ms Boyle said. The report shows that closing the gap is a long-term goal that needs the full commitment of government, the community and individuals before Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders can enjoy the same life chances and outcomes as other Queenslanders.

The Closing the Gap report is available online at http://www.atsip.qld.gov.au

Congratulations Robert Jackson

Robert Jackson, President of ATESOL (NSW) in 2009-2010 was elected President of ACTA (Australian Council of TESOL Associations) for 2010 at ACTA’s last meeting on 11 February. ACTA is the peak body for ESL and ESOL educators in Australia. All members of ATESOL (NSW) are also members of ACTA and share in the benefits offered by ACTA, including discounted registration fees to its biennial conference.
GEOS colleges were members. English Australia manages the TAS for its members, and is obliged to find places for all students displaced by the closure of their college with other member colleges.

Teachers left without a job may well find another fairly easily in a sector that is still in growth, albeit much more modest than this time last year. There is still a high demand for qualified, experienced teachers in programs such as English for Academic Preparation and the English Australia website publishes jobs available in ELICOS colleges around Australia.

It is hoped that no other colleges will close but this is not certain in a business context where the full effects of the GFC are yet to be felt. Confidence within the sector, however, remains high, especially with changes to skilled migration which should attract more students to higher level English language courses.

What is ‘ELICOS’?

ELICOS is generally not well-understood by teachers in other areas of education. It’s important to remember that ELICOS is a sector, such as school, tertiary or vocational education, rather than a type of institution such as state/independent schools, TAFE or university. Strictly speaking ELICOS (English language intensive courses for overseas students) applies to students on student visas, but the term has come to cover those on other visas such as working holiday and tourist visas. ELICOS colleges are found in both the public and private sectors. Most universities and many TAFE colleges and schools have an associated ELICOS college or department to prepare students for further study. There are colleges run by large international chains as well as Australian-based businesses of varying sizes. Any providers offering courses to students on student visas must be accredited by the National English Language Teaching Accreditation Scheme (NEAS), which ensures that ELICOS providers meet minimum quality standards in areas including marketing, student services, curriculum & assessment and business management. NEAS was set up by English Australia in 1990 as one of national compulsory accreditation for ELICOS. All providers of international education are required to which all providers must adhere, although already ahead of the rest of the world in terms of such a framework, the Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations (DEEWR) is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the ESOS Act, chaired by Bruce Baird in consultation with key representatives of providers of international education. Go to the website of Australian Education International, a division of the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, for more information about the ESOS Act and the National Code.

ELICOS in Australia is the most highly regulated in the world and was the first country to introduce a system of national compulsory accreditation for ELICOS. All colleges offering courses to international students on student visas must be accredited by the National English Language Teaching Accreditation Scheme (NEAS), which ensures that ELICOS providers meet minimum quality standards in areas including marketing, student services, teacher qualification and professional development, curriculum & assessment and business management. NEAS was set up by English Australia in 1990 as one response to the widespread closure of ELICOS colleges at that time and since then the number of closures has dramatically reduced. You can find out more about the NEAS minimum standards for ELICOS providers at www.neas.org.au.

Later issue: ELICOS and quality, ELICOS case studies, how to become an ELICOS teacher. For more information about ELICOS, go to the English Australia website at www.englishaustralia.com.au.

Most ELICOS students are young adults in their twenties and early thirties. Many will have graduated high school, if not an undergraduate university degree, and most are middle class. The most recent figures indicate that over 70% are from Asian countries such as South Korea, China and Japan but students also come from Europe and there is an increasing number from South America (Brazil, Argentina, Colombia) and the Arab region. They, their parents or an institution pay for their course.

Regulation

ELICOS lies within the international education industry, now Australia’s fourth biggest export earner. The Education Services for Overseas Students Act (ESOS Act) provides a national legislative framework for this industry that is intended to both provide protection for the consumer and protect Australia’s reputation in the international education market. The mainstay of the ESOS Act is the National Code of Practice to which all providers must adhere. Although already ahead of the rest of the world in terms of such a framework, the Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations (DEEWR) is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the ESOS Act, chaired by Bruce Baird in consultation with key representatives of providers of international education. Go to the website of Australian Education International, a division of the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, for more information about the ESOS Act and the National Code.
The HSC ESL Area of Study Paper 1 is divided into two sections: Section 1 with a series of unseen texts and questions, and Section 2, an essay requiring use of two prescribed texts and related material.

In 2009, the HSC ESL Area of Study Paper 1 topic changed to ‘Belonging’. This topic is broad, with many potential aspects such as belonging, not belonging, community, family, love, acceptance, friendship, isolation, loneliness and ostracism. As noted in the NSW Board of Studies English Stage 6 Prescriptions: Area of Study Electives and Texts (http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_hsc/english-std-adv.html):

These perceptions are shaped within personal, cultural, historical and social contexts. A sense of belonging can emerge from the connections made with people, places, groups, communities and the larger world. Within this Area of Study, students may consider aspects of belonging in terms of experiences and notions of identity, relationships, acceptance and understanding.

As a teacher in the 2009 initial year introducing belonging, it seemed to me that the vast majority of students grasped the many facets, concepts and aspects of belonging very well.

Section 1 is worth 25 marks, consisting of questions on unseen texts within the context of belonging. Section 2 is an essay response worth 20 marks. Students generally find that Section 2 takes more time because of the requirement to use two prescribed texts as well as a related text. This will be revisited at the end.

In teaching essay writing skills for the Area of Study belonging topic, I have found it helpful to try and imagine the ideas and motivations of both student and examiner. The student needs confidence in the subject and the ability to expound upon it. “You are an expert on the subject of belonging” is what I tell them. They should write with authority, clarity and depth of knowledge, using excellent English expression with a clear argument and pertinent details, all the while ensuring that they completely answer the question.

In trying to imagine the ideas and motivations of the examiners, I make a number of suggestions. What are the goals of the examiners? A good read of the syllabus and rubrics can help for this one. What kind of responses are they looking for? Reading responses of other students and getting teacher feedback on personal responses is a good way to do this. Attempting regular responses to past Trial or HSC papers is an outstanding way to understand the positions of the examiners and the likely tone of the paper. Above all, studying previous Area of Study marking criteria can provide significant insight into what examiners are looking for and how students should write.

Before writing the Area of Study essay, it is highly recommended that students plan a response. Planning the response must not take much time but a sound plan will ensure that the student has a direction and model for the essay to be written.

There are many ways of planning an essay response, but the most popular are those of the scaffolding or outline method. This is where the student makes a short list of what they intend to write, including the key words and main points to include in the essay. As mentioned earlier, it is essential to understand the question. The majority of essay problems occur from misunderstanding or misinterpreting the question.

Writing the essay should follow the plan from preparation. As long as the essay question is clearly understood, the response written by the student should be straightforward and easy to follow. Have students avoid preparing detailed introductions consisting of philosophical discourses on aspects of belonging outside the scope of the question. This waste valuable writing time and in nearly all instances do not achieve any marks. Keep introductions short and on the question topic, allowing the essay to move easily into the body. There should be a topic sentence in each new paragraph followed by several detailed sentences using language features and examples to illustrate the position of the student. The paragraph should end with a brief summary of the arguments just presented. At the end of the essay there should be a brief conclusion, summarising the arguments and points without introducing new ones.

Some other tips

Related texts are an integral part of the Area of Study response. While some teachers provide one related text for an entire class to learn, I believe that in the interest
of education and learning that students should choose their own material. There are probably a large number of books, movies, songs and poems they are familiar with as possibilities. Related texts should be strong on aspects of belonging and be a different text type than their prescribed texts. Written texts can be easier to use because a visual text requires lengthy descriptive language as an introduction for the marker. Students should introduce and summarise the related text within two sentences so as to move ahead in the essay with answering the question. Excessive retelling can be fatal in the Area of Study essay. The examiner will probably not know the text but assumes the student will be very familiar and confident with it.

Students should use the best English expression and grammar possible, but without over-extending themselves. Dropping in impressive academic and technical terms in what is an essay on belonging by an 18 year old ESL student will appear out of place unless it is clear by the rest of the paper the terms are a regular part of the student’s vocabulary. Use of the word ‘juxtaposition’ does not automatically gain a mark!

As an experienced teacher of the HSC English (ESL) course, I would encourage new teachers of the course to promote original thought in student responses. Original thought and expression are a vital part of the syllabus prescriptions for the ESL HSC Area of Study. Australia is a democracy and many of our ESL students have come from backgrounds where personal expression, thought and ideas were discouraged, if not punished. Rather than continuing restricted expression in a form of indoctrination by their teacher in their ESL classes, I believe it is far better to encourage each to think, discover and write for themselves. The valuable educational experience found in the ESL HSC course is far more fulfilling and permanent when original thought and expression are encouraged and expected.

Time management is usually the biggest problem ESL students encounter in the exam. With 90 minutes + 10 minutes reading time in the Area of Study Paper 1, every second needs to count. A 50-50 split between Section 1 and Section 2 is advised by the Board of Studies but as mentioned earlier, the reality is that two prescribed texts and a related text are going to take more time to write about. Students should learn from extensive practice from sample questions how long it takes them to write the essay and make adjustments accordingly. For Section 1, the most time should naturally be allocated to the questions offering the most marks. A one mark question needs a short, succinct response while a six to eight mark question required much more thought and input. Further, it is important to keep students moving through the paper. Getting bogged down in one question can waste much valuable time, especially if it is a low mark question.

The Area of Study Belonging essay is the longest extended response in the ESL HSC exam. For better chances of success, it requires significant knowledge of the texts, concepts of belonging, excellent English expression, confidence in answering the question, significant preparation and conscious time management. Careful observation and instruction from the teacher will greatly increase the student’s chance of success in the essay and ultimate success in the exam as well as solidifying their progress with English.

Joe Clark has been teaching the NSW Board of Studies ESL HSC course since its inception in 2000 and served on the examination committee in 2008. Joe is a Lieutenant in the Australian Naval Reserve, lives at Parramatta and teaches the ESL HSC course at St Augustine’s College, Brookvale.

Sudanese Community History Project now online

An important oral history project recording the migration journeys and settlement experiences of southern Sudanese refugees now living in Blacktown, Western Sydney is now online. To view the stories, visit – www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/sudanesestories
Revising for Tests
by Scott Habeeb

Editor’s Note: When I read this article on http://salemafl.ning.com while looking for nings which might interest ESL educators, I immediately thought I could profitably use the revision method outlined by the author. In this article by Scott Habeeb, of Salem High School, Virginia, USA, reference is made to “AFL”. This is not the kicking, running, leaping sport that is so popular in Australia but stands for “Assessment for Learning”. Scott clarified the meaning of the term in the US as follows:

“Assessment FOR Learning is much different than the idea of assessment in the American accountability movement. Often referred to as Formative Assessment, Assessment FOR Learning refers to frequently assessing students at the classroom level (through graded and ungraded means) to gain feedback that the teacher can then use to guide instruction and that the students can be trained to use to guide their learning. It’s, therefore, assessment for the purpose of increased learning rather than assessment to determine a grade or assessment to hold schools/teachers/students accountable. Of course, if done properly then learning increases and accountability isn’t a big deal - but that’s not what AFL is all about. Take a look at this site – http://salemafl.ning.com - and I think you’ll see what I mean.”

As I have come to comprehend better what Assessment FOR Learning truly means and how its principles can be applied, I find myself regularly thinking about how I would do things differently if I were still in the classroom. After recently observing Paola Brinkley, one of our school’s Spanish teachers, I realized yet another former practice of mine that I would now change. It’s in the area of reviewing for a test or a quiz, and I think teachers of all content areas will benefit from creating their own version of Mrs Brinkley’s practice for their classrooms.

As a teacher, my methods of reviewing for quizzes and tests were fairly typical of many classrooms. I basically did one of two things:

1. Played a basketball review game

This game was always fun. The kids and I both enjoyed it. If a student paid careful attention to each question I asked then they would have heard almost every question on the upcoming test/quiz. While it definitely was possible for all students to get a decent review from this method, in hindsight it had some drawbacks:

a. Because I asked one student at a time a question, there was almost never 100% participation – or anything even close to that.

b. I was not able to precisely gauge who knew what or what overall problems students were having with the material. Yes, I knew that the kid who kept wanting to answer questions knew it all, and I could safely assume that certain kids knew very little. However, I would not have been able to say with certainty the areas of strengths and weaknesses that the class shared.

c. The students left the room having enjoyed class, but they didn’t necessarily leave with a greater incentive to study or with a specific plan for studying.

2. Handed out a review sheet for students to complete

Some years I graded the review sheet. In hindsight I definitely would change that practice. It really doesn’t make sense now to me to grade a review sheet. I understand the point of view that says that the grade might be an incentive for doing the review, but grades should reflect mastery more than be used as incentives (or punishments for not doing work). If a student didn’t do the review that wouldn’t necessarily reflect on his or her level of mastery. These review sheets generally consisted of all the questions on the test. While some students definitely completed the review and thereby raised their test grade, I wonder how much of what I was doing was encouraging memorizing the answers to specific questions rather than truly mastering content. Also, this method of review didn’t let me know how my students were doing in time to help them prepare for the test/quiz since I collected the review on the day of the test/quiz. Finally, I wonder how many students viewed this as a study guide v. just another assignment that just has to be done. How many students simply copied answers from a book or notes rather than really tried to study? Or worse, how many students copied a friend’s review sheet?

While the review game and the review sheet are practices with instructional value, I believe that their effectiveness pales in comparison to what I saw Paola Brinkley do in her Spanish 2 classroom recently. Mrs Brinkley had a quiz coming up the next day. Her objective was to review the conjugation of certain types of verbs. Each student numbered a sheet of paper 1–25. Each student also had a small whiteboard (approx. 8” x 6”) and a dry erase marker. 25 verbs were shown 1 at a time on the overhead. The students would write their conjugation on their whiteboard and hold it up so that Mrs Brinkley could see it. As she looked around the
room she would nod to them as she saw their correct answers. Then she would go over each answer basing her explanation on the answers she had seen written on the whiteboards. Students would then write on their numbered paper the verb, whether or not they got it right, and any other information about its conjugation that they needed to remember. At the end of the class period and after having gone through all 25 verbs, Mrs Brinkley reminded the students that their numbered sheet of paper was now their own personalized study guide for the next day’s quiz.

I’m sure you can see the simplicity in this activity, and, hopefully, you can think of some ways to replicate it in your own classroom with your own content. As you do, I think it’s important that you remember the key AFL factors present in this review:

1. **100% Engagement**

   The students really appeared to enjoy writing on the whiteboards. This activity lends itself to a high level of engagement which means the teacher will get maximum feedback, as opposed to the one-at-a-time feedback I received during my basketball review or the not-at-all feedback I received from my review sheets.

2. **Feedback for the Teacher**

   AFL is a process by which a teacher gains feedback that impacts his or her instruction. By seeing all of the answers at one time from each student, Paola was able to shape her review based on their needs. For example, several times throughout the class period she reminded the students that they would lose points the next day if they did not use accent marks. She knew to remind them of this from the fact that they were not using accents on their whiteboards. She also stopped several times and went into greater depth explaining verbs with which the students seemed to have the greatest difficulty.

3. **Feedback for the Students**

   I think the most powerful aspect of AFL is when students themselves are given feedback that they can use to guide their own personal learning. Sometimes students are intimidated by the idea of studying because in their minds it means go back over every single thing they’ve learned. This seems like too large a task to complete, so many don’t even try to start it. It also wouldn’t be a very efficient way to study. After all, why spend time studying something you have truly mastered? Each student left the class that day with a personalized study guide – something that Mrs. Brinkley wisely reminded them. Whether or not the student chooses to use the study guide is one thing, but each student received the feedback they needed to know exactly how to focus their studying. Surely this will increase the odds that students will study, and most important, it should guide learning. Mrs. Brinkley’s students (as the 6th of the 6 Key AFL Ideas states) knew what they needed to know so they could know if they knew it.

This simple and easy-to-apply activity captured the essence of AFL – teachers and students basing teaching and learning on feedback that they are receiving from assessments. I wish I could go back and use a version of it in my World History classes. I would encourage you to consider how you might apply it to your content area.

Scott Habeeb is an Assistant Principal at Salem High School in Salem, VA. Prior to entering administration, he taught Modern World History at Salem High School from 1997–2004. One of Scott’s roles at SHS is to lead his school’s staff development efforts, including their current focus on Assessment FOR Learning (AFL). For more articles by Scott on the topic of AFL, visit http://salemafl.ning.com. Scott is also a consultant with Solutions, etc., a firm providing professional development for educators BY educators – www.solutionsetc.org. You can contact Scott directly via email at scotthabeeb@gmail.com.
Enthusiasm and expectation predominate as the 2010 ACTA International Conference ‘Redefining “TESOL” for the 21st Century’ draws ever closer. Hosted by QATESOL and financed extensively by ATESOL NSW, the conference will be held at the Holiday Inn in Surfers Paradise from 7-10 July. As I am writing this report, online registrations have just opened and the conference program is very close to being finalised and uploaded to the conference website at www.tesol.org.au/Conferences/ACTA-Conference-2010.

I am very pleased to report that Mr Robert Randall, the General Manager, Curriculum, with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), has now been confirmed as a featured speaker at the Friday morning session of the conference. Mr Randall has agreed to speak on the topic of how the Australian Curriculum will meet the needs of EAL/D learners in all curriculum areas. Another new item on the conference agenda which will complement Mr Randall’s presentation very nicely is an ACTA colloquium focusing on the adult sector, in which representatives from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and TAFE will provide similar presentations on developments and policies in adult ESL.

ACTA’s outgoing president, Rosina Antenucci, presided over the national council’s teleconference and AGM on 11 February, where discussion about the upcoming conference was very much to the fore. A difficult year in 2009 notwithstanding, Rosie’s passion for and work on behalf of the profession over many years has been quite extraordinary, and a vote of thanks was extended to her as she moves on to assume a senior position with the South Australian Education Department as ESL Programs Manager.

With a new Executive Committee now in place, ACTA’s ability to liaise in a timely and efficient way with federal departments and educational authorities is crucial to the ongoing relevance and effectiveness of all of its constituent state and territory TESOL associations. To this end, the ACTA Council will continue to participate in the National Education Forum, and we have also been invited by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to send two representatives to an EAL/D advisory group which will discuss the viability of developing an EAL/D curriculum to accompany other Australian Curriculum documents.


Robert Jackson
2010 ACTA President

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

ELICOS college closures
After a few smaller colleges went into receivership last year the ELICOS sector was rocked by the closure of seven Japanese-owned GEOS colleges around Australia on 1 February. All GEOS colleges were members of English Australia, which is making good progress in placing more than 2000 students left without a class by the closures (see feature story). The effects of the global financial crisis are still being felt around the world and this sector is no exception.

Legislative review
The timely 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, is proceeding well under the leadership of The Hon. Bruce Baird. The ESOS Act regulates how all education and training providers (private and state-run schools, vocational & ELICOS colleges and universities) deal with international students on student visas. Baird has consulted widely with representatives of all sectors of the international education industry and a preliminary report was released late last year. The final report is expected shortly.

Go to http://www.aei.gov.au/AEI/ESOS/default.htm if you are interested in finding out more about this review.

Action research in ELICOS
English Australia is piloting a program of small-scale action research projects this year. The participants will be teachers at colleges registered on CRICOS to deliver ELICOS and will be supported in the program by the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations as well as by their employers, with Professor Anne Burns of Macquarie University as key reference person for the project. The aim of the program is to equip teachers with the skills to enable them to explore and address identified issues within ELICOS then to share the outcomes with others. Details of the program are available on the English Australia website.

Write for the EA Journal
Are you interested in professional writing and sharing your practical ideas for the classroom? We’d like to encourage teachers on any ELICOS program to contribute to the new ‘Classroom Talk’ section of the EA Journal. The first ‘Classroom Talk’ articles covered teaching with videos, developing communicative skills and teaching collaborative writing in EAP. To find out more about how to contribute, go to the English Australia website www.englishaustralia.com.au.

English Australia Conference 2010
We’re looking forward to this year’s conference from 16 – 18 September in the Gold Coast, with plenary speakers Professor Jun Liu, Dr Janet Zadina and Gavin Dudeney joining ELICOS professionals from around Australia and beyond to learn with and from each other. The Call for Papers will open shortly and you can contact the conference secretariat, info@eaconference.com.au, if you would like your name on a mailing list for information updates. The conference website can be accessed at www.eaconference.com.au

Katherine Brandon
Professional Development & Support Officer
English Australia
kathbrandon@englishaustralia.com.au

English Australia is the peak body and professional association of institutions offering ELICOS. For more information on ELICOS, including details of professional development workshops, go to www.englishaustralia.com.au.
A Masters of Education (TESOL) set Finn McCall on course for an international career, he tells Jane Sandilands how.

“There is huge pressure,” McCall says. “Many clients holding very senior positions are in their 50s and 60s, so you need to find a way to bring English to them as a positive experience.” Most sessions are one-to-one, two hours each week. McCall recounts a recent success story of a senior manager with very little English whose French company now has Swedish management.

TOEIC had to be faced. “He wouldn’t speak English and it was up to me to find a basis to work from. I used an English language action movie and it became our topic: recounting, questioning, opinion and dialogue. It worked.”

At Université Jean Moulin, McCall teaches 24 fourth year marketing and business students, completing Masters One. He gives the entire class in “immersive English”. Between the two very different learning environments, he uses all he learned at Sydney, whether related to the history of ESL teaching, different motivation theories, latest thinking, or task-based language learning.

The appeal of working abroad is “getting to know the people” McCall said. “I’m constantly aware of how rich the culture is. When I ask people about France, they start with the country, the wine, the region, their small town and its speciality: perhaps a nougat, cheese or wine. It’s the tapestry of identity I like.”

Most appointments for Teaching English as a Second Language happen on-line, as did McCall’s appointment to Concordia. A popular site is www.eslcafe.com where schools seeking English teachers and those looking to teach both pay a registration fee. “Put your name down and you get offers. I got an offer saying ‘come to beautiful Lyon’ so I did!” said McCall.

Financially, it is less attractive than work in South Korea, according to McCall, because of French bureaucracy and high taxes. A high point of living in France, however, is visitors from Australia. “No-one came when I was in South Korea.”

And the low point?

Waiting to be served in a boulangerie and asking for a croissant using the wrong gender. “She didn’t serve me until I said ‘un croissant’ properly – and made everyone else wait. I’m scarred for life.”

This article first appeared in the Sydney Alumni Magazine SAM Winter 08
Collaborate with colleagues and students - using Wikis and Nings

by Helen Fong

As an instantly accessible source of introductory information on any subject, Wikipedia is now taken for granted. It almost seems as if Wikipedia has always been around and it is surprising to find it is not yet 10 years old. Wikipedia’s ‘birthday’ was 15 January 2001. Wikipedia is the largest example of a wiki, a website that allows easy creation and editing of any number of interlinked web pages. The term ‘wiki’ comes from ‘wiki wiki’ which means quick in Hawaiian. A wiki allows content to be created collaboratively.

Many educators are now using wikis as teaching tools. Free wikispaces are available to teachers of K–12 students. Go to http://www.wikispaces.com to find out more about wikis and set up your own free educator account. The following article about Ben Miller’s work on the University of NSW’s site, HUMS: Censorship and Responsibility tells you how one educator is using a wiki.

HUMS 3001:
Censorship and Responsibility - Winner!
Judged one of three Edublog’s Best Educational wikis of 2009

Ben Miller, a course coordinator in the School of English, Media and Performing Arts at the University of New South Wales, wanted his students to build learning materials for his course, one of several options in the mandatory HUMS group of subjects which students studying for an arts degree are required to complete. His students came from several backgrounds including visual arts, linguistics, history and English. Ben decided a wiki was the best platform to capture the group’s work over the semester. He felt that the wiki provided a group space which enabled multiple voices to contribute to a group page.

Ben chose to create his wiki on UNSW’s Wikispaces Private Label site as it gave his students a university-branded environment for their academic work. Being on a university site underlined the fact that material added to the wiki was academic work and needed to meet the usual academic standards eg no plagiarism, appropriate referencing. Ben coached his students to present their contributions in an academic voice. He encouraged the development of a neutral page with a range of opinions and points of view. Students’ contributions to the wiki formed part of the assessment for the course.

A Ning is an online platform for people to create their own social networks and was launched in 2005. Anyone can create a ning to develop a social network for a particular topic or need, catering to a specific membership base. I belong to two nings, one of which is the ACTA newsletter editors’ ning. This ning enables me to communicate easily to editors of other TESOL newsletters in Australia and has made it possible for me to locate articles which may be reproduced in ATESOL’s newsletter. To find out more about nings look at the site for Ning for Education at http://education.ning.com/. To set up your own ning go to http://www.ning.com.

Browsing the Ning for Education site, I found an American educator, Scott Habeeb, who kindly provided the article ‘Revising for Tests’ (page 12). Scott has established a ning for educators interested in assessment for learning at http://salemafl.ning.com.

There were face-to-face classes as well as the online wiki building project. Initially many students made only very minor contributions to the wiki, perhaps just changing a word. Later as their confidence built, they made more substantial contributions, bringing materials from their own disciplines. In the second module of the course Ben found that the students contributed more quickly and that while there was less material, it was more considered and of higher quality.

Students reported that they enjoyed the relative anonymity of the wiki and the fact that they had time to prepare a considered contribution rather than join in a fast-moving discussion during a live class. Ben noted that some shy students gained sufficient confidence after participating in the wiki to debate more “opinionated” students during a live class. The final product was a rich body of knowledge that helped the students prepare for their end-of-year exam. Congratulations to Ben Miller. This link will take you to a podcast of Ben discussing this project – http://blogs.unsw.edu.au/telt/blog/2009/12/07/ben-miller-wikispaces-pilot/

[...] Students loved the wiki and after several weeks, were building most of the content for the site – summarizing theories on free speech, arguing their viewpoints, and highlighting censorship cases that they wanted to further explore.
Facebook ‘enhances intelligence’ but Twitter ‘diminishes it’, claims psychologist

Keeping up with friends on Facebook stretches the ‘working memory’, according to one scientist. Playing video war games and solving Sudoku may have the same effect as keeping up to date with Facebook, according to Dr Tracy Alloway.

But text messaging, micro-blogging on “Twitter” and watching YouTube were all likely to weaken “working memory”.

Working memory involves the ability both to remember information and to use it.

At a job interview, a candidate will employ working memory to match answers to questions in the most impressive way.

Dr Alloway, from the University of Stirling in Scotland, has extensively studied working memory and believes it to be far more important to success and happiness than IQ.

Her team has developed a working memory training programme that greatly increased the performance of slow-learning children aged 11 to 14 at a school in Durham.

After eight weeks of “JungleMemory” training, the children saw 10 point improvements in IQ, literacy and numeracy tests.

A number who started off close to the bottom of the class ended up near the top.

“It was a massive effect,” said Dr Alloway, who today gave a talk on working memory at the start of the British Science Festival at the University of Surrey in Guildford.

Video games that involve planning and strategy, such as those from the Total War series, may also train working memory, Dr Alloway believes.

“I’m not saying they’re good for your socialisation skills, but they do make you use your working memory,” she said.

“You’re keeping track of past actions and mapping the actions you’re going to take.”

Sudoku also stretched the working memory, as did keeping up with friends on Facebook, she said.

But the “instant” nature of texting, Twitter and YouTube was not healthy for working memory.

“On Twitter you receive an endless stream of information, but it’s also very succinct,” said Dr Alloway.

“You don’t have to process that information. “Your attention span is being reduced and you’re not engaging your brain and improving nerve connections.”

She said there was evidence linking TV viewing with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) while extensive texting was associated with lower IQ scores.

First published in New Internationalist in September 2009.

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.

OTEN study @ your own pace @ your own place
Texting is a gr8 help 4 learning

Is texting valuable or vandalism?

Children who are heavy users of mobile phone text abbreviations such as LOL (laughing out loud), plz (please), l8ter (later) and xxx (kisses), are unlikely to be problem spellers and readers, a new study funded by the British Academy has found.

The research, carried out on a sample of 8-12 year olds over an academic year, revealed that levels of “textism” use could even be used to predict reading ability and phonological awareness in each pupil by the end of the year.

Moreover, the proportion of textisms used was observed to increase with age, from just 21% of Year 4 pupils to 47% in Year 6, revealing that more sophisticated literacy skills are needed for textism use.

The study conclusions will come as a surprise to many who believe that textisms are vandalising the English language.

The theory behind the research, carried out by Dr Clare Wood, Reader in Developmental Psychology at Coventry University, relates to one of the early developing skills associated with (and believed to underpin) successful reading and spelling development. ‘Phonological awareness’ refers to a child’s ability to detect, isolate and manipulate patterns of sound in speech. For example, children who can tell which words rhyme, or what word is left if you remove a letter, have particularly high levels of phonological awareness.

After her initial studies uncovered the link between textism use and literacy, the British Academy funded Dr Wood’s latest research through its small research grants scheme. A larger scale report will follow, to be published next year.

Dr Clare Wood, British Academy grant holder, said, “We began studying in this area initially to see if there was any evidence of association between text abbreviation use and literacy skills at all, after such a negative portrayal of the activity in the media. We were surprised to learn that not only was the association strong, but that textism use was actually driving the development of phonological awareness and reading skill in children. Texting also appears to be a valuable form of contact with written English for many children, which enables them to practice reading and spelling on a daily basis.

“So what can we do with this evidence? With further research, we hope to instill a change in attitude in teachers and parents – recognising the potential to use text-based exercises to engage children in phonological awareness activities. In short, we suggest that children’s use of textisms is far from problematic. If we are seeing a decline in literacy standards among young children, it is in spite of text messaging, not because of it.”

These are common types of text abbreviations:

- Shortenings: cutting the end off a word, losing more than one letter, e.g. bro = brother.
- Contractions: cutting letters, usually vowels, out of the middle of a word, e.g. txt, plz, hmwkrk.
- G Clippings: cutting off only the final g in a word, e.g. goin, comin, workin, swimmin.
- Other Clippings: cutting off other final letters, e.g. I’v, hav, wil, com.
- Symbols: using symbols, including emoticons, and x used symbolically, e.g. &, @, ;-), :-p, xxx.
- Initialisms: a word or group of words is represented by its initial letter, e.g. tb = text back, lol = laughing out loud, gf = girlfriend.
- Letter/Number Homophones: a letter or number is used to take the place of a phoneme, syllable, or word of the same sound, e.g. 4, 2, l8r, u, r, c.
- Non-conventional Spellings: a word is spelled according to legitimate English phoneme-grapheme conversion rules, but not the conventional one used to spell the word, e.g. nite, cum, fone, skool.
- Accent Stylisation: a word is spelled as it is pronounced in casual speech, e.g. wanna, av = have, wanna, elp = help, anuva = another.
- Missing Apostrophes: left out either in possessive or traditional contraction form, e.g. dads, l’m, l’ve, cant.

Courtesy of the British Academy, read the complete article at http://www.britac.ac.uk/news/news.cfm/newsid/14

:-) l8r XXX & @:-P lol & l8r ;-) & xxx :-p @
Michigan Corpus of Upper-Level Student Papers Available Now

The Michigan Corpus of Upper-level Student Papers (MICUSP) is a collection of around 830 A grade papers (roughly 2.6 million words) from a range of disciplines across four academic divisions (Humanities and Arts, Social Sciences, Biological and Health Sciences, Physical Sciences) of the University of Michigan (U-M), Ann Arbor. MICUSP was created by a team of researchers and students at the U-M English Language Institute (ELI).

MICUSP Simple was designed with teachers, students and novice corpus users in mind. In addition to a simple search facility, the interface provides multiple filtering options to enable easy access to a wide range of sample writing assignments from a major American research university. It features interactive graphs, user-friendly navigation, automatic results update in response to user selection, and full paper view (in HTML and original pdf format).

Search and browse MICUSP at http://search-micusp.elicorpora.info/simple/

The website is optimised for use in Firefox (most features also work fine in Internet Explorer and Safari but MICUSP is still working on some issues with these and other browsers).

Resources from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

The ABS provides suggestions for using ABS data in the classroom. The following information is from the ABS’ February newsletter, “Education News”. To find out more, go to the following link – www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1330.0?OpenDocument#idea

The ABS’ February newsletter highlights the latest curriculum related teaching resources, student activities and statistical tools that have been developed by ABS Education Services as well as other ABS resources that are useful for schools. Teaching ideas now on the website include the following:

• CensusAtSchool News
• Young People’s Participation in Sport
• Getting to school, getting to work
• Environmental Studies: Protecting the Great Barrier Reef

The following section from the website (edited for space) gives you a taste of what is available at this site.

CensusAtSchool 2010 is open NOW!
The CensusAtSchool questionnaire is now available from the ABS web site, for your students. This amazing resource is a great way to teach statistical concepts using data that is rich, real and relevant. The questionnaire asks about behaviours and attitudes as well as physical measurements so the data can be used well beyond the mathematics classroom.

‘Students have quickly engaged in the hands-on aspect of collecting statistics, especially as they relate to them personally’

(Michael McKay and Paul Tabart, Kingston High School, Tasmania)

There are many ways to use the CensusAtSchool data to introduce topics such as water use and conservation. Because CensusAtSchool is about students and their peers, they are likely to engage on a deeper level with the data and hence improve their comprehension of both the content and the numbers.

The CensusAtSchool web pages include numerous other suggestions about using the data in the classroom – from Grade 5 (pie charts of eye colour) to Year 12 (binomial distributions and linear regression). There are also a number of teacher submitted activities with examples of student work to assist you to successfully use CensusAtSchool.

‘After completing the Census at School questionnaire, students felt a degree of ownership of the data and found them more relevant’

(Glenda Paton, Illawarra Primary School, Tasmania)

CensusAtSchool is free and easily accessed from the ABS website. You will need to register and generate student access numbers for your students before they complete the questionnaire. This is a very quick process that is completed on line.
Schools open a ‘window’

A new online portal will make it easier for parents to engage with their children’s schooling, reports Caroline Milburn.

Parents will be able to check on their children’s school attendance and homework, and get faster feedback from teachers, by using an online portal to be introduced in all Victorian government schools.

The initiative, the first of its kind in Australia, will also allow parents to have online access at any time to their children’s assessments and curriculum.

Teachers have welcomed the move but are wary about the potential for the system to be abused by over-zealous parents bombarding them with messages.

“We’re concerned that teachers are already under pressure from heavy workloads,” says Justin Mullaly, deputy vice-president of the Australian Education Union’s state branch. “Parents will be able to access their child’s results at any time but there will have to be clear protocols about expected response times from teachers and what level of information they provide. The portal has the capacity for parents to get more timely information from teachers about their child’s performance but it has to be managed properly.”

The State Government will phase in the parents portal from May, as part of the UTRANET IT system used in Victoria’s 1600 government schools. Parents and schools will be encouraged to use the portal as an extra communication tool along with parent-teacher meetings and school reports. Education Department officials are developing protocols for its introduction with the AEU and other groups in the public school sector.

The portal is one of several initiatives outlined in a State Government report, *Blueprint: One Year On*, that acknowledges more needs to be done to improve links between schools, families and communities. It charts the progress of the first year of the Government’s latest five-year blueprint for education reform, and says the parents’ portal is one way to improve parents’ engagement with their children’s education.

Other measures to be introduced this year to strengthen links between families and schools include:

- The trial of extended school hubs in poor areas to provide homework clubs, music, sport and other extra-curricular activities outside school hours.
- A 10-year plan to improve outcomes for Victoria’s indigenous children and young people.
- The development of a rural education strategy to strengthen country schools.
- An advice guide for schools and early childhood services on how to improve links with parents and get them more involved with their children’s learning.

Low student attachment to school and respect for education is a cultural problem that has dogged Australian education and led to one of the highest school drop-out rates among industrialised nations.

The progress report reveals student attitudes to school have gradually improved in Victoria over the past three years. But students in years 8-12 have much lower attachment levels to school than students in other year levels.

The State Government’s push to foster closer ties between families and schools comes as school principals and teachers warn of a rise in aggressive behaviour by parents.

The president of the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, Brian Burgess, says many schools struggle to deal with belligerent parents or those who seem uninterested in their child’s education. The parents’ portal could help reduce confrontations or misunderstandings between parents and teachers.

“The portal will help build a better relationship between parents and teachers,” says Mr Burgess. “You’ll always get people who will be belligerent, who won’t tolerate any criticism of their little darling. But in many cases, if the parent gets a better understanding of what a teacher is trying to do with a child, it really helps make communication a more positive experience.”

“Most people’s understanding of schooling is based on what they did at school but the educative process has changed enormously in the last 20 years. So the portal will be helpful, not just for belligerent parents, but for all parents to understand what schools are doing.”

Courtesy The Age Feb 1, 2010

Dear Colleague

On Monday 1 March 2010, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) published the draft K-10 Australian Curriculum in English, mathematics, science and history for a period of national consultation. The consultation period closes on 23 May 2010.

This is a significant event in Australian education.

The draft curriculum and all the resources required to provide feedback are published at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au

At this address, you will find the draft curriculum which you can comment on, a survey which you can complete and other resources such as videos, information sheets and frequently asked questions.

On visiting the website, you will need to register your details in a simple process that will provide you with an ongoing login and password and ensures you the opportunity to save and return to your feedback over time and as often as you wish.

This is a unique opportunity for you to express your views and comment on the draft curriculum materials. Take the opportunity over the next few months to contribute to making this the best possible curriculum for all teachers and students in Australia.

The draft curriculum in the same four learning areas, for the senior secondary years, will be published online and available for public consultation between April and June 2010. More details on consultation on the senior years’ curriculum will be provided in March.

ACARA will refine the draft curriculum in response to the feedback from both the K-10 and senior years’ national consultation, and will publish a final version of the K-12 Australian Curriculum in English, mathematics, science and history in September 2010.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Peter Hill
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
A world of difference for WA students

Multiculturalism’s importance and its principles will be heightened by a new resource kit produced for Western Australian school students. ‘A World of Difference’ has been designed to assist teachers to provide knowledge, skills, understanding and appreciation of the State’s cultural diversity. Citizenship and Multicultural Interests Minister John Castrilli said the kit would promote awareness and policies, with focus on equality and discrimination – the key issues affecting multiculturalism.

Using ‘A World of Difference’ empowers teachers by providing learning tools and stimulating activities that can be taught as a complete or integrated program, Mr Castrilli said.

‘A World of Difference’ was produced by the Department of Education in collaboration with the Office of Multicultural Interests. It is available at http://det.wa.gov.au and www.omi.wa.gov.au

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 may be found at www.atesolnsw.org. Please contact Robert Jackson on 0414 554 216 or robert.jackson44@hotmail.com if you are interested in finding out more information.
March
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
24–25 (Central and South America)
MATE-TESOL Haiti, “Strengthening English Language Learners Success,” Haitian American Institute, Port Au Prince, Haiti
Email: jeanfrancois_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

July
7–10
ACTA Conference
Holiday Inn, Surfers Paradise
Redefining “TESOL” for the 21st Century
For more information see Page 5 or visit the website at www.astmanagement.com.au/ACTA10

September
16–18
English Australia Conference 2010
Gold Coast Convention & Exhibition Centre
Web: www.englishaustralia.com.au

October
1–4
12th National Conference for Community Languages and ESOL (CLESOL)
King’s High School, Dunedin, New Zealand
*Context & Communication: Mediating Language Learning*
For everyone involved in ESOL, Community Languages (e.g. Mandarin, Korean, Samoan…) and Te Reo Maori.

Featured Speakers —
David Nunan: Vice President for Academic Affairs at Anaheim University, California; and Emeritus Professor at the University of Hong Kong
Merrill Swain: Professor Emeritus, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Canada
Pauline Gibbons: Associate Professor, University of Technology, Sydney
Rosemary Eurlam: Senior Lecturer, University of Auckland
Jill Hadfield: Senior Lecturer, UNITEC, Auckland
Charles Hadfield: Teacher Training Coordinator, ELA, University of Auckland

Key Dates —
Call for Papers closes 1 April 2010
Registration opens 1 March 2010
Conference programme will be confirmed in May 2010.
For further information see the conference website:

18–19
TARC International Conference on Learning and Teaching 2010
*Emerging Trends in Higher Education Learning and Teaching.*
Tunku Abdul Rahman College
One World Hotel, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia

For enquiries regarding the International Conference, kindly contact:
Tel: 603 41499164
Mobile: 6012 2543714
Email: tic2010reg@mail.tarc.edu.my
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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)

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

Deadlines for Issues in 2010
16 May
15 August
16 November

Advertising rates for 2010 – space only (including GST)

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Website: www.atesolnsw.org