



TexTESOL III Newsletter

Texas Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

April 2006

www.textesol.org/region3

Letter from the President

Make It Happen by using the 3 C's!

Whenever we work with at least one other person, there is a possibility that the results will not be satisfying or even worse that there will be no results and nothing to show after all the hard work. I have recently had an experience where all the elements for success were present. My recent experience involves working with other TexTESOL affiliate leaders. An idea that was spoken about in passing at TESOL in San Antonio is now alive and well. The idea to come together to work on affiliate membership statewide will be undertaken this summer. But why did this venture succeed? It succeeded because of three factors.

One factor is effective communication, which is important for any joint effort to work. There are times when: 1) we think we said something clearly, 2) we think our ideas were understood, or 3) we think of something but don't say it out loud. Any one of these three can cause our efforts to go in a different direction than we anticipate or will cause us to get feedback that we don't understand. With either of these outcomes, some people may sulk or may become defensive- maybe even both!

There is no easy cure for communication problems. My advice is to double-check or re-confirm. A former director I worked with would follow up every meeting with an e-mail. She did this with one of our teachers, who sometimes forgot what she agreed to do and would do something very different. The e-mail acted as a reminder and a summary of what was discussed and decided on.

Remember too that discussing something does not always mean a decision has been made.

With good communication, the second factor, cooperation is possible. Once everyone knows what is expected, work can begin. At this stage everyone is committed to making something work. This is a time to play to each person's strengths. There are three main groups of people: the planners, the doers, and the cheerleaders, and the group will also divide into leaders and implementers. This is also the time for collaboration to be developed. In order to succeed, we need to cooperate with one another. This is time when everyone not only should come to share but also to learn. Ideas should be shared but not critiqued or criticized because the sharing of ideas could be stifled. Fear of an idea being dismissed will lessen the openness and candor in which people share ideas.

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When ideas are presented, simple ground rules need to be in place. Allow each person to present an idea without interruption. Questions should only be asked after the idea is presented.

Focus on “what” and not “why.” “Why” makes people defensive. By focusing on “what,” you begin to see the parts of the idea- its strengths and weaknesses or its advantages and disadvantages. Only play the devil’s advocate by stating you are doing so. Otherwise, you run the risk of appearing to be a pessimist or extremely negative. Listening is an important skill. Give full attention to the person presenting the idea. Show your interest also with your body language and posture.

Finally, good communication and cooperation make collaboration happen. This is when work gets done. It is important to know who is responsible for delegating tasks; no more than two people should have this responsibility. These two people need to share and communicate with each other about what they have done so that no conflicts arise later. A team member should not be getting two different tasks or sets of directions delegated by two different people unless all the parties involved are aware of these assignments.

Tasks can be assigned according to each person’s experience or what s/he would like to do. Once the task is delegated, the leader needs to step aside and allow each person to follow through on the assigned task. If the person either cannot do the task or has a change of heart about doing it, s/he needs to communicate this to the leader so that the task can be re-assigned to someone else. The leader is there to troubleshoot with each person, to ask questions, to listen, but not to do the task assigned to someone. Conversely, the doers need to respect the leader by accepting the direction and sometimes correction. The leader has the responsibility after all is said and done to make decision. Everyone can have input, but decisions are not made by committee.

Communication, Cooperation, and Collaboration are the key ingredients that make or break any endeavor. Make it happen in your work!

As always, let me know what’s on your mind and what we can do for you. E-mail me at aschlend@austincc.edu

Keep in touch.

**2006-2007
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The Texas Adult Education Credential

by Dr. Victoria Hoffman

What is it?

The Texas Adult Education Credential is a state initiative funded by Texas Education Agency (TEA) and administered by Texas LEARNS. Developed through a TEA special project, and with the support and urging of the state professional organization for adult literacy practitioners (Texas Association for Literacy and Adult Education, TALAE), a major purpose of this initiative is to professionalize the field.

The Texas Adult Education Credential will be awarded to TEA-funded adult education teachers in Texas who (1) successfully complete a coherent sequence of meaningful, rigorous, and research-based professional development, and (2) who successfully document that process by submitting supporting documents – including reflections for each professional development session about what was learned, how it was implemented, what went right, what went wrong, what is next, and so on.

Who may participate?

Teachers *who work for adult education programs funded through Texas Education Agency* are eligible to participate in the Texas Adult Education Credential process. These are teachers usually referred to as “teachers of record in TEAMS.”

How is this relevant to members of TESOL?

About half of the adult students served by the TEA’s Adult Education system have limited English skills and are enrolled in ESL classes. And, the proportion of limited-English students is growing as more and more immigrants arrive in Texas. Many – though we do not know how many – of the teachers of these classes have TESOL training and/or belong to the TESOL organization. These teachers are eligible to begin pursuing a credential.

I am a member of TESOL, and I teach adults in a TEA-funded program, and I’m a “teacher of

record in TEAMS.” Should I pursue this credential?

You are certainly eligible to do so. Should you? That’s really something you must decide. For many teachers, especially those who are relatively new, or who are isolated, or who “fell into” this field with little preparation, participation in the credential process can lead to collaborative on-going professional development that addresses a broad spectrum of knowledge and skills represented in the Texas Credential’s six core content areas.

What’s in it for me?

More money? More prestige? Certification that transfers from state to state? Not necessarily. While we expect that “market forces” will eventually reward teachers who have earned this credential that is, Texas administrators may prefer to hire those who are credentialed over those who are not – or authorize raises or higher pay scales for those who are credentialed – there are no guarantees. And while the certification may not transfer (yet) to another state, an additional entry on your resume (or better, a hard copy of your credential portfolio) could provide an edge when applying for jobs outside of Texas. The most we can guarantee, though, is that teachers pursuing the Texas Credential will engage in a rich and rewarding professional development process.

For more information, go to the Texas Adult Education Credential web site at <http://www.tei.education.txstate.edu/credential/>, call 1-866-798-8767, or send an email to aecredential@txstate.edu.

Dr. Victoria Hoffman’s career in adult and developmental education has spanned 30 years. Currently she works at Texas State University at The Education Institute on two special projects, the Central GREAT Professional Development Center and the Texas Adult Education Credential Project. vh10@txstate.edu.

Voices from the Field

by Dennis McCown

Like most people in Adult Education—I didn't intend to get here! I went into Civil Service, from whence I planned to transfer to the National Park Service and---well, it didn't work out that way. The biggest Civil Service population outside of Washington, D.C., is in San Antonio. I moved to San Antonio and secured a temporary job at the Defense Language Institute, DLI, in April 1975. I've been in Adult Education and ESL ever since. That's thirty-one years!

The Defense Language Institute is the world leader in ESL instruction, but it's limited to military and "official" students, not including State Department or diplomatic students (They have their own ESL program ...). DLI, as we affectionately knew her, trained raw college-educated youngsters like me and exposed us to radically new ideas in cross-cultural communication, grammar, linguistics, and a whole lot more.

But for me, I took everything I was learning with me as I jumped to a better-paying and more stable job in ... Iran! I was hired by the Imperial Iranian Air Force, but first, I had to learn their dreaded SOP, Standard Operating Procedure. The IIAF took people who WEREN'T college-educated, or native speakers, or even sane and turned them into ... well robots. To show how bad it was, what DLI taught in one week, the IIAF taught in one month. The IIAF had distilled it to three basic lessons: Dialog, Repetition, and Modeling. Each day began with a dialog from the book, every word of which had to be memorized by every student in the course of the lesson. Endless repeating, testing, correction occurred without any useless interruptions like explaining the vocabulary, etc. Supervisors walked the halls, listening. Every instructor on a wing of the building had to be doing the SAME THING AT THE SAME MOMENT AS EVERY OTHER INSTRUCTOR!

What's worse, there were spies in every classroom whose job was to report HOURLY on what instructors were doing. There was little heat, air conditioning, or ventilation. It was horrible, and the toll among instructors was intense. Of 440 "contract" instructors brought from the US, only three finished their first two-year contract. I was one of them—and I signed another contract for more. Fortunately, the Iranian Revolution interrupted me after three and a half years.

When I returned to the US, however, I was readily employable at DLI, this time as a permanent instructor. I was used not only as an ESL instructor, but as a supervisor, an instructor-trainer, an advisor, and an evaluator. Often I traveled overseas on short assignments. One year, I visited seventeen countries in 49 weeks. After several years of this and other high-profile assignments, I grew tired, so I transferred to the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. That was not a good assignment for me, however, and after four years there, I resigned from Civil Service and moved to Austin, Texas, where I was quickly hired as both an Academic ESL instructor and an Adult Education ESL instructor. After ten years, I was moved to a full-time ESL/GED position in Adult Education, and, unfortunately, lost my Academic part-time ESL position, which I dearly loved. Oh well.

At any rate, thirty-one years I've been doing this. I've seen EVERYTHING in the classroom. I've even had two students die in my classes! I can tell stories all day long about the things I've seen. But I've gained much, too, with all this experience. Several years ago, I estimated how many students I've had over the years. 75,000 or more. Hard to believe. I've learned to read body language like a pro—well, hey! I AM a pro! I know what each of my students is thinking and where he or she will be in six hours. I know their difficulties long before they do, and, usually, I can anticipate their questions in order to begin laying the background

for an explanation. As a result, I have the highest student retention rate, plus some of the highest measurable gains. I can teach anyone from teenagers to someone in their eighties—and I have done so over the years. I can work with any culture or language group, literate or illiterate, normal intelligence or not. And the secret I've learned is to have a plan. It's long-range and short-term. I try to have a goal for each student (in my head) for the day's lessons and the semester's growth. That's it. That's what I do.

Dennis McCown moved to Texas in the 70s, then traveled the world. He has been in 44 countries altogether and lived in 8. He now lives in Texas again, where he is a professional writer, college instructor, and part-time cowpoke. If you would like to contact Dennis, please write to the newsletter editor at flin@mail.utexas.edu

Mark your calendar!!!

TexTESOL 2006 State Conference

“Focusing on the Ability to Learn”

October 26-28, 2006

**Omni Southpart & Marriott South
Austin, Texas**



Be sure to also submit your presentation proposals by May 30, 2006. Visit <http://www.textesol.org/region3/> for updates and additional information

Interested in volunteering? Please email us at contact@textesol.org

For information about the conference venues, visit
www.omnihotels.com/FindAHotel/AustinSouthpark.aspx
www.marriott.com/ausap

Scenes from the TESOL Conference

By Macarena Aguilar & Carolyn Ho

Dr. Aguilar and Dr. Ho are from TexTESOL Region IV, a Texas affiliate which has been collaborating withy TexTESOL III in membership development and conference organization

Attending an international TESOL conference is an experience you should definitely place in your “to do” list, especially if you have not attended this particular conference yet. We were fortunate to represent our affiliate (TexTESOL IV) at the last TESOL conference, which took place in March in Tampa, Florida.

Global Exchange and Development

One of the advantages of attending the TESOL conference is that your horizon is immediately expanded. The minute you arrive at the registration area, you are suddenly surrounded by colleagues who come from as far as Siberia, Turkistan, the Philippines, Argentina, South Africa, or as near as Laredo, Katy, or Spring, Texas. It is an amazing feeling knowing that so many people around the globe share your enthusiasm and concerns about this profession. We enjoyed listening to presentations that focused on development in a particular country or education system. For example, from a report by the President of TESOL, Dr. Jun Liu, we learned that the English curriculum and program at the Shantou University in China had undergone a major transformation in the past two years. Not only has the university adopted a communicative approach to teaching, it has also created an English speaking environment through a Drama Club, a National Speech Contest, an International Guest Speakers Series, etc. We all know how difficult it is to get students to speak English in an EFL environment. It is, therefore, an impressive feat to garner the support of the university to implement such comprehensive programs for English learning.

Collaboration among Affiliates

Speaking of sharing enthusiasm for our profession, a collaboration project between the Texas affiliates generated great ideas for recruitment and marketing. You may or may not know that there are five affiliates in Texas, including EL Paso, San Antonio, Austin, Houston, and Dallas, all serving a much larger area than the cities they represent. All five boards often wonder what we can do to better serve our members, but it had been dealt with individually until this year. Thanks to the leadership of Don Weasenforth, President Elect of TexTESOL V (Dallas), we collaborated with TexTESOL III and V, and presented a panel discussion where we shared and discussed recruitment and marketing ideas with the audience. The presentation was well received by other affiliates, and it encouraged us to continue collaborating, along with TexTESOL II, on increasing membership benefits and enhancing affiliate profile. Specifically, we are considering offering discounts to our members for attending state conferences. As a benefit to conference presenters, we are also thinking of selecting one of the popular presentations at local conferences and send the presenter to represent us at the annual state conference. We will let you know about some other initiatives as soon as we finalize details of the plans.

Best of TexTESOL IV

Talking about popular presentations, the board selected Richard Millet, who received the best review at last year’s local conference, to represent our affiliate in Tampa in a session called “*Best of ...*” Richard is an Adult Education Trainer for the GREAT Center in Houston, and he is very well organized and resourceful. In the presentation he gave at TESOL, participants obtained a free CD with over 750 ready-made lesson plans, activities, and worksheets. A lady from Uruguay personally

thanked Richard and told him that the teachers in a small rural town in Uruguay would be grateful to him for this wonderful gift. There were over 55 participants in his session, and his presentation was so well received that he got a standing ovation at the end. Thanks to the GREAT Center that sponsored Richard to attend TESOL, TexTESOL IV was able to showcase the talent and professionalism of one of our members.

Focus on Aural-Oral Skills

Every year TESOL seeks to spur the development and presentation of new and not so new trends. This year it was listening and speaking skills that caught our attention. Several presentations dealt with the integration of grammar and listening. Of course, contextualizing grammar is nothing new, and authors have been encouraging us to do so for many years. However, in the previous years many of the presentations encouraged us to contextualize grammar using written texts. This year, several presentations focused on the importance of introducing grammar through listening activities and encouraging plenty of oral practice before presenting rules and/or a written text.

Speaking skill was another highlighted topic, probably in response to the new test format of TOEFL iBT. A session on how to set up a teacher-student pronunciation conference generated a good discussion on how to raise learners' awareness of their pronunciation errors, particularly among International Teaching Assistants (ITAs). One solution is to tape the learner's speech (1-2 minutes) and ask an undergraduate student, presumably someone in a class taught by the ITA, to transcribe it as best as he or she can. The blanks and question marks in the transcription often shock the ITA who has had no idea of the errors and the confusion they cause. Another memorable session was presented by David Randall of the Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab, who gave a very exciting lecture on continuous assessment of speaking. Some of his

suggestions include speech profiles with pre/post recording, weekly digital voice journals, peer assessments, fieldwork and questionnaires, video-recorded presentations, and vocabulary notebooks.

New Frontiers in Technology

Technology, of course, has been around for quite some time, but every year we see increasing number of new technologies adapted for language learning and teaching. One trend that was prevalent this year was the use of audio files (in one way or another), as can be seen in several online speaking assessment programs, many of which are Internet-based and allow students to take the test wherever they are. One of them even allows instructors to give feedback either by voice recording or by text. This means that instruction delivery in online courses is no longer limited to written texts (e.g., e-mail, discussion boards, or instant messaging); we can take advantage of sound files and even video files. In this way, students and instructors can communicate in a variety of ways, and language learning can closely mimic the traditional face-to-face format. An example was seen in a presentation on teaching pronunciation online. We were somewhat skeptical at first. However, after going to the presentation and witnessing how the presenters took advantage of this new technology, we realized that it is not only feasible, but also an idea worth exploring.

As we mentioned at the beginning of this article, attending TESOL is a refreshing and rewarding experience that invigorates you and, at the same time, helps you to expand your horizons. We are already making plans to attend next year's conference, which will take place on March 21-24 in Seattle, Washington. We hope you will make plans as well. If it coincides with your Spring Break, you can kill two birds with one stone: enjoy a short "vacation" and take advantage of a wonderful professional development opportunity. See you in Seattle!

Calendar of Events

September, 2006

28- October 1. ANUPI -TESOL/MEXICO, "Pragmatics, Semantics, & Cultural Awareness in ELT," Hyatt Regency Hotel Acapulco, Mexico.
E-mail huecaglez@axtel.net.
Web site: <http://www.anupi.org.mx>

October, 2006

26-28. 2006 TexTESOL State Conference. Austin, TX. Web site: <http://www.textesol.org/region3/>

November, 2006

17-19. 2006 American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages 40th Annual Meeting & Exposition. San Antonio, TX.
Web site: <http://www.actfl.org>

March, 2007

20-24. TESOL 2007 Convention. Seattle, Washington.
Web site: <http://www.tesol.org>

GAMES FOR ESL CLASSROOMS

Compiled based on recent discussions on the listserv: TESL-L@CUNYVM.CUNY.EDU

- *Guess Who? & Guess Where?* –great for practicing yes/no questions
- *Oh-Cards* (www.oh-cards.com) –interesting decks of cards for storytelling games.
- *Snakes & Ladders* –for discussing cultural differences among students (http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/othertry/other_activities.shtml#snakes)
- *Word Thief* –a card game requiring use English to create & "steal" words
- *Don't Panic* –requiring learners to give a spoken list of a lexical set in under 10 seconds
- Useful websites:
 - http://esl-lounge.com/board_games.html
 - <http://www.manythings.org>

Call for Newsletter Submissions

Do you have some thoughts on the teaching of English to speakers of other languages? Do you have personal stories to share that are related to TESOL issues? Do you have some helpful tips or websites for other TESOLers? If you do, please consider submitting an article to TexTESOL III Newsletter. Let the voices from the field be heard!

Submission deadlines:

Submission	12/1	3/1	6/1	9/1
Publication	1/15	4/15	7/15	10/15

Visit <http://www.textesol.org/region3/> for submission types and guidelines.