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Meet our Spring Meeting Speakers!



Christine Tapu oversees the ESL Department and teaches at Pittsburgh Brashear High School. She is National Board Certified, a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer and was a Fulbright Exchange Teacher. Christine co-authored *Our International Education: Stories of American Women Living, Working and Parenting in Hungary*, soon to be available through Sense Publishing.

Letter from the President

Greetings, Three Rivers TESOL members!



I hope the beginning of 2015 has been wonderful for you. It was a pleasure to see many of you at the Three Rivers TESOL Fall 2014 Conference at Chatham University. I'm looking forward to meeting you again at the various events Three Rivers TESOL is planning for 2015.

2015 is a special year for 3RT as it is our 25th anniversary. To receive recognition for 3RT for its 25 years of service, all 3RT board members will be attending the Affiliate Assembly on March 27, 10am–12:30pm during the TESOL International Convention in Toronto.

The Spring 2015 Meeting will be at Chatham University on April 11. I hope all of you will be able to join the meeting to share ideas on the important topic of bridging cultural differences in ESL teaching, vote for new board officers, and discuss the status of 3RT. We need nominees for the following positions: Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Please write to vp@3riverstesol.org to nominate yourself or a colleague.

The Fall 2015 Conference will be on November 7. We have applied to receive funding for a speaker for the Fall Conference through TESOL International. We have requested to have TESOL President-Elect, Andy Curtis, or TESOL President, Yilin Sun. To better organize the 3RT Fall Conference, the board members have decided to move the submission deadline for proposals to present to June 30th with an exception for graduate students. More information will be sent out after the Spring Meeting.

In addition, 3RT has the budget to sponsor more professional development and networking events as well as collaborative projects. However, we need your input to come up with initiatives that have the most impact on improving ESL instruction and advancing the TESOL field. Please feel free to email me or other board members with ideas.

I hope to see many of you in Toronto and at the Spring 2015 Meeting at Chatham!

Best regards,

Linh Phung

THREE RIVERS TESOL SPRING 2015 MEETING

Theme: Bridging Cultural Differences

Date: April 11, 2015

Location: Chatham University (room to be announced)

Panelists: Arlette Ngoubene-Atioky, Christine Tapu, Stacy Ranson, and Vivian Yamoah

Agenda:

9:00 – 9:30

Check-in and breakfast

9:30 – 11:10

Panel presentation and discussion

11:10 – 11:30

Reports, announcements, and voting

11:30 – 12:00

Interest Sections

Registration: <http://tinyurl.com/3RT-Spring2015Meeting>

Meet our Spring Meeting Speakers!



Dr. Ngoubene-Atioky is an assistant professor in the graduate psychology department at Chatham University where she teaches counseling psychology courses. Dr. Ngoubene-Atioky is a former ESL student with multiple professional and personal experiences in cultural and language dynamics.

Vivian Yamoah has been in the field of international education for over 10 years. She has a Master's degree in Cross-Cultural Communication and International Management from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in the UK and her Bachelor's in Asian Studies and Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia. At Chatham University, she is the International Student Services Coordinator.

Using *Scientific American*: Three Ways for Self-Study

By Dawn E. McCormick and Heather McNaught
English Language Institute, University of Pittsburgh

The *Scientific American* website provides an array of materials that can be utilized in ESL classrooms. Of particular note are the 60-second podcasts (<http://www.scientificamerican.com/multimedia/>), which cover technology, science, health, space, earth, and mind topics. The podcasts are downloadable and accompanied by transcripts. The speakers vary in gender and speed of delivery, but most are North American English speakers. *Scientific American* podcasts are frequently used in classrooms, but they also can be used by students for independent practice outside of the classroom.

The first way students can use the podcasts is for general listening comprehension practice. Students can listen – without looking at the

Scientific American, a free and frequently updated resource, is well-suited for self-study with students

transcript – and then verbalize the main idea. They then can look at

the transcript to check their main idea. Of course, students can listen again if their answer was incorrect.

A second way adds note-taking to the practice. Students listen, again without the transcript, and take notes. Students may need to listen more than once given the rate of speech in the podcast. After they take notes, students use the transcript to check their notes for accuracy and completeness.

Last, students can listen to the podcast and simultaneously read the transcript. If students often recognize words while reading but not while listening, or vice versa, this activity allows them to map aural and visual input, which can assist vocabulary learning.

Three Rivers TESOL Celebrates 25 Years!

By Janet Pierce
TESOL Affiliate Leadership Past Chair
Three Rivers TESOL Secretary

On March 27, 2015, I will have the double honor of awarding the Board of Three Rivers TESOL a certificate and plaque commemorating 25 years of membership in TESOL International. Having served on the Three Rivers TESOL board and on TESOL International Affiliate Leadership Council, I know the hard work, dedication, and effort that is put forth to run an affiliate. Recruiting members and informing members and the public of educational opportunities within Three Rivers TESOL and TESOL International is a service of love and dedication for many. As a member of the Affiliate Leadership council, I can attest to the fact that membership in TESOL International is an honor. In our upcoming issues, we will feature highlights of past events and initiatives Three Rivers TESOL has orchestrated through its 25 years. We will also include pictures from the award ceremony in March. Please join us in celebrating our milestone at TESOL Toronto, March 27, 2015! We hope to see many of our members there.

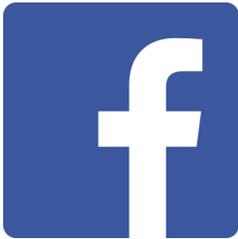


Speaker Joe McVeigh at the 3RT Fall 2014 Conference

Meet our Spring Meeting Speakers!



Stacy Ranson has been the Student Services Supervisor for the English Language Institute at the University of Pittsburgh since 2008 and has been teaching ESL for 17 years. She earned her Master of Arts degree in education and TESOL certificate from Seattle University in Seattle, Washington.



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[Facebook.com/ThreeRiversTESOL](https://www.facebook.com/ThreeRiversTESOL)

Using Socratic Seminar in the ESL Classroom to Promote Higher Order Thinking and Academic Discourse Skills

By Laura Whitman, M.Ed.
 ESL Staff Instructor
 La Roche College

One roadblock for ESL student success in the classroom environment involves their ability to participate in in-depth classroom discussions that involve critical thinking and understanding of complex ideas and assigned texts. Socratic Seminar is one successful strategy that addresses all four language domains, as well as gives ESL students the opportunity to participate in critical, stimulating conversations with their peers regarding an assigned common text. Socratic Seminar provides ESL students who may otherwise remain silent during classroom discussion a safe opportunity to dialogue about texts, while asking questions and seeking further insights from their peers. The Seminar follows a set format where there is no one "correct answer." Instead, students listen, ask questions, express agreement or disagreement, and use textual evidence to support their opinions. This classroom strategy is highly effective in all levels of ESL classroom. The format and rubric are adaptable although most Socratic Seminars follow a format similar to the one below:

Before the Socratic Seminar:

- Students read assigned text (article, poem, story, etc.)
- Students independently answer assigned questions about the text (questions that promote critical thinking skills).
- Teacher reviews with students conversation strategies and vocabulary for questioning politely, transitioning to a new topic, and expressing new ideas.

During Socratic Seminar:

- Students are divided in 2 groups. Participating students sit in a circle.
- Non-participating students sit on outskirts.
- Participating students work through and discuss questions assigned. Teacher does not participate.
- Non-participating students are each assigned a student to "observe," and they complete a peer evaluation regarding that student's participation and performance.

After Socratic Seminar:

- Students complete a self-evaluation or reflection piece.

3RT Member in Tunisia

Three Rivers TESOL member Claire Bradin Siskin recently returned from the Tunisia TESOL conference in Tunisia. In its second year of operation, Tunisia TESOL is one of TESOL International's newest affiliates. The theme of the conference was "Emerging Technologies and Evolving Pedagogies in ELT." Most of the sessions dealt with technology. In her plenary talk, "Farewell to Technosnobbery!" she appealed to all TESOL educators to refrain from looking down on their colleagues who do not have advanced technological tools or technical expertise. She advised that if a particular technology is working well, it should not be abandoned just because something new and trendy comes along. Siskin offered some suggestions for dealing with the ever-changing scenario of technology. She believes that we language educators should be creators of digital resources and not just consumers. We must trust our instincts and draw upon our expertise as language teachers in deciding which tools to use and how to integrate them into our teaching.

She also conducted a workshop, "Unwired But Still Connected." In the workshop she suggested various approaches to making effective use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in situations where direct use of the Internet is not a viable option. Resources for both sessions may be found at <http://www.edvista.com/claire/pres/snob.html>

Call for Articles

Have you given a presentation this year? Maybe you've read about or done an interesting research study or piloted a new pedagogical technique. Please consider sharing because when you share, we are all enriched! Please visit our website for more information.

Call for Nominations

Looking for a way to serve the ESL/EFL profession? Consider nominating a colleague or yourself for a board position for Three Rivers TESOL. Go to our website to learn more about the positions and nominating procedures. We will be voting to fill openings at our Spring meeting!

How to Get Involved

- Join 3RT
- Present at 3RT
- Write for the 3RT Newsletter
- Serve on the 3RT Board
- Provide input to the 3RT Board
- Like 3RT on Facebook

Contact

Website: <http://3riverstesol.org>

Facebook: [facebook.com/threeriverstesol](https://www.facebook.com/threeriverstesol)

Email: president@3riverstesol.org

Newsletter editors: Janet Pierce and Linh Phung

Layout and Design: Linh Phung

Pitt Series in ESL: *Academic Vocabulary Building in English*

Betsy Davis

University of Pittsburgh

As copy editor for the Pitt Series in ESL published by the University of Michigan Press, I am excited to tell you about our new series, *Academic Vocabulary Building in English*. Like the name says, this series builds on the strengths of our earlier vocabulary series, *Words for Students of English*, which will be going out of print soon. The original series was beloved by ESL teachers for its easy-to-use exercises and theme-based units and practice of the words in context, which we have included in the new series. Building on that, the new series includes exercises on collocations, focuses on using words in multiple contexts, and asks students not only to recognize but also to produce words in different forms with the correct meanings. The added benefits of such practice are multiple. In addition to being able to improve their scores on standardized tests, students will be able to produce better essays, give sharper oral presentations, and impress their professors with their academic potential on applications.

The new series will feature four volumes, each of which covers 160 words carefully selected from a cross-analysis of Avril Coxhead's Academic Word List and Paul Nation's frequency lists. Each volume contains eight 20-page units that are designed to be covered in two to three class periods. The series works as a stand-alone mini-course in vocabulary with four levels, or as a supplement to a more extensive reading or writing course.

Each unit begins with a chart containing the word forms covered in the unit, followed by definitions and examples. The unit moves on to vocabulary practice exercises that are designed to cover form and meaning in both recognition and production formats. Next comes a list of frequent collocations and practice exercises for ten of the words. The unit ends with a 20-item practice quiz in a traditional format. Online materials push students to use the vocabulary in less-controlled exercises such as writing paragraphs or imagining further contexts for use of the words.

All in all, this series more than fulfills your requirements for teaching high school EFL or ESL or pre-college or university-level ESL students the vocabulary they need to get to the next level!

The image is a screenshot of a webinar presentation. On the left, a slide is visible with the text "FROM DISCO SCHEMA TO EXPERT". In the center, a video feed shows Dr. Ken Beatty, a man with a beard and glasses, speaking. To his right, another video feed shows Linh Phung, a woman with long dark hair, standing in a room. The video player interface includes a progress bar at 63%, a "Click to add notes" button, and a "To Do" list at the bottom right. The overall background of the webinar has a warm, orange-toned image of a tree.

Webinar by Dr. Ken Beatty at the 3RT Fall 2014 Conference

Walking the Walk and Talking the Talk: Making Lessons Comprehensible to ELLs

By Janet Pierce, Ph.D.
Franklin Regional School District

In this time of increased rigor in the core curriculum, ESL and regular teachers are finding a corresponding increase in the need for English Language Learners (ELLs) to learn not only English but also the academic language within the core curriculum. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) have conducted numerous workshops on how to help ESL teachers and regular content area teachers meet the needs of ELLs. The key is understanding the English proficiency levels of ELLs and their Can Do Descriptors as well as knowing how to teach language functions in conjunction with key concepts and academic vocabulary.

First, the ESL teacher has to determine the ELL's English proficiency level. After that, the ESL teacher needs to examine the WIDA Can Do Descriptors to determine what the ELL can do at the given English proficiency level in each of the four domains of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking. It is the ESL teacher's responsibility to inform each content area teacher of the ELL's background, English proficiency level, and where that lies on the WIDA Can Do Descriptors.

Then the ESL and regular teacher align that information to Bloom's Taxonomy to determine what types of activities and questions can be asked and expected of the ELL. After that, the ESL teacher and the regular teacher need to examine the lessons they will be teaching in order to determine what language functions the ELL is being asked to do within each lesson, what the content is, and what supports are needed. The language the teacher uses to explain and tell students how to do something are your language functions. The content is the key concepts ELLs will learn. The scaffolds and methods are your supports. Each teacher will need to model the actions required of the ELL and provide visuals and explanations of the academic terms the ELLs need to learn and use. At this point it is important to remember that the more ways an ELL can learn a concept, the more he or she will remember it.

Let us look, for example, at a Beginning level ELL. This ELL can demonstrate their knowledge by arranging, ordering, labeling, reproducing visuals, and using simple words and phrases. They can also show comprehension by pointing to visuals and using simple words and phrases to answer questions. In addition, the ELL can move to application reasoning by making choices of visuals; dramatizing what would happen in a what-if scenario by using visuals as prompts; illustrating, writing, and telling, in one word or simple phrases, what would happen next, or what he/she interprets as happening in a specific situation.

From there the ELL can then show ability to analyze, calculate, categorize, compare and contrast, criticize, differentiate, examine, and experiment by pointing to visuals to answer questions; naming things by using phrases; and using adjectives to show differences between objects. A beginning ELL can demonstrate the ability to synthesize by arranging visuals in order, putting things together (puzzles, pictures, and items), and collecting pictures and items. Further demonstration of the ability to synthesize includes creating, designing, developing, organizing, and planning visuals, saying words of things and ideas that are associated, as well as saying short phrases to show how he/she would set up and organize something so it can do something else. Beginning ELLs can also evaluate by arguing, assessing, attaching, choosing, comparing, defending, estimating, predicting, rating, selecting, supporting, and evaluating visuals; answering questions with visuals and one word phrases; and examining situations to give phrase answers.

It's important to remember that the ESL teacher and content area teacher needs to provide ELLs with models and clear explanations as well as a lot of practice in different modalities and in the 4 domains. We need to teach ELLs concepts and terms explicitly and provide Guided Practice. We need to break learning into smaller manageable chunks and sequence the learning chunks with scaffolds to control the level of difficulty throughout the learning process. You can reduce supports as the ELL learns.

Recognizing that ELLs need specific organizers and sentence structures, both the ESL teacher and the content area teacher need to teach signal words such as chronological sequence words; language structures such as sentence starters and cloze frames; key words for vocabulary; and real life mini lessons to teach grammatical usage for authentic context of what they might really encounter. We also need to provide timely corrective feedback. Like all students, ELLs want to know what is expected of them. So be specific in using criteria in line with content and the WIDA performance Definitions and Can Do Descriptors so ELLs know what to expect. Empower your ELL. Let him/her provide some of his/her own feedback. One last thought – the teaching methodology that is good for an ELL is good for all students.