Three Rivers TESOL

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http://3riverstesol.org/

A Message from the President:

Dear Three Rivers TESOL Members,

With spring approaching quickly, the time has come to reflect on the year recently concluded and look forward with excitement to the wonderful opportunities that lie ahead for Three Rivers TESOL and you as members.

First, the Three Rivers TESOL Board would like to thank all of you who attended, volunteered, and/or presented at the Fall Conference. Over 120 members attended the conference, and you played a significant role in creating a worthwhile professional experience for your colleagues. The Conference offered a wide variety of sessions aimed at supporting educators who work or will work with ESL learners in diverse settings. Conference attendees also had the opportunity to talk with publisher representatives and exhibitors while browsing through the latest instructional materials offered by such leading publishers as Pearson, Cengage, and Cambridge. If circumstances prevented you from joining us that day, you can still listen to Dr. Steven Brown's delightful and informative plenary speech "Listening to Research: Applying Second Language Listening Research to Classroom Teaching." by going to http://www.3riverstesol.org/conf/fall12/index.html. Regardless of whether you're a student studying TESOL or an educator in the K-12, Higher Education or Adult Education realm, Dr. Brown's address will give you some food for thought and some ideas to expand your professional expertise.

The past year also brought Three Rivers TESOL further into the digital world by offering *on-line* membership and conference registration. The members who opted to preregister for the conference were able to move rapidly past the registration desk to the tempting breakfast table! We hope you will consider this option for renewing your membership in 2013.

Finally, this fall brought the opportunity to vote on a proposal created to bring our current practices and our constitution into alignment. The proposal was overwhelmingly approved, and you can view our Constitution at http://www.3riverstesol.org/about/const.html.

Looking forward, new opportunities await our members. **Our spring meeting will be on Saturday, April 13 from 9:00 am – 12:00 at Chatham University**. A panel discussion will focus on the topic *Expanding the Teacher Toolbox*, with ideas and information relevant to all ESL professionals, including soon-to-be teachers, new teachers, and those who have been teaching for more years than we'd like to disclose! Watch for more details and a map at our Three Rivers TESOL website. In addition, our K-12, Administrators, CALL, and International Teaching Assistant Special Interest groups will have time to dialogue about topics and concerns specific to their areas of expertise. Lastly, we will also be voting for a new secretary and vice-president while our current and very able vice-president Heather McNaught assumes the position of president. Please consider joining the board – you will have a wonderful experience while serving your colleagues and expanding your own skill set. Finally, I want to express my sincere gratitude to the very diligent members of the Three Rivers TESOL Board. Working with Past-president Susan Todhunter, Vice-President Heather McNaught, Treasurer Peter Kolenich, Secretary Janet Pierce, and Webmaster Jeanette Clement has been a rewarding and thoroughly enjoyable experience. The Three Rivers TESOL Board is a dedicated (and fun) team of professionals, and we sincerely hope you will consider sharing your ideas and experiences by joining the board at our spring meeting. See you when the daffodils and tulips are blooming at Chatham University.

Cynthia Lennox

Conference Presentations: Our Fall Plenary Speaker

Listening problems – and some solutions
Steven Brown

The way Listening has been taught in ELT classrooms has become familiar to all of us: pre-listening, while-listening, post-listening. Pre-listening activities have been predicated on the idea of activating prior knowledge. While-listening activities are task-based and measure comprehension. Post-listening activities usually consist of checking answers and moving quickly to a theme-related speaking activity. None of that is bad. It reflects a view of what I've come to think of as listening-as-reading. Jack Richards (2005) calls it "listening as comprehension."

I believe we're in the middle of a shift in thinking that sees listening less as fast reading and more as what it is – speech processing. As I wrote *Listening Myths* (Brown 2011), I read two dozen articles that reported on what students find difficult about listening in a foreign language. Virtually everything they find difficult is a result of speech: phonological processes (deleted sounds, merged sounds, strong and weak forms), prosody, speed of delivery, and breaking up the speech stream to find words and recognize them. And yet these are not things that we have traditionally worked on in Listening class. They have more often been part of production work in Speaking.

Broersma and Cutler (2008) discuss how we all use our first language listening strategies to listen in our second language. We routinely rely on native language word stress (in English, usually the first syllable). We know where words begin and end because of reliable cues; we know, for example, that an English word cannot begin with [bw], but in some Arab dialects words can begin that way. So learners have difficulties recognizing words in the speech stream and they have difficulties suppressing wrong guesses because they cannot suppress L1 cues.

An aspect of word recognition is vocabulary. If we can get beyond our L1 cues and recognize words, we obviously have to know what the words mean. In Goh (2000), three of the top ten problems that Singaporean Chinese learners of English had were word-related: students failed to recognize known words, got hung up on unknown words (and missed the rest of the message) or had trouble segmenting the input into words. A big problem is that students often have been taught vocabulary words in reading class. They have no idea how the words sound when spoken. They might have heard the word a couple of times, but most practice has been written.

So, first of all, we need to develop in students a robust aural vocabulary. Next, it seems to me that we can work on the other problems by adopting some old methods. I'm thinking of dictation and dicto-comp/dicto-gloss. Nation (1991)

points out that dictation focuses on phrase and clause construct, and on collocations. Dictation works by holding information in working memory and reproducing it in chunks. Much of current SLA research is obsessed with constructions and chunking and memory. Dictations couldn't be more relevant.

Dictation also relies on multiple modalities: listening, writing, reading. Dictation is perfect for multi-level classes. Consider the task in which the teacher reads aloud a short text that is a little different from the one that students have. Lower ability students can simply cross out the words that are different from the teacher's, while higher ability students can write the correct word.

Other communicative dictations:
• Teacher reads a text. Students write but add their personal information. For example, "I was walking down the street and saw ____. " Students work in pairs to read their stories.
• Teacher holds up a picture, says True/False things about it. Students write only things that are true. Or higher ability students put the sentences into T/F columns.

Not everything has to be communicative. (There, I've said it!)

Given the student difficulties outlined above, I think there is merit in dictations that ask students to put minimal pair words into like columns or words with similar stress into columns. To listen well, students need to work on what are typically thought of as pronunciation activities.

To develop listening skills, we need to go beyond comprehension to work on the stuff of speech.

References
Broersma, M. & Cutler, A. (2008). Phantom word recognition in L2. *System 36*, 22-34.

Brown, S. (2011). *Listening myths: Applying second language research to classroom teaching.* Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press.

Goh, C. (2000). A cognitive perspective on language learners' comprehension problems. *System 28*, 55-75.

Nation, P. (1991). Dictation, dicto-comp, and related techniques. *English Language Teaching Forum 29*, 12-14.

Richards, J.C. (2005). Second thoughts on teaching listening. *RELC Journal 36*, 85-92.

More Conference Presentations

Using ePortfolios for Different Purposes
By Maha Alawdat
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

ePortfolios (eP), which refer also to efolios, electronic portfolios, web-based portfolios, or digital portfolios, are unique tools for the development of educators' competencies. The eP, by definition, is "a digital container capable of storing visual and auditory content including text, images, video, and sound" and is used for students while studying, for teachers and institutions while assessing their work and their students' assignments, and for graduates while searching for a job (Barrett, 2000; Abrami and Barrett, 2005; Butler, 2006; and Hedge, 2012). Cambridge (2010) also defines eP "as fundamentally a type of composition, an emerging genre." Following the history of ePortfolios, Helen Barret (2011) is considered to be the grandmother of eP and probably the first to realize the connection between paper-based portfolios and the use of computers. She defines eP from two different perspectives: process and product. The initial is the activities that are conducted throughout the learning process over time while the product is the result of the process that evaluates learning and shows achievements. Through process and product, eP, which is also considered a reflective tool, helps in constructing knowledge and experiences through tracking educators' learning process and connecting it to the final product.

From here, one could ask: why eP? Why is it recommended for education? Why is it so special? Simply, eP offers a promising future for educators to track learning and achievements. ePortfolios, in this sense, are accessible, portable, and dynamic that enable learners to access them from anywhere because they are not limited to any institution. They also enable learners to reorganize their work in any way they want to suit their purposes, to customize them according to their skills, styles, and age, and present them for different audiences and different purposes. Kathleen Yancy (2001) points out that the "electronic medium is particularly suited to two needs of portfolio users. First, it provides a place to house students' work. And second, through hyperlinking, it invites students to make connection between and among classes, experiences, and observation." Most importantly is that eP promotes learners' collaboration and self-assessment and helps them to monitor their learning development and trace their weaknesses and strengths. This helps learners to construct meaning by connecting what they learn with their own personal experiences and knowledge and, eventually, develop metacognitive skills. Teachers, too, can use them as an alternative assessment and reflective tool and can track their students' learning over time.

Through the power of technology and the use of eP, educators can create their own works and promote their personal creativity through developing digital citizenship when they become comfortable with using digital tools in the current era. Mentioning digital tools, eP can be created through free and secured Google Apps such as blogs and/or wikis, as examples. However, educators who have poor internet access in their institutions can still create their own eP by using desktop applications such as Microsoft Office, where they can store their works electronically and then transfer it to the institution network.

In short, this brief input may generate interest for further exploration of the potential use of eP in institutions for different purposes. It also aims to draw instructors' attention to the importance of incorporating an alternative assessment and learning tools into their education in order to cope with the rapid development of technology and its integration within the classroom. This might open an insight for a generation of eP users and save some trees out there.

Conference Presentations continued:

Andragogy: An Overview
By Lara Hauer

Andragogy: An Overview focused on a comparison between andragogy (the teaching of adults and how adults learn) and pedagogy (the teaching of children and how children learn). Attention was given to second language instruction and learning as well as implicit versus explicit learning.

The presentation asked teachers to reflect upon the nature of adult learning, including (1) the importance of the learner's life experiences, and (2) the significance of the difference between adults' and children's goals in learning a second language. Pedagogy and andragogy were compared in terms of both teaching and learning.

Malcolm Knowles, a father of andragogy, introduced six key principles that were presented: (1) the learner's need to know, (2) the learner's self concept, (3) the learner's prior experience, (4) the learner's readiness, (5) orientation to learning that is problem-centered and contextual, and (6) the learner's motivation. Each principle was discussed with relevance to participants' ESL teaching experiences. Participants also identified similarities and differences between pedagogical and andragogical principles, and various contexts/learners in which each set of principles may be appropriate.

Authors cited included Horwitz, E. (2008), Shreet, S. (2007), and Knowles, Holton and Swanson (1988). Please contact the presenter at lmhauer77@gmail.com with any questions or comments.

Welcome to the WOW!

Claire Bradin Siskin and Shannon Mischler reported on the ESL Writing Online Workshop (ESL-WOW), which is finally now available to the public at http://esl-wow.org. Funded by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) of the U.S. Department of Education, ESL-WOW is an online multimedia program designed to guide non-native speakers of English through each stage of the pre-writing, while-writing, and post-writing processes: 1) Getting Ready to Write, 2) Developing Your Ideas, 3) Revising Your Work, and 4) Editing and Polishing. The tutorial "Avoiding Plagiarism," is an additional component, and it is geared toward international students. Students learn what plagiarism is in the context of higher education in the United States, how plagiarism is detected, what the consequences might be, and, most importantly, how to avoid it. This free resource is designed for community college students and adult learners.

Siskin demonstrated ESL-WOW and described the recent pilot project in which the materials were used with two classes. In one class, online and face-to-face instruction were blended; the other class was offered exclusively online. Mischler described her role in the project as a "writing guide" as she offered support and feedback to the students and made suggestions for positive results.

Conference presentations continued

Recapping Voicethread
By Rae Mancilla

During the Fall Conference on October 27, 2012, I had the privilege of hosting a workshop session on the free Web 2.0 application Voicethread. Response from attendees indicated that they enjoyed learning about and creating their own Voicethreads for classroom use, and overall found the tool to be a useful addition to their repertoire of instructional resources. What makes Voicethread a particularly versatile tool for learning and instruction is its ability to be customized for various educational settings, including virtual and traditional classroom environments as well as for diverse age groups and learners of varying language proficiencies. The purpose of this article is to present a brief overview of Voicethread, its functions, and possible classroom applications for all those interested in infusing their lessons with technology.

Voicethread can be conceptualized as a presentational tool or as a tool to foster collaboration among classroom users. It allows any user to create a free account by accessing http://voicethread.com/. The user can then begin a Voicethread by uploading media such as images, video segments, or websites onto what looks like a web page interface. The user can add commentary, or narration, to the uploaded media in the form of audio, video, or textual comments. Then the user can invite others to share their creation (i.e.; their Voicethread) through a simple hyperlink or by entering specific email addresses into the system. By inviting others to participate in the Voicethread, all invitees have the ability to add their own audio, vide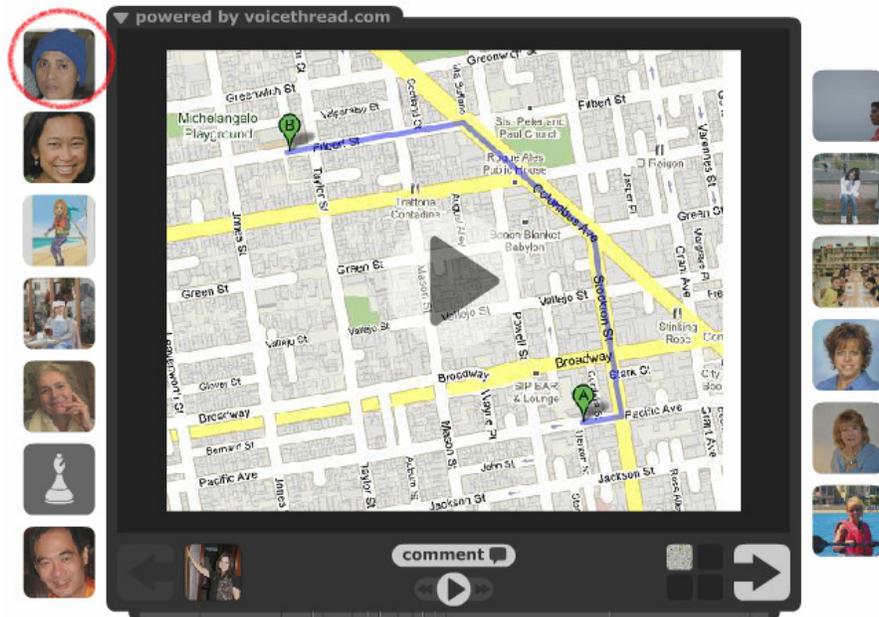o, or textual commentary to the page. Participants form a virtual community around the edges of the initial Voicethread. An example of the Voicethread interface is depicted below.

Voicethread author

Uploaded media

Voicethread participants

6

As with most technology integration, it is not the tool itself that defines the potential learning outcome, but rather the creative application of the tool. Thus, instructors may choose to apply Voicethread in myriad ways within their individual educational settings. Voicethreads may be created by both instructor and student authors, allowing both parties to play the roles of creator and participant of virtual conversations/presentations, directing the instructional use of the Voicethread. Suggested applications of Voicethread are summarized in the table below.

> Commenting functions: phone, microphone, webcam, keyboard

Instructor-led	Student-led
Current events/Cultural artifacts display (instructor solicits students' reactions)	Cooperative story creation e.g., one student begins the story and another follows
Class Voiceboard (class announcements/forum for questions)	Creation/narration of a photostory e.g., students talk about their home country, illustrated with pictures
Aural practice e.g., post an image/video, instructor asks questions about it	Practice forum for short oral presentations e.g., students post their video segments and solicit peer comments and constructive feedback
Provide feedback on student work	Creative performance assessments e.g., students impersonate a character
Scaffolding or tutorial presentation using video doodle feature	

For those whose interest in Voicethread was piqued by this short article, Voicethread offers a number of free resources on their website that include tutorials on more advanced features of Voicethread--such as video doodling, personalization options, and privacy settings--sample lesson activities, and a digital library of example Voicethreads categorized by content area. Please see the following website for more details: http://www.voicethread.com/about/library/category/foreignlanguage/.

As Web 2.0 technologies, such as Voicethread, continue to make technology-integration in classrooms more accessible in user-friendly ways, my hope is that this overview will facilitate your own experimentation with these tools.

TESOL webinars provide professional development at your computer screen
By Janet Pierce, Ph.D.

        I recently had the opportunity to take a break between my ESL classes to attend the February TESOL Virtual Seminar titled *TESOL's English Language Proficiency Standards and the Common Core State Standards: Applications and Implications for Effective Instruction of ELLs*, with Judy O'Loughlin and Lynore Carnuccio. I found the webinar very informative and helpful. I also found myself wishing our regular classroom teachers had listened in on the discussions. In this day of high stakes testing and an emphasis on academic language for all students, ELLs have a particularly difficult time learning social as well as academic language in order to perform tasks that demonstrate learning in specific content areas. Pennsylvania's Department of Education has been stating for some time now that regular content area teachers need to teach not only the content but also the language of their content area so that ELLs and other students at risk may more readily understand and learn. With states adopting the Common core standards in each content area (history, math, science, and English), there are now more rigorous demands upon the teacher and the student. In the webinar O'Loughlin and Carnuccio explain how ESL teachers need to blend or marry the language needs with the content objectives. The key, is understanding what an ELL can do at each proficiency level and developing tasks and assessments that teach the primary concepts in each content area so that ELLs and other students can show they understand by using the academic language in ways they are able. In the webinar these steps are outlined and explained in great detail. While the webinar focused on K-12 educators, educators at any level need to understand how to scaffold instruction of whatever content ELLs must learn to enable the learners to do the tasks asked of them, using academic language in ways that can be assessed and show that learning has taken place.

        Currently members who attended the webinar can access the virtual seminar, and eventually the program will be put into the TESOL Resource Center as a members' only resource. However, if you are going to TESOL 2013 in Dallas you will have another opportunity to learn this information as well as the theoretical constructs and implications that may arise. On the TESOL 2013 Convention program there are numerous sessions dealing with Common Core Standards and ESL instruction. O'Loughlin and Carnuccio are presenting their webinar again at TESOL. So, take advantage of these and other highly recommended sessions and come away highly equipped to face the challenges of all educators for the future

Your Articles:

Three Rivers TESOL encourages members to submit articles of interest they have read as well as scholarly articles they have authored advising educators of the latest trends and concepts in education. Please submit your word document to the secretary/newsletter editor. If you have photos, include them as jpeg files, please.

Save the Date!

Three Rivers TESOL Spring Meeting

Saturday, April 13, 2013

9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Chatham University.

Panel Discussion Topic: *Expanding the Teacher Toolbox*

Check out our website for more details!

http://3riverstesol.org/