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Convention Edition

Spring 2013

Recapping & Reflecting

Convention Reflections, Presentation Recaps, Awards, and a look ahead.

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Snap shot of submission info:

- email to news@itbe.org
- subject line: "ITBE Link Submission"
- article: Microsoft Word attachment only (.doc/.docx)
- APA citations/references
- 1 space between words & after punctuation
- Pictures embedded , web res.
- Ideas for regular columns are welcome
- Submitted by the deadline
- No Press Releases, Please

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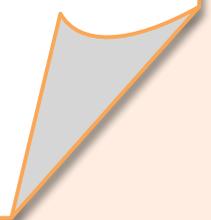
From the president

Thanks to our dedicated Convention Committee and all of our loyal members, the 39th Annual ITBE Convention was a great success! We had a great lineup of plenary speakers and breakout presenters from around the country for our various teaching contexts. We were also able to pilot two new types of breakout sessions, namely the Presidents' Session and Student Presentations. In addition, we continued our ever popular Tech Showcases and had an array of publishers displaying their books and educational products. We awarded a number of scholarships and awards to many worthy educators. We also resumed session/conference evaluations. In the coming months, we will be reviewing your invaluable comments to better plan future ITBE events, including next year's fortieth anniversary conference, titled, "Milestones in Learning: ITBE Forty-Years On", tentatively scheduled for February 28-March 1, 2014 again at the Wyndham Lisle. In the meantime, we encourage you to attend ITBE's annual Spring Workshop on April 20 to close out the academic year. In an effort to reach more of our downstate membership, this year's Spring Workshop will be held at Heartland Community College in Normal. Please check our website at the end of March for details.

Have a wonderful spring!

Warmest wishes,

Gevik Anbarchian, ITBE President



Part I

Mirror Neurons in the ESL Classroom:

The Power of Imitation, Attitude, and Gestures in Learning



by Patrick T. Randolph

Faculty Language Specialist, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo

This article is the first in a 4 part series based on “What Every Teacher Needs to Know About the Brain,” a presentation given at the 2013 ITBE Conference in Lisle, IL.

The Vision

In its eye

are mirrored far-off mountains—

dragonfly!

—Issa (1762–1826)

Introduction

“Mirror, mirror on the wall, which is the fairest neuron of them all?” If you were to bypass the Grimm Brothers’ wicked queen and go straight to the neuroscientists in Parma, Italy, they would most probably tell you that it is the “mirror neuron”. This, they will claim, and justifiably so, is a profoundly paramount kind of neuron that is highly responsible for learning, and, most importantly, for language acquisition (Rizzolatti & Arbib, 1998).

So, what exactly are mirror neurons, and what do they have to do with learning? The response is clear and yet rather surprising—everything! Over the past two decades, neuroscientists (Rizzolatti, 1998; 2004; 2005; Arbib, 2000; Ramachandran, 2006; and Iacoboni, 2009) have begun to discover that mirror neurons are more responsible for learning and memory consolidation than we once thought. These wonderful neural creatures help people mirror others’ actions, gestures, and attitudes; therefore, they play an essential role in learning through observation and imitation. Not only do these neurons help us learn new skills and acquire information, but they also assist in helping us align ourselves and empathize with others (Iacoboni, 2009). Because of these specific neurons, we can have a very real and sincere sense of how others act and feel.

The Discovery

In his magnum opus, Walt Whitman writes, “In all people I see myself” ([1855] 1986, p.43). Nietzsche states in his *Twilight of the Idols*, “Are you genuine? or only an actor? A representative? or that itself which is represented?” ([1889] 1988, pp. 26–27). Did these two already have a glimpse into the phenomenal world and consequences of mirror neurons? If not, they were at least aware of the power of imitation and the mysteriously intimate relation we have with others on a daily basis.

How, then, did this discovery of mirror neurons occur? Like many great scientific breakthroughs, it happened by pure accident. One unsuspecting day in Giacomo Rizzolatti’s lab in Parma, Italy, one of his co-workers, Vittorio Gallese, had taken a break and returned to the room where one of the monkeys he was working with was sitting in her chair. Her brain was hooked up to a computer via surgically implanted electrodes, and she was waiting for her next task. At this time, Gallese happened to reach for a peanut¹ in a dish; he cracked the shell open and ate the nuts. Just then there was a plethora of activity on the computer screen that was hooked up to the monkey’s electrodes. The activity was coming from the monkey’s F5 brain area (Iacoboni, 2009).

This was significant, for area F5 is in the premotor cortex, *and* this area is considered the homolog of Broca’s area—an essential center for language, usually located in the left

¹ Stories vary as to what the actual food was, but a number of reports claim it to have been a peanut.

hemisphere of the human brain (Kohler et al., 2002). The amazing thing was that the monkey was not doing anything. She was merely “watching” someone else act, yet the activity in her F5 region was firing as if she were actually doing the action of reaching, picking up the peanut, cracking it, and eating it! In short, this is where the magical moment of mirror neurons, once termed “monkey see monkey do mirrors,” was first discovered.

It was here that Rizzolatti and his colleagues asked, Could it be that a certain subset of motor neurons fire at the mere sight of someone else doing an action? Could it be that one could “mirror” someone in his or her own mind or thoughts by simply watching that other person act?

Since that moment, the excitement of mirror neurons has continued to lead to some fantastic discoveries. Neuroscientists have found that humans, like monkeys, have mirror neurons. Brain imaging devices have disclosed mirror neuron activity in a number of areas in the human brain. The occipital, temporal, and parietal areas seem to activate “a complex network” of mirror neurons. In addition, two cortical areas, whose function is motor-based, are also full of this activity. These include the inferior parietal lobule, the precentral gyrus, and the inferior front gyrus (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004). (See also Buccino et al., 2001; Iacoboni et al., 1999; and Rizzolatti et al., 1996b). According to Iacoboni, mirror neurons do even more than just react to actions (and this is what makes their discovery so exciting for teachers). Iacoboni has shown that mirror neurons actually “...fire when an individual kicks a soccer ball, sees a ball being kicked, hears a ball being kicked, and even just says or hears the word “kick...” (2009, p.12). With a basic understanding of the broad scope of possibilities for activating these neurons, let us briefly turn now to look at the various kinds of mirror neurons.

Mirror Neurons and their Sub-Categories

Mirror neurons are the cells that fire at the mere sight of watching someone do something—whether that be an action, a gesture or a facial expression—causing the observer to feel as though he or she is actually doing the action.

Strictly congruent mirror neurons fire when someone performs a specific action and also when one sees another performing the exact same action. These actions can be both precision grasps or whole-hand grasps (Iacoboni, 2009; Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004).

Broadly congruent mirror neurons are “broad” because they fire when observing any number of actions related to a specific goal (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004).

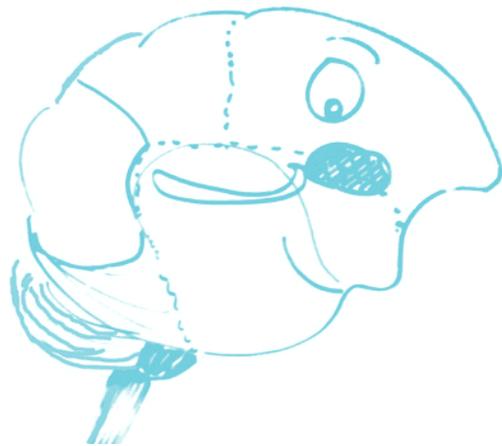
Logically related mirror neurons react to the observed intention of someone or the preparation of something; thus, the name—“logically related” (Iacoboni, 2009).

Audio-visual mirror neurons fire not only at the sight of actions but also at the mere sound of actions. That is, these fire equally as intensely as when actions are seen or heard (Kohler et al., 2002).

Word-elicited mirror neurons² fire, amazingly enough, when we simply hear, read, or say words (Aziz-Zadeh, 2006).

Implications in the Classroom: “In all people I see myself”

As we can easily see, the implications of mirror neurons in the classroom run deep and permeate just about every moment of a lesson; for ultimately, the instructor’s actions, movements, facial expressions, and mood are mirrored in the brains of his or her students. It should come, then, as no surprise that “Teachers who smile, use humor, have a joyful demeanor, and take genuine pleasure in their work generally have high-performing learners” (Jensen, 2008, p. 98). It is both inspiring and daunting to know that each student in the classroom is *mentally imitating* his or her instructor each conscious moment of the lesson. With this in mind, here are some things that teachers can do to optimize the mirror neuron network.



Maintain Healthy Attitudes, Positive Expressions and Moods

First and foremost, instructors need to be highly cognizant of their own attitudes, facial expressions, and moods. Remember, if we are being *mirrored* in the neural network of our students’ brains, then we should be setting a positive, healthy, and inspiring example, since we are, as Sousa (2011) claims, the great “brain changers” in the classroom. Such an awareness of our own presence will also heighten our instructor-consciousness and develop an awareness of our learners’ sensitivity as we hone our craft of teaching.

Model Activities and Assignments

We have always heard how important it is to model activities for our students, and now it is even more evident why that is such an essential task because so much of what we learn is tied to our mirror neurons and the reactions that they elicit in our brains (Aziz-Zadeh, 2006). For optimal learning, we should model class activities and homework assignments as

² The final set of mirror neurons, up to now, have been nameless, so I have taken the liberty to refer to them as *word-elicited mirror neurons*.

much as possible. Using a student–volunteer to help model class activities is always very beneficial and rewarding, and getting the class, or some member of the class, involved with modeling is an important component of learning through imitation.

Develop a Rapport with Your Students

Studies have shown that the better the rapport the students have with their teacher, the more mirroring of actions and involvement in the class there is (La France, 1982). Think back on your own days as a student. Do these findings ring true with those experiences? The students who have a healthy rapport with their instructor tend to have more empathy for him or her, and thus mirror more of what he or she does. Consequently, the students become more absorbed in both the lesson and the skill they are working on. In a speaking class, for example, a student might even begin to mirror the regional dialect of his or her instructor, or the student might mirror the unique gestures that the instructor uses. Any of these mirrored actions will ultimately engage the students and open the doors for language acquisition.

Use Gestures and Facial Expressions Whenever Possible

If, as the neuroscientists and psychologists claim, our language development depends on how much we react to others and how we incorporate that in our own learning, then gestures and facial expressions are imperative tools in the classroom (Iacoboni, 1999; 2009). While mirroring the instructor’s or fellow classmates’ gestures, the students are helping to solidify and transfer the current information from short to long-term memory. This will reinforce learning, create stronger neural connections (Willis, 2006), and produce better language learners. Therefore, it is important, whenever possible, to use gestures or facial expressions to reinforce the teaching of lexical items, ideas, or culturally-based information. Studies continually show us that students learn better from teachers who frequently use gestures versus those who don’t (Iacoboni, 2009). And insofar as we are visually minded creatures, it stands to reason how significant gestures are in conveying information and strengthening the connections of our neural pathways.

Concluding Remarks

I have given a general history and overview of mirror neurons so that instructors may be better aware of how to tap into and take advantage of their powerful presence in the classroom. Although there are skeptics who doubt the influence of mirror neurons, they cannot doubt their existence in various parts of the brain. Moreover, with advanced brain imaging devices, we are clearly able to observe how mirror neurons and their siblings, like strictly congruent or audio–visual mirror neurons, react to others and work in the brain to assist the mind in interacting with the world and the complex challenges therein. If we were to ask the question again—“Mirror, mirror on the wall, which is the fairest neuron of them

all?”—I would say that all neurons are phenomenal, but I would argue that mirror neurons have their own special beauty and eloquent magic, especially in the context of the ESL classroom.

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Patrick T. Randolph currently teaches at Western Michigan University where he specializes in creative and academic writing, speech and debate. He has created a number of brain-based learning activities for the language skills that he teaches, and he continues to research current topics in neuroscience, especially studies related to exercise and learning, memory and mirror neurons. Randolph has also been involved as a volunteer with brain imagining experiments at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He lives with his wife, Gamze; daughter, Aylene; and cat, Gable, in Kalamazoo, MI.

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Go Tech with Blackboard's CourseSites!

By: Lisa Barrett, Computer Systems Institute

In today's tech-minded world, students are not only learning at a desk in front of a blackboard. Students can now learn at any time and any place, even from their Smartphones. Blackboard's CourseSites is a wonderful resource for instructors who would love to incorporate an online learning management system into their courses, but simply do not have the funds to do so.



After a few semesters of using a variety of wikis and blogs to help my students go "tech," a co-worker stumbled upon Blackboard's CourseSites and gave me the scoop. After a few minutes browsing a test class I created, I was hooked! Instructors can create up to five active classes at a time. The platform allows you to create discussion boards, post embedded videos, create and easily grade assessments, create student groups, and much more.

I have had quite a bit of success using the online platform. Students who are not as engaged in the classroom or those who are shy seem to like being able to use the discussion board to voice their opinions. Students who had little to no computer skills are now learning how to navigate the Internet and links I have posted to the course. They also enjoy having access to educational resources I post throughout the semester and can study as much or as little as they would like.

For anyone who missed my presentation on this topic at last month's ITBE conference, you can view the presentation in the file archive under the members only area at ITBE.org. I encourage all to take a look at www.coursesites.com to see what this free tool can do to transform your classes. Educate and engage...all for free!

See more

in the file archive under the members only area on ITBE.org

<http://www.viethconsulting.com/members/secure/filearchive/mcats.php>

Elliot Judd Outstanding Teacher Award Winner:

Suzanne Leibman



Suzanne Leibman, the 2013 Elliot Judd Outstanding Teacher Award winner, has been described by her colleagues as a “virtual ESL goddess.”

Suzanne’s dedication, professionalism, and enthusiasm to teaching English Language Learners distinguishes her and represents the ideals Elliot Judd aspired to for all in our profession. ITBE is proud to honor and celebrate Suzanne Leibman as the 2013 Elliot Judd Outstanding Teacher Award Recipient.

Over a 30-year career Suzanne has

- Developed the curriculum, courses, tests, and website content for McDonald’s Corporation’s English Under the Arches: ESL for Restaurant Managers and GED for Restaurant Managers program
- Instructed ESL and other academic skills at the College of Lake County, William Rainey Harper College, Northeastern Illinois University
- Served as a master teacher for TESOL certificate practicum students at the College of Lake County
- Written and published resources for teachers and professionals in adult ESL education, including *We Are Your Neighbors: A Collection of CLC ESL Student Writing with Teaching Materials and Suggested Lesson Activities* (which I have used myself!), *“Go Now and Learn”* in *Teacher’s Guide of Stories to Tell Our Children* by Gail Weinstein-Shr, and *Listen and Communicate, Book One*.
- Served as a member of the TESOL task force developing Standards For Adult Education English As A Second Language Programs
- Presented abundant conference sessions at TESOL, ITBE, COABE, IACEA, and others on topics including transitioning students into higher academic levels, utilizing student writing in the classroom, and teaching various English language skills
- Served as President, Executive Secretary, and Executive Board Member of ITBE
- Chaired the TESOL Adult Education Interest Section
- Served as a member of the ESL Advisory Taskforce to the Illinois Community College Board
- Served as a member of the Center for Applied Linguistics’ Standards Setting Panel for BEST Plus

Words from Suzanne Leibman,

Recipient of the 2013 Elliot Judd Outstanding Teacher Award

Thank you very much for the honor of this award. Receiving this award, which is named in memory of a person that I respect greatly, and from the organization that I consider my professional home, is a compliment that touches me very deeply. I have many thanks to give. Recognition from your colleagues and friends is an honor indeed. Special thanks to the very hardworking board, the award committee, to my colleagues at the places I've taught—College of Lake County, William Rainey Harper College, Northeastern Illinois University, Albany Park Community Center, City Colleges of Chicago, and not to forget, McDonald's Corp.--to my wonderful and always supportive colleagues who nominated me, and to my wonderful and supportive husband.



I know that many, many, many, many of you deserve awards for good teaching. You work long hours preparing, you work even longer hours responding to student work, you share and collaborate with your colleagues, you observe the learners in your classroom and respond to their needs and goals, and you obviously believe in continuing professional development. I know how hard you work in all those uncompensated “other duties as required.” I hope that someday you will be rewarded for your efforts and then be able to

For more than 30 years I've been fortunate enough to have
the very best students in my classes

thank the colleagues that made it possible. In the meantime, I am pleased to represent you and to thank you. And we all know that it's easy to be a good teacher—we just get the best students in our class. For more than 30 years I've been fortunate enough to have the very best students in my classes, and I thank them for all that they've taught me.

Mostly, I am happy to be up here because it allows me to say nice things about Elliot, O'H, and Kathy, Z"L. Elliot was one of the first people that I met when I timidly entered IL TESOL/BE, and he was always encouraging and friendly. I noticed how his students appreciated and respected him. And I noticed how hard he worked at and for our profession in so many ways, much, much more than any service requirements or tenure needs would have demanded. He made TESOL and IL TESOL/BE stronger organizations, more collegial, more fiscally responsible and most importantly, at least to me, more responsive and knowing advocates for teachers and learners.



What comes to mind first when I think of Elliot was his passion and glee in teaching. Every year during this conference, Elliot would give a presentation about upcoming issues in language policy and legislation. I would faithfully attend those sessions, not only to gain the considerable knowledge he provided us, but to watch him having such a good time in sharing it. I learned that joy in teaching is contagious and leads to better learning. And we learned a lesson that Elliot spent his life teaching us: teaching never takes place alone, in a vacuum or in just a classroom. We are responsible for knowing about the contexts in which our students learn; we are responsible for trying to effect positive changes in those contexts; we are responsible for sharing and collaborating.

I think Elliot would be tickled that this award comes near the holiday of Purim, when we celebrate the events written in the book of Esther, where a critical plot point comes only because the hero is multi-lingual, and the bad guy, on his way to plotting genocide, promulgates repressive language policy.



What endeared Elliot to me, however, was his love for his family and for Kathy and vice versa. It was a pleasure to see the kids at this conference and see the love and pride in his eyes. And Kathy—each year she has the absolute courage to stand up here in front of



all of us, and talk about Elliot and not to break down, and she inspires us. Kathy was one of the first ESL teachers I ever observed as a newbie graduate student, and I remember thinking, if I ever could as good as she is, if I ever could have such a repertoire of teaching techniques, if I ever could be as approachable and professional simultaneously in the classroom. And through the years that I've had the privilege to know Kathy, I know that she has continued to learn so that she can give her students more, and to develop innovative teaching strategies to facilitate their learning. She is truly an example of the outstanding teaching that this award celebrates, and I'd really appreciate it if we give her our applause.

Thank you again for this award.

Suzanne Leibman

Throughout his extraordinary career, Elliot Judd exemplified the characteristics of an exceptional educator and demonstrated outstanding commitment to the field of TESOL, ITBE has established a memorial award in his honor.

The Elliot Judd Outstanding Teacher Award honors an ITBE member who demonstrates the qualities exemplified by Elliot Judd: outstanding teaching, dedication to the professional field of TESOL, as well as a commitment to the professional development of colleagues.

Find out more about the award and submit nominees for next year at
http://www.itbe.org/elliott_judd_outstanding_teachers.php

Dr. Folse's History of TESL:

Yes to Audiolingual, No to Affective Filter?

by Joshua Thusat

For those who did not have the opportunity to attend this year's conference, Dr. Keith Folse was one of the headlining speakers. I have been reading and using his books since I first started teaching English, and from the first moment I heard he would be joining this year's great list of speakers, I was thrilled. I reread his *Vocabulary Myths*, hoping that I might get a chance to chat with him about some of his stories, including one amusing situation when he needed the word for *flour* while teaching abroad and explained it to his interlocutor by saying "before bread," which unfortunately did not work.

Dr. Folse communicates TESL methods so well, and for those who had expectations to hear him articulate in this way for the Illinois TESL conference, he did not disappoint. He told stories on that Friday evening, as many people stayed later, ready to brave the winter storm warnings at night in order to catch a few sagacious words from a leader in their field. During the Friday afternoon plenary, he spent most of the time regaling us with stories of his teaching career, in many ways highlighting the history of TESL. I listened with the knowledge that this information is always important to visit and revisit, and I was happy to see many students of TESL in the crowd, perhaps even people in theories and techniques courses right now who would benefit from the practical implications of Dr. Folse's stories.

I did, however, get stuck on one criticism Dr. Folse levied against Stephen Krashen, who is always a contentious figure in TESL. Only moments before, Dr. Folse reminded everyone of the importance of the audio-lingual method, not as something that should be central to teaching but as a useful tool, as occasional drilling can still play a vital role in language learning. However, upon introducing Krashen, he mentioned that discussing the "affective filter" was a decadent exercise, since no good teacher needs to be told that students have conflicting emotional responses that often affect their ability to learn. Though this observation seems apt on the surface, I would like to note that in the same presentation, he told stories about how he learned to be wary of criticizing students who were late to his class, as he had found his own difficulties making it to class on time while teaching/learning abroad. He also told several honest tales of woe as a student, where he saw examples of bad language teaching, especially examples of asking students very personal questions in the classroom. It was during these moments that I wondered whether or not he realized how much of his history of teaching ESL has involved the affective filter. Though, as a teacher, he feels that he doesn't need to be told this at this current point in his career, it was germane to his own history lesson to all of us: consider the emotions of the student.

All of this is not to say that Dr. Folse's speech was poor. In fact, I found him to be one of the most inspirational and significant additions to this year's convention. I just hope that as teaching professionals, we can say, that there are merits to using the audio-lingual method as well as discussing the affective filter.

Pronunciation Mirroring with [EnglishCentral.com](https://www.englishcentral.com)

by Heather Torrie, Purdue University Calumet

Teaching Suprasegmentals

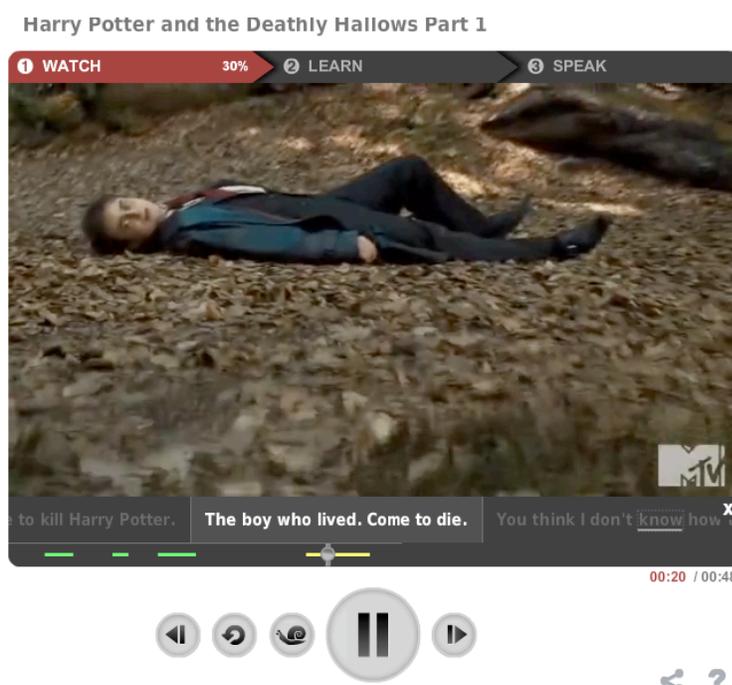
When attempting to teach pronunciation, teachers often wonder how much focus should be placed on segmentals and suprasegmentals. While both are important in improving intelligibility and communicativeness, suprasegmental pronunciation instruction may be a better choice of emphasis in a classroom with diverse L1 backgrounds. There is also some research that supports a focus on the suprasegmentals (see Hahn 2004 & Pickering 2001).

To teach suprasegmental pronunciation, including intonation, sentence-level stress, rhythm, and linking, one useful activity is mirroring. Mirroring simply means that learners listen to a short segment, such as a sentence or phrase, in the video, and then repeat the speaker immediately after hearing it. If you think about it, this is how we learned our L1 in the first place—by hearing and imitating the intonation and rhythm of our parents. In the classroom, mirroring native speech in movies or recordings can be extremely fun and engaging.

What is EnglishCentral.com?

While mirroring can be done with any pre-recorded audio or video passage, it is easier for students to use a resource that includes the transcript. Websites such as About.com or Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab ([esl-lab.com](https://www.esl-lab.com)) are great tools for mirroring, since they allow learners to see the text while they hear it.

EnglishCentral.com is another great site that has an extensive gallery of short video clips with subtitles. Videos can be searched by keyword, genre, or difficulty



level. A basic account is free and contains all the capabilities needed for successful mirroring. After the login, there are three modes. The “watch mode” shows the video clip with or without the captions. The “learn mode” stops after each line, allowing learners to replay the line at a slower pace, as well as do a cloze listening exercise. The speak mode is where learners repeat back and record their own speech samples, getting instant computer-generated feedback.

Classroom Application

While instructors can have students work on this site independently as homework or in the computer lab, it is also a useful tool in class. Instructors could select a meaningful video clip, perhaps thematically linked to the lesson, and have students do a choral mirroring of each line.

To add even more focus, instructors could choose a particular pronunciation feature for the class to work on, such as thought groups. EnglishCentral.com includes the complete transcript, in addition to showing the text line-by-line. Instructors can then print out the transcript and have students mark pronunciation guidelines as they listen, and then follow them as they mirror the speaker. In this example, students could draw short lines to mark the divisions between thought groups. This will then help them to focus on dividing the speech into chunks as they repeat after the speaker.

After teaching a particular pronunciation feature, an assessment could be created that required the students record their version of the video clip in its entirety. Although EnglishCentral.com allows recording, it only saves the student’s speech temporarily. For assessment purposes, a good option is to use a free audio recording tool, such as Audacity (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>). Once recorded and submitted via email or Blackboard, the instructor could use a focused scoring rubric. In this type of assessment, the only thing being graded is the pronunciation feature in focus.

The Bottom Line

Overall, this is a great tool that students love! The broad range of video clips ensures something for every lesson and every proficiency level. Of course pronunciation mirroring can be done with any website with speech samples and a transcript, but the interactive features and self-recording make this one of the best.

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ITBE 2013 Award Winners



Awards chair Leah Miller & award namesake Marsha Santelli with 2013 award recipients at the 2013 ITBE Convention.

Each year, ITBE offers a \$1,000 Graduate Scholarship, a \$500 Undergraduate Scholarship, and a total of ten Professional Development Scholarships.

For more information about ITBE awards, award recipients and nominations see

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ITBE 2013 Award Winners



Above: mentor, award recipient & awards chair Leah Miller



To the left: Award recipient & award chair Leah Miller



To the right: Marsha Santelli & recipient of the award given in her honor

A Report on the Higher Education SIG Meeting at the ITBE conference

by Shane Dunkle

On February 23rd the Higher Education Special Interest Group meeting was held at the ITBE conference at the Wyndam Hotel in Lisle. I (Shane Dunkle) hosted the gathering, and there were approximately 25 participants. The meeting began with the announcement of the launching of a Higher Education SIG Facebook group where members are now able to communicate directly with each other and the Higher Ed. SIG coordinator. In order to join, Higher Ed. SIG members and non-members alike can search for “ITBE Higher Education SIG” on Facebook, and by “liking” it, can receive updates and post to the page.

Find us on Facebook

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

Furthermore, in the initial minutes of the meeting, ideas were solicited from participants as to what kind of presenters that attendees to the spring and fall ITBE workshops would like to hear from. Ideas for topics or speakers can still be posted to the Facebook group page for consideration for these workshops.

After a brief open floor for questions and comments, participants were invited to review two generic rubrics for strengths and weaknesses in small groups. Following individual discussions there was a lively group discussion as to how various participants use rubrics in their own classes. Different skill groups such as writing, listening, and speaking were created, and participants were allowed to join in the group of the area they desired to discuss with other participants. Many excellent suggestions for classroom activities and strategies focusing on specific skills were discussed and shared by participants. This conversation accounted for the majority of the meeting.

Finally, after the discussions had finished, the election of the Higher Education SIG coordinator took place after solicitations of nominees for chair and co-chair. The result was that I, Shane Dunkle, was reelected as the coordinator for a term of one year. Additionally, at the conclusion of the meeting, the winner of the one-year free membership was randomly selected from the participants present.

I would like to thank the participants who attended and hope that it was beneficial and worthwhile. If there are any questions, comments, or suggestions about anything related to the Higher Education SIG group, or in general, please feel free to contact me directly through the ITBE website (<http://www.itbe.org/higher.php>) or through the ITBE Higher Education SIG Facebook group page (<https://www.facebook.com/itbehigheredsig?ref=hl>).

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Cooperative Learning Activities: Grammar Games for ELLs.

By Mark Nagy

I began my ESL teaching career teaching elementary students and, over the last couple of years, have been teaching adults. One thing I have discovered is that virtually all students, regardless of age, enjoy playing games. Additionally, there is substance amount of research that supports game playing in the classroom. For example,

Playing games ...

- ✓ lowers students' affective filter by reducing anxiety by creating a relaxed setting for practicing language.
- ✓ facilitates language acquisition, especially for developing learners.
- ✓ promotes the usage of language in a novel and communicative way (Yolageldili, 2011).

And

- Working together, students can practice the use of language in a nonthreatening environment and provide responsive and critical feedback to each others' errors (Smith, 2006).

The game boards and full PowerPoint® presentation can be found on the ITBE web page in the "members only" section under "file archive."

A Board Game for Past Tense

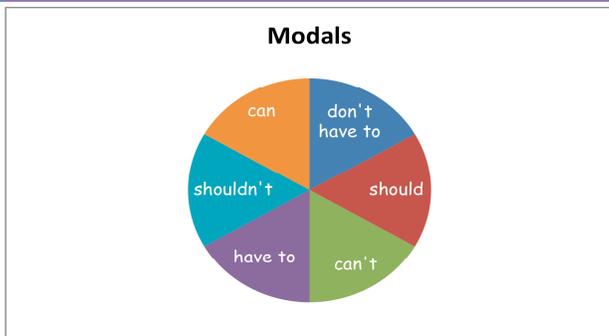
The first game involves practicing the irregular past tense verbs. The game board can be downloaded for free as mentioned. Then, you can print as many as you need for your class. The only supplies you will need for this activity are some dice and game pieces for students to mark their place on the game board. I purchased the dice at a dollar store. For game pieces, I have collected, with the help of my students, caps from water and soft drink bottles. I now have a collection of about 50 caps of different sizes and colors for the students to use as markers.

To play this game, the students, in groups of 3 or 4, take turns rolling a die and moving their game piece to the appropriate place. Next, they construct a sentence using the verb they land on in the past tense. The members of their group determine if each player has constructed the sentence correctly. The person who originally created this game board made it using a Word document, so it is easy to change the verbs to suit your class. In the past, I have modified this game board for other applications as well, such as the pronunciation of regular past tense verbs after giving a lesson on the pronunciation of "-ed" words.

Spinner

The second game is called “Spinner.” For this game, you will need one paperclip for each group of students. Like the previous game, I usually place students in groups of 3 or 4. There are two circles on the game board. A student places the paperclip on the tip of a pencil and places the tip of the pencil in the center of the circle. They then flick the paperclip, it spins around, and it eventually

stops on a word. They repeat this process with the second circle. Now they have two words that they must use in a sentence. I usually use this activity to practice modals, but I have also modified it to practice simple present tense.



DIY White Boards

The last activity is a cooperative learning activity. It is modified version of “Think, Pair, and Share.” In this activity, students are paired up and given a topic or question to discuss. They then formulate an answer and share their response with the whole group. Because students often have a tendency to just repeat what other groups have said, I have discovered the effectiveness of using mini-whiteboards to record their answers within their groups. The students write their response before sharing it with the group. When they share their response, they hold up the whiteboard for everyone to see. To get a supply of whiteboards, go to a hardware store, such as Menards or Home Depot, and buy a large sheet of hardboard. This material is often used by contractors to build shower walls. Have the store cut it into 2' x 3' sized pieces. Out of one large piece, you probably will have enough boards for your class.

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Yolageldili, G., G., & Arikan, A. (2011). Effectiveness of Using Games in Teaching Grammar to Young Learners. *Elementary Education Online*, 10(1), 219-229.