

Seniors & ESL Students  
a perfect match?

Breaking the Ice  
w/ a Teaching Philosophy?

"More Food  
Please!"

# I T B E

Newsletter

the  
**Winter Break Issue**

WINTER 2011

Breaking out new ideas  
& solid pedagogy

Convention updates, FAQ's and What your SIG will be up to. Ideas for break, class wrap up & field trips.

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- subject line: "ITBE Newsletter Submission"
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June 15 September 15 December 15 March 15

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# ESL Students and Senior Citizens: The Perfect Match

Sherry Rasmussen

Perhaps like our ESL students, your students want to meet and talk to “normal Americans,” not just ESL teachers! At DePaul’s English Language Academy (the ELA), an academic IEP, we have found a way to serve two populations that want to talk to each other: ESL students and senior citizens.



This project, which includes conversations, interviews, and oral presentations by the students, has been successful for several terms and has had both predictable and surprising outcomes.

The history dates back to the nursing home experience of my father, an intelligent but shy man who lived in a suburban Chicago facility before his death several years ago. Living and teaching in Chicago, I wished I could take my students to visit my father so that he could tell them about his interesting life. At DePaul, when I started to teach high-intermediate speaking and listening classes, I became determined to find a way to connect my students with senior citizens. I looked at several senior facilities but could not find one meeting the criteria I needed (see sidebar). Eventually, I found The Clare, a Chicago facility that offers independent and assisted

living as well as skilled nursing and dementia-care. I met with Jennifer Ayers, the Director of Life Enrichment at The Clare, and we worked together to initiate the ESL-seniors project, which includes two afternoons of conversation and one afternoon for interviews.

Jennifer recruits suitable participants at The Clare and secures an appropriate room at the facility for our gatherings. My work includes preparing my students. The students discuss views toward, and care of, the elderly in their native countries, practice conversation and “small talk” strategies, anticipate topics seniors might wish to discuss, and learn which questions are inappropriate in US culture.

## Choosing an appropriate senior citizen facility:

- *The facility must be near enough to the school for students to go there easily. We use public transportation, but some facilities have vans that can pick up and drop off the students.*
- *Seniors must be healthy enough to participate. They can have a variety of disabilities, but they must be able to speak and hear well enough to be engaged for the time required. Memory-care patients can sit in at tables to listen to the conversations/interviews (which many enjoy), though they are not good conversation or interview participants.*
- *An interested administrator at the facility is vital for both establishing and maintaining a successful program.*

The students are nervous when they first arrive at The Clare, but the seniors make them feel comfortable immediately. The seniors are divided among various tables or chairs and the students join them in groups of 3 or 4. Our class time is 90 minutes, and after 45 minutes of conversation, the students move to talk to a different senior. The second afternoon follows the same pattern, though students are much more comfortable upon arriving and are eager to start the conversations.



For the interview portion of the project, the students learn about interview techniques. I pair students, preferably with someone who speaks a different native language, and they



think of topics and questions for the senior they will interview. On the day of the interview, the two students interview one senior, taking notes while they listen. They

get the phone number or email of the senior in case they need more information later. I give the pairs some class time to organize their notes into a presentation of 10-12



minutes, but they must also meet outside of class to prepare. (The presentations are delivered over 2 days so that students are not listening to presentations the full 90 minutes.) Students project a photo of “their senior” while they are talking to the class.

Feedback from the students about the project has been very positive, including:

*“I liked it because we learned a lot about the seniors and senior centers, what does it mean “senior center” and what activity they are doing.”*

*“After we visited The Clare, I have confidence in speaking English. We talked with seniors all afternoon, so I knew that I could express completely what I thought, with not only English teachers but also a normal American, although the sentences I said were not so fluent.”*

*“I am interested in the history about World War II. The seniors always having those special memories about that time. I can learn a lot of things from them which I can't read in book.”*

Seniors at The Clare have also thoroughly enjoyed the project. *“It’s a wonderful thing you’re doing,”* one senior told me recently. *“We really enjoy talking to the young people,”* said another before he asked, *“but what could they possibly get from us?”* One gentleman was beaming after a pair



interviewed him about his days as a chemistry teacher for the Chicago public schools, a job he loved. Positive comments have spread word-of-mouth at The Clare, so Jennifer no longer has to recruit participants the way she did initially. Similarly, the project now includes two classes at the ELA, and may grow further.

I thought that many of my students, who plan



to be in Chicago for several years to get a degree, would continue to contact “their senior” as a local, temporary grandparent. In many cultures, however, young people should

not initiate contact with older people, and some students have not been able to get beyond this difference in culture to stay in touch with the seniors; if, however, a senior invites the students to visit, the students are eager to do so. Some students have been so taken with their experience that they want to volunteer their free time at The Clare. Two students have mentioned opening similar facilities in their native countries! On the other hand, some students just cannot believe



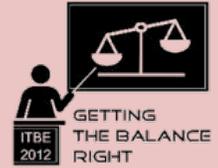
that many of the seniors prefer being at The Clare to living with their adult children.

The ELA project with senior citizens has been more successful than we could have ever dreamed. Service-learning proponents stress the importance that both parties involved in a project be served well. The seniors and students in this project have shown that they value the experience at The Clare linguistically, culturally, and personally.

*Sherry Rasmussen has worked as an ESL teacher and teacher-trainer for more than 20 years and currently teaches fulltime for DePaul’s English Language Academy in Chicago.*

# Illinois TESOL·BE Annual Convention - 2012

Friday, February 24–Saturday, February 25, 2012 • Wyndham Hotel, Lisle, Illinois



**ACCOMMODATIONS: Wyndham Hotel Lisle**, 3000 Warrenville Rd., Lisle, Illinois 60532

TEL: 866-615-4206 – **call** and mention “**ITBE**” to get this rate:

Room Rates: Sales tax will be added to room rates.

Single rooms \$92.00      Double rooms \$92.00

Upgraded rooms are also available. Please inquire when contacting the hotel.

Room reservations must be made with the Wyndham Hotel Lisle **no later than 5 pm February 2, 2012.**

You **MUST** mention “**ITBE**” specifically when contacting the hotel to receive these special rates.

**LOCATION and TRAVEL INFORMATION:** The **Wyndham Hotel Lisle** is conveniently located just off I-88 on Warrenville Rd. in Lisle, 35 miles west of Chicago. There is ample free parking. The hotel is located only a few miles from Naperville, whose quaint downtown offers a wide array of dining and shopping venues.

**Via PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION:** Call Metra at (312)222-6777 for information on transportation to and from Naperville. Limited, free shuttle service from the Naperville Metra station to the **Wyndham Hotel Lisle** is available. Call the front desk at (630)505-1000 to reserve your shuttle ride.

**SESSIONS:** In the 60-minute sessions, presenters will address instructional methods, techniques and materials, and curricular concerns. In the *Tech Showcase* sessions, presenters will give 15-minute demonstrations of cutting-edge technology they have successfully used in the language-learning classroom.

**SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (SIG) MEETINGS:** During ITBE’s SIG meetings, attendees will have the opportunity to network with colleagues in Elementary, Secondary, Adult, and Higher Education. SIGs also give members the opportunity to voice any concerns about or suggestions for the organization.

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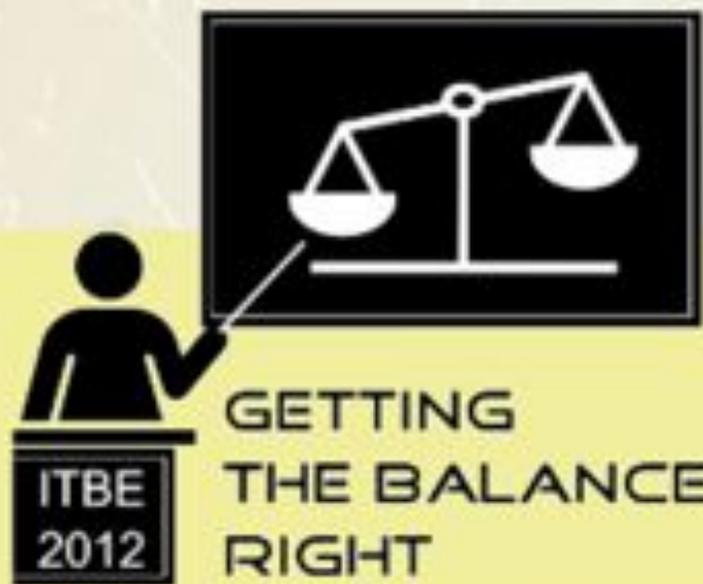
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Fri. Feb. 24 – Sat. Feb. 25, 2012

Wyndham Hotel, Lisle, Illinois

- **MORE THAN 70 SESSIONS**
- **SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (SIG) MEETINGS**
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# Breaking the Ice with a Teaching Philosophy

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Patrick T. Randolph  
Writing Coordinator, Center for English as a Second Language  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale

## Part I: The Background

Walking into the IEP creative or academic writing classroom on the first day of the term can create jitters for both the students and the instructor. The students are wondering what the atmosphere of the class will be like, what the lecturer will be like, and the lecturer is wondering what kinds of students have arrived—serious, lazy, comedians, drama queens, or a colorful mix of each. To make the term run smoothly, the best way to open up communication between the teacher and the students is to start right off with an explanation of what is expected from the students, and also what the students can expect from the instructor.

## Part II: The Benefits of the Philosophy

I always start each new class by addressing my eight point teaching philosophy on the first day. This eight-step philosophy is an integral part of the class, and each point is revisited throughout the term on a weekly basis. This has numerous benefits: first, as above, the students know what to expect from me starting from day one. They see, for example, that “Mistakes are good.” But they also learn that they are good “As long as we learn from them”. That is, making same mistake over and over again is not what I am looking for in my students, but making it once, twice, even three times is okay, just as long as they

finally learn to self-correct and improve their skills. The first point in my philosophy is that I am not looking for perfection in my students, but I am looking for each one to become better than before. “Perfection” is boring, “Becoming better” is best! Second, it provides immediate dialog between each student, and it gets the class warmed up as we communally discuss each point. I use the Socratic method while doing this, so I do not

give any answers as to what I mean by each point in my teaching philosophy. I first have the students discuss in pairs what they think each one means, and then we discuss the points as a class. Third, I get an immediate feel for the class: I see who is shy, who is outgoing, who I can expect great things of, who is the creative thinker, who is the academic, who is the angel, who is the nitpicker, who will need a little extra coaxing, who is the class clown, who is the leader, and who is the “apple polisher”. And lastly, it simply sets the tone of the class. As we “work together” on this for our “first communal project”, it quickly forms a bond between the students and me. While answering their questions, they see that I have an eclectic mix of emotions, I have particular ideas on how I want the class to be run, and they also see that humor and laughter will also be an essential part of our rigorous class.

### Part III: The Philosophy

Below is the list of eight points of my class philosophy that I discuss with my students. I will briefly go over each point and explain what it is that I expect my students to glean from these points.

*(1) Mistakes are good as long as we learn from them. We are not looking for perfection here, but we are looking to become better.*

\* I want the students to consider “mistakes” as “friends”. I do not want them to be overly concerned with handing in “perfect” work. I want them to play with the language, think outside the box, and embrace the language. This often entails making mistakes, but as long as they can control these and learn from them, then the battle is worth the fight. John Medina, in *Brain Rules*, tells us that “Expertise in specific subjects breeds the confidence to take intellectual risks” (Medina, 2009). I like the students to develop confidence in their writing, and once this is done, then they can start to really create and push the envelope. This, however, initially means that they must not be fearful of making mistakes. This idea also brings up the interesting point that there are “levels of mistakes”. The higher the level of mistake is, the higher level the thought or the writing becomes. But if the students are afraid of mistakes and want to avoid them, they will not venture outside their comfort zone, they won’t go beyond their own little village to see the vastness from the mountaintop, and they won’t be able to see the limitlessness of possibilities.

*(2) You must trust me. Everything we do is done for a reason.*

\* I explain to the students that the in-class work, the homework, tests, and quizzes are all given for the sole purpose of helping them. Each assignment is given for a particular reason in that there is

some element in the homework or on the test that will make the students stronger. I am not giving them homework just to give homework. They must trust me when I push them and tell them that they can do better. I always tell them that there is no excuse why they can not become as good at writing as any native English language speaker; granted, it may take a while, but if they are willing to push themselves and put in the time, they will become effective and impressive writers.

*(3) Your primary goal is independence. You should be able to self-edit and proof-read on your own.*

\* In whatever profession we choose, or in whatever aspect of life we experience, being “in control” seems to be a pivotal element. This is not—by any means—the same as “controlling” others, but simply being “in” control of oneself. I ask my students to do a great deal of “peer editing” and “peer reviewing”. This gradually transfers to “self-editing” and “self-reviewing”. The more they are in control of what they write, the more trust they have in themselves, and the more they trust how I teach them; and consequently, the more they start to see the benefit of learning from their mistakes. When they complete the course, I want them to be able to walk out the door with a strong sense of independence and a sincere feeling of “I can do it on my own now! I can write and edit by myself!” In short, being independent and being “in control” of their writing and thinking abilities are the primary matters of importance.

*(4) You have two jobs as students: (1) to become better learners, and (2) to make me a better teacher.*

\* Learning is an endless activity. I learn something new almost every day from my wife and my students. My father is famous

in our home for saying, “I’ve been married to your mother for almost 60 years, and I still learn from her every day.” This powerful reality of perpetual learning winks at us every conscious moment of our lives. If the students can understand more about “how” they learn and how they can become better learners, then they will be successful at their “job” in my class. How they do this depends on how they address the above three components of my philosophy, and how much they are willing to tap into their own resources of learning. The second element is to make me a better teacher. This, I tell them, is merely a matter of asking me as many questions as possible during the term. The more questions they ask me, the more I have to think about the best answer for each one. This helps them, makes me stronger, and prepares me for the next set of students down the line. So the questions they ask today, will be the answers for others in the future. This butterfly effect is a beautiful reality of teaching and learning—our next topic.

**(5) *Everything you learn in here you should teach to others. Teaching is learning, learning is teaching.***

\* The idea of having my students teach during the course is a central theme. They teach themselves, they teach each other, and they teach me. I want them to take what they learn in the classroom and teach it to their roommates, family members, or other loved ones. The more they can explain something on their own, the deeper understanding they have of the topic. I tell them that learning something means that they know the material anywhere from 70% to 80%, but if they teach it, they can know it up to 90%. I humbly explain that nothing is ever known 100%. The two realities of teaching and learning are essentially one and the same: there is never one without the other. In

some cases, I have the students teach a small segment of class for review lessons at the end of the term. If there is no time for that, then I always make sure to do a great deal of pair work in which they naturally teach and learn from each other.

**(6) *Every class is a 50-50 effort by the instructor and the students.***

\* This is a relatively basic point. I merely want my students to come prepared for class. I explain that I will always come to class as prepared as possible, but the class won’t run smoothly unless the students are equally prepared. I tell them that our writing class is more like a small firm or a sports team. In both cases the manager and coach must be as prepared for the day’s tasks as the employees or the players. That is, a 100% success can only be achieved if both parties are ready, enthused, and prepared to dig into the wonders of learning.

**(7) *Continually ask yourself: What is learning?***

\* This is a pretty heavy concept, and whether you are a neurobiologist or a cognitive psychologist, the verdict is out as to what learning is. It seems to be the elusive phantom; one moment we have defined it, the next moment we are still asking what it is. I suppose that is the beauty of the whole idea, once we have learned what learning is, there is nothing more to learn. On a more practical note, I simply ask my students to inquire on a daily basis what learning is for them. Is it just memorizing material to later forget it? Is it just holding it in their minds momentarily in order to complete an assignment? Or is learning something that they use as a tool to help them ascend to higher levels of knowing? Are they visual learners, kinesthetic learners, audio learners, or a mix of the three? Do they learn better studying in groups or by

themselves? As you can see, this is similar to the first part of number four, but I approach it from a different angle and focus more on what learning is for each student.

(8) *We are a family here. We must trust each other and work as a tight group.*

\* And last, I try to get the notion across that I want the class to be like a family and the classroom to be like a home. This idea proves to be particularly useful when we do peer reviews. I explain that there is always sibling rivalry in families, but that pushes each sibling to be better. The same applies in the classroom; we need to honestly critique each other and not just say “everything is perfect” while reviewing the written work. We must critique with honesty, and that will help the classmates to move to greater heights in their pursuit of knowledge. Moreover, if we listen to each other in class, we will learn from one another, just as family members learn from each other. But most importantly, if we treat each other like a family, we will forge lasting friendships and genuine study partners, we will

naturally become each other’s teachers and learners. We will see that mistakes, trust, independence, and learning are all fun realities to be embraced and revered.

#### **Part IV: Concluding Remarks**

Plato, in his epic work, *The Republic*, cheerfully claims that “We must make learning fun” (537a). I think no wiser words have been spoken. It follows that in order to make this happen, of course, the environment in which the learning takes place must also be “true,” “sincere,” “tense” yet “relaxed” and truly “educate” or “pull forth” the knowledge of the students. Setting the foundation on which this is to take place is the first step to make the learning fun and effective. Setting up one’s personal classroom philosophy and offering it to the students create this foundation and the necessary bond between the teacher and the students; it is that efficacious bridge that links the members of the class together; it is that fantastic gift that sets learning in motion with a wink of wonder and an itch of curiosity.

# Professional Development Planner

**February 24-25, 2012**

**ITBE’s 38th Annual Convention 2012**

Wyndham Lisle-Chicago Hotel & Exe. Meeting Center  
3000 Warrenville Road Lisle, IL 60532

**March 28- 31, 2012**

**TESOL International Convention & English Language Expo**  
Philadelphia, PA

**April 2012**

**ITBE Spring Workshop**  
TBA

**May 21- June 1, 2012**

**NAFSA 2012 Annual Conference & Expo**  
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# Convention FAQs

*Illinois TESOL-Bilingual Education Association (ITBE) conventions have been held in various types of facilities through the years, from universities to convention centers and hotels. They have been held in Chicago, Champaign-Urbana, Peoria, Hillside, Naperville, Lisle and Springfield. Members often ask about why certain things happen or do not happen and how decisions are made.*

## Who plans the convention?

Each year, a member of the Executive Board volunteers or is selected to be the Convention Chair. The Treasurer, the Exhibits and Advertising Director and the Publicity Chair are *de facto* members of the Convention Committee, and the President is an *ex officio* member. Other committee positions are Program Chair and Registration Chair. Not all committee members need to be members of the Executive Board. These committee members participate in selecting a venue and present it to the entire Board for approval.

## How is the venue selected?

Hotels want to sell sleeping rooms, and ITBE does not “sell” anywhere close to what the large hotels—the ones that have sufficient function space—require in order to rent their function space to us. That immediately denies us access to many locations. Criteria have changed over the years, but the major considerations have remained the same:

**Cost.** Contracts are negotiated starting a year in advance. Every effort is made to be economical and affordable for attendees, while getting the best possible facilities, food and amenities available as well as supporting the costs for speakers, printing and postage. Based on these criteria, the Treasurer presents a budget to the Board for approval.

**Location.** This is determined partly by how conveniently located a facility is for those who drive and also for those who would use a public conveyance. Many Chicagoans don’t want to go to the suburbs, and many suburbanites don’t want to go into Chicago. On the one hand, the cost of gas is a factor. On the other hand, so is the cost of parking in Chicago. So far, there has been no charge for parking in the suburbs.

**Space.** ITBE conventions need a lot of function space: plenary and luncheon ballrooms, exhibit hall and breakout rooms. Small and mid-size hotels, conference centers, etc., cannot meet our needs. The large hotels want us to guarantee at least 400 room nights in order to rent enough function space. In Naperville and Lisle, we averaged 90-95 room nights, including the rooms for scholarship winners, key workers and plenary speakers.

**Availability.** The best time of the year to get the space and other items we need at a price we can afford is in the depths of winter, namely February. We also need to try to not overlap with conventions held by other similar associations and holidays.

**Amenities.** This category includes the quantity and quality of food service, some token of hospitality for invited speakers, awards for student contest winners and door prizes for members whose numbers are drawn.

## **How are plenary speakers selected?**

A list of potential plenary speakers is made from Board and Convention Committee suggestions early into Convention planning process, nearly a year in advance, as soon as the theme is confirmed. The theme is also determined based on a "hot topic" or pressing issue relating to ESL professionals. The Convention Chair then follows up with gathering information on the bios and vitae of the potential plenary speaker and how they would address the convention theme. The final selection depends on availability and interest of the speakers. ITBE is willing to pay for a quality speaker if it is within a reasonable amount. In addition, publishers, such as Oxford, Cambridge, Longman and Merriam-Webster, sometimes sponsor plenary speakers. In those cases, some or all of the travel expenses and honorariums are covered.

## **How are breakout sessions selected?**

The program chair prepares and disseminates a submission form describing what the content of the session would be. The proposals undergo a blind judging. Proposals must adhere to the following: the title must match the abstract, relate to current research or field-tested best practice, or show possibilities for networking or sharing among like professionals. Those selected are then given time slots for their presentation.

## **Why do I still have to pay for registration if I am presenting?**

Most large conferences in the field of language learning that solicit proposals from its members, such as AAAL, NABE, and TESOL International Association and its regional affiliates, require presenters to pre-register. Exceptions are made for invited featured speakers. Also, even if presenting, you are still attending the rest of the convention, earning credits and enjoying coffee breaks and luncheons.

## **Why are AV fees charged for presenters?**

Be assured that the ITBE planning team makes every effort to keep the registration rates as low as possible so that the convention is accessible to everyone. In order to do so, presenters who wish to use the internet are charged a nominal fee. Nonprofit organizations, such as ITBE, operate on a much lower budget than for-profit companies, such as technology firms. Keep in mind that hotels make most of their money from their meeting rooms space, particularly AV. Did you know that ITBE is charged \$25 per day to use the screen in each meeting room? Yes, that is \$25 to push the "down" button. This year the Convention Committee decided to absorb this fee instead of charging presenters for using the screen. Also, ITBE is charged \$200 to use the LCD projector in each room. Because of this large expense, presenters are encouraged to bring their own projectors from their institutions. Unfortunately, ITBE is not the only conference charging AV fees--TESOL International Association charges \$50 for projectors, \$25 for internet, and \$105 for sound.

## **Can I help with the convention and/or other events or activities next year?**

Yes! All ITBE members are welcome to serve on various committees or just volunteer to help at any stage. For instance, you can be involved early on with the proposal review process, or at the convention you can volunteer at the registration desk or help to collect lunch tickets and door prizes.

Besides the convention, workers are needed to staff the registration desk at all events, help publicize the association, prepare materials, keep records, to outreach to potential members, etc., and we certainly hope you will!!!

# More Food, Please!

## Activities with Nouns & Expressions of Quantity

*By Lin Cui, Harper College*

When my ESL students get frustrated with the seemingly “irrational” rules and usage of English grammar, I usually let them pound on their desks with fists to vent exasperation. Sometimes the whole class breaks out a chorus of “This is a crazy language!”

I can’t blame them. The situation gets worse when we get to the unit of nouns and expressions of quantity. If a head of lettuce does resemble the shape of a head, how can we associate an ear of corn with, say, an ear? I am even more at a loss to present a rationale of why “corn” is non-count and “pea” is count. Doesn’t “corn” look bigger and have a more clearly defined shape? When reduced to the kernel size, isn’t *cut corn* placed side by side with *sweet peas* in the freezer of a grocery store? Aren’t they even packed in the same bag labeled “Mixed Vegetables”?

After much bewilderment and, of course, much pounding, the students slowly resign and eventually get used to the idea that it is better to concede than whine. As an instructor, how can I help them get past the frustration and to the

core of language learning? I believe in the “Aha” moment followed by practice, practice, practice.

In my recent beginner grammar and intermediate core language skills classes, I had my students brainstorm instances where their native languages might not make sense to a foreigner. After protesting that Spanish did not contain such nonsense, a student admitted that his non-Spanish speaking friends did not understand why the book (*el libro*) is masculine and the pen (*la pluma*) is feminine. When another student wrote two nouns in Chinese side by side, “horse” and “tiger”, they evolved into an adjective meaning “careless”. “Aha,” I said, “Do you think people from other countries would be having a hard time learning Spanish and Chinese?” “We’re even!” the class shouted, laughing. No more pounding this time!

Once the playing field was leveled, I started the drills, which included a combination of the following activities.

## 1. Practicing with images

I have compiled food/drink images from Yahoo and Google Images for my students to describe and discuss. For example,



*[Intermediate level – create a conversation incorporating at least three of the images above.]*

*Student A: I bought three ears of corn for a dollar yesterday. What a deal!*

*Student B: Yeah! This is the season for corn. I love fresh vegetables. I bought some peapods last weekend and just had a bowl of steamed peas for snack today.*

*Student A: What an unusual but healthy snack! For me, a bowl of corn flakes is the most convenient snack.*



*[Beginner Level – Name the food and its quantity in each image below.]*

*Student A: I see a head of cabbage and a head of lettuce.*

*Student B: I bought a bunch of bananas and three bunches of grapes.*

*[At this point, I would brace myself for a query why the big cabbage is non-count and the small grapes are count.]*

## 2. Taking food inventory

This is often assigned as homework that requires the students to check what food they have at home. They will then bring the lists to class for discussion. It is not uncommon to overhear that someone has a piece of outdated cheese or a few rotten apples, much to the amusement of the rest of the class. In one instance, many of us were curious about the cactus pears one student listed, prompting him to bring a whole bucket of such pears to class the following week, adroitly peel one, and, as further demonstration, eat it with relish. We all ended up tasting one in class and taking another one home. Talk about eating, learning, and building relationships!

## 3. Making a shopping list

I usually have my students make a shopping list they will actually use in real life. In the beginner level class, I bring in grocery store flyers so they can rely on the pictures to identify what they need to buy. The lists can be quite impressive, and the “Pair and Share” activity that follows usually leads to a discussion of ethnic recipes and ethnic grocery stores. Once it even resulted in my giving a short lesson on giving driving directions to one of those stores.

## 4. Judging the best and worse lunch

Another activity the students enjoy is to have a “lunch contest”. They list each item of the lunch they ate the day before (such as a bowl of noodle salad, a bottle of orange juice, and a few crackers), share in groups of three or four students, and decide who had the most healthy or unhealthy lunch. Then the class votes on the best lunch and the worst lunch. There are prizes for even the least healthy lunch – all for good fun. As some students have similar lunches, the lower level students really benefit from practicing the same expressions over and over. I also encourage my intermediate students to debate why a particular lunch is healthier than others.

## 5. Compiling an ethnic recipe book

The unit culminates in an ethnic recipe project, which I have tried in three classes. The students were encouraged to think of two favorite dishes and try drafting the recipes. Along with a detailed instruction sheet and recipe examples, I also handed out [a list of cooking vocabulary](#), found with gratitude on Dave’s ESL Café website. We had quite some fun acting out “whip” and “chop”, “mince” and “toss”. One of the requirements was that everybody had to write on his/her own, with no help from family, friends, books, or the Internet. I allowed those who did not normally cook to write something very

*Continued after Beliefs, attitudes and teacher ed.*

# Beliefs, attitudes and teacher education

by **Yurimi Grigsby**

It is particularly important for teachers to ask how their particular backgrounds have shaped their thinking because as a group, teachers are strikingly homogeneous.

Their similar backgrounds and experiences make it likely that their thinking on important issues, like the goals of education or standards for student behavior or simply the importance of showing up to school every day, will also be similar (Hinchey, 2008). This may come in conflict with the assumptions, expectations, and norms that school children from backgrounds different from their teachers may bring with them into the classroom.

## **Teacher Beliefs**

Ertmer (1999) described teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning as being ingrained and difficult to overcome due to their intrinsic nature. In her work on technology integration in the classroom, Ertmer (1999) showed how belief systems played an important role in teaching as those who held more constructivist, or

student-centered, beliefs integrated technology-enhanced and engaging lessons more often than those with more traditional, or teacher-centered, beliefs (Bai & Ertmer, 2008). Richardson (2003) posited the most important source of preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning was their own personal experiences they have had with schooling and instruction (Bai & Ertmer, 2008).

## **Teacher Attitudes**

Besides beliefs, attitudes can also be viewed as predictors of behaviors. "Attitudes and beliefs are a subset of a group of constructs that name, define, and describe the structure and content of mental states that are thought to drive a person's actions" (Richardson, 2003, p. 102). Applied to teaching the culturally and linguistically diverse student, attitudes toward what makes an individual diverse are thought to predict one's commitment to and interest in attempting to teach the diverse student effectively. Teacher education programs must endeavor to prepare tomorrow's teachers to effectively teach to the diverse learner, and it is necessary for teacher preparation programs to include (more) courses on the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students and staff the courses with knowledgeable and capable instructors to facilitate competency and positive attitudes toward the students' future diverse learners. Attitudes are "learned directly by observing the activities of people who are perceived as significant" (Aiken, 1980, p. 16).

In teacher preparation programs, the teacher educators are the models for preservice and in-service teachers. Thus, teacher educators need to be learned and experienced individuals who model inclusive attitudes and best practices for teaching diverse learners. Such research

makes clear the undeniable importance of teacher educators and their critical role in preparing teachers for a classroom that is culturally responsive and sensitive, and fostering the ability to teach their diverse students effectively. Whether you are a PK-12 teacher or teacher educator, in what ways does your teaching reflect an intercultural orientation?

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(Continued from 'More Food Please') simple, for example, how to make tea. They might also have a family member demonstrate cooking before they wrote up the recipes. The class and I worked together on how to express ideas clearly and how to apply appropriate grammatical rules. It gave me much satisfaction to read "sauté a clove of minced garlic" and "add just a little pinch of salt" in their writing. The result? A delicious collection featuring cactus pear snack from Egypt, galbi from Korea, guacamole from Mexico, kabab from Syria, milk tea from Mongolia, musaka from Bulgaria, shole zard from Iran, and much much more. Imagine the joy and pride the class felt on the last day of the semester to have this beautifully designed booklet as a souvenir of their learning experience!

These activities make us, students and myself, not only better language users, but also self-proclaimed food experts. Most importantly, we build fun, confidence, and community into the learning process. Should I be expecting less pounding in my class? Definitely!

## A Recipe Book from Core III



ESL & Linguistics Department  
Harper College

Instructor: In Cui

Reference: Sperling, Dave. *Words Used in Cooking*. Retrieved from Dave's ESL Café <http://www.eslcafe.com/idea/index.cgi?display:1028675430-25901.txt>



Daniel Kaiser, North Park University  
School of Education alumnus

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# SIGs at the Convention

## February 24-25, 2012

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### **SIG Hot Topics Speakers**

For Friday's SIG session, ITBE is working to secure speakers for advocacy issues and other SIG-related hot topics. Stay posted for details as the convention gets closer. In addition to Friday's speakers, you can anticipate the following SIG activities on Saturday and throughout the convention:

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### **Higher Education SIG**

*Chair: Lisa Barrett*

- Vote for a new SIG chair
- Lesson Plan Swop Shop – see announcement
- FREE MEMBERSHIP Raffle

### **Secondary Education SIG**

*Chairs: Lila Birchfield, Margaret McGregor*

- Lesson Plan Swap Shop: Bring copies of your favorite lesson plans to share with your colleagues! Plan on bringing 25 copies.
- Collaborative Structures: We will get together to network and discuss various collaborative structures that could help us in our professional learning communities.

### **Elementary Education SIG**

*Chairs: Margaret Gigous, Jose Resto*

- Listen to the elementary students read their poems on Friday at the award ceremony.
- Vote for our co-chairs to keep their positions for a 2nd year.
- Lesson Plan Swap Shop: Think about a lesson plan that you would like to share with others. Bring it on Saturday and walk away with lesson plans from others in your field. (An email will be sent out with more details.)
- There will be some sessions that are focused toward the elementary grades and some that can be modified for our students.

### **Adult Education SIG**

*Chair: Cathy McCabe*

- vote for next year's SIG Chair; and, hopefully, elect a Co-Chair. (Start thinking about how you would like to contribute to ITBE next year!)
- a lesson plan swap session
- another presentation on persistence, this year's SIG focus topic.



## **SIG Chair Responsibilities**

Each year at the Annual ITBE Convention, SIG members elect a chair to represent their interests on the executive board the following year, beginning July 1. Below are the expectations of each SIG Chair:

### **1. Newsletter**

- a. Maintain a SIG column in each of the quarterly issues of the ITBE newsletter
- b. Solicit and edit materials from SIG members for publication
- c. Send content for SIG column to the newsletter editor

### **2. Annual Convention**

- a. Plan and lead SIG meeting at the annual convention
- b. Assist the proposal chair in evaluating proposals relating to respective SIG
- c. Recruit and support SIG-related presenters and speakers for future ITBE workshops and the annual convention

### **3. Annual SIG Event**

- a. Solicit activity ideas from SIG members
- b. Plan and carry out 3 meetings and/or events, either together with other SIG leaders or individually

### **4. SIG Webpage and Electronic Communications**

- a. Review, evaluate, and post content on SIG webpage four times a year
- b. Maintain useful content on the SIG webpage, including resources, news, and discussion
- c. Utilize the MMS broadcast messaging system to maintain communication with SIG members for soliciting newsletter content and disseminating news and announcements

### **5. Reports and Board Meeting Attendance\***

- a. Provide monthly reports on progress and updates of the SIG at each board meeting personally and via electronic reports
- b. Attend board meetings at least 4 times per year
- c. Serve as a liaison between the SIG members and the board

\*SIG Chairs are voting members of the ITBE board

# *Hello Higher Ed SIG Members!*

The fall semester just zoomed by! I hope you are all well and ready for the upcoming holidays. I have just a few announcements.

## **Sad News for Essay Contest**

I am very sad to announce that we had no submissions for the Higher Ed Essay Contest. One factor that may have contributed to this is that many of our students are busy with class work and simply didn't have time to submit essays. However, I am very grateful to those of you who volunteered to be judges for the contest. Hopefully we can get another contest up and running in the spring semester. Please feel free to email me at [highsig@itbe.org](mailto:highsig@itbe.org) if you have essay contest ideas that would get students involved!



## **Convention News**

As some of you may already know, we will have 45 minute sessions on both Friday and Saturday during the convention. Here are some of the things you won't want to miss.

## **ITBE Membership Raffle**

One lucky winner will receive a complimentary ITBE membership at this year's convention. Please, stop by our SIG meeting on Friday and Saturday to put your name in for the raffle.

## **New SIG Chair**

We will also be voting for a new SIG Chair for 2012-2013. Please stop by our convention SIG meeting to vote for a new SIG Chair. If anyone is interested in serving as a SIG Chair or Co-Chair, please email me at [highsig@itbe.org](mailto:highsig@itbe.org)

## **Swop Shop**

Mark your calendars for the second day of the convention, **Saturday, February 25th, 2012!** Our SIG group will be holding a Swap Shop!

# HigherEd SIG



We all have lessons that we love doing in our classes and now is the time to recycle and share those lessons!

Please participate by bringing in copies of your favorite lesson plan, PowerPoint presentation, or worksheets, or you can always email the materials you'd like to share to [highsig@itbe.org](mailto:highsig@itbe.org) and I will bring the copies for you.

I saw so many wonderful things happening at last year's convention and I would love an opportunity for our SIG to share our best lessons with each other. Together we can engage our students with fun and interesting lessons. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions!



I wish you and your families a very warm and restful holiday season. Stay tuned for more exciting updates as our annual convention gets closer!

# Ideas Corner

Sabrina Budasi Martin

*When the request for ideas for the Winter Issue came out, I was in the midst of listing all the things I wanted to do for next semester! Here are a few “wrap up” activities, winter break chores, and ideas to enhance your spring ESL lessons.*

## Wrap Up Activities

- Ask students to address an envelope to their own homes. Use it to mail the students a note over the break.
- Take photos of students as a group and doing individual classroom activities.
- Set up a self-guided, practical, life-based project to reinforce what was learned during the semester.
- While students are working on projects, have individual or small group conferences with students to share portfolios, progress, and future goals.
- If you're having a party, plan a short lesson around “making a salad” using realia, flashcards, etc. The salad will be enjoyed when finished!

## Winter Break Chores

- Develop photos and mail each student a copy with a short note using the envelopes they addressed.
- Make a poster with photos of students writing, reading, speaking, listening, asking & answering questions, spelling, etc. to refer to when teaching.
- While you are out and about, collect realia related to subject matter you may address next semester: calendars (Hallmark stores), maps (Chamber of Commerce), sale flyers, 2011 phone books (ask your friends so you have the same kind), trains schedules, signs.
- Find a source to donate binders, dividers, folders, or other items to help teach organizational skills to your students.
- Review tests & student work to assess students' needs.
- Put together a file of pictures and/or photos related to life-skills to use for future class needs assessments.
- Read through old conference folders/files and make a list of activities you will use next semester. Have them handy along side semester lesson plans.
- Make learning stations, activity folders or practice worksheet/puzzle files for students to access when they come early to class.

## Ideas for Spring Semester

- For lower level students, use life-skills related pictures/photos collected over break to assess student needs: hang pictures around the room with blank notepaper attached. Give each student 3-5 circle stickers to mark the pictures that represent their immediate language needs.
- Infuse critical thinking skills in daily language activities: creating, evaluating, negotiating, sorting, interpreting, etc.
- Disseminate binders and teach mini-lessons on how to organize materials. Take a few minutes to reinforce lessons at the beginning of every class.
- Include a calendar with the syllabus so students can mark off the days they attend class. This can be used to show students how attendance reflects progress.
- To reinforce organizational skills, provide a progress sheet for students to keep track of attendance & study hours, test scores, homework, etc.
- As a class, plan a field trip: brainstorm, negotiate, identify, and plan. Design lessons addressing related vocabulary and oral/aural communication skills. Field trip activities could be, conduct a scavenger hunt, schedule a guest speaker/tour, and initiate Total Physical Response activities in different sections of the site. Follow up with a Language Experience stories.

## Overview of Academic Writing

*Audrey Zenner, UIC*

*The following is a brief introduction to American academic writing for UIC international graduate students for spring semester 2012.*

Written academic English can be daunting. The unique sociolinguistic backgrounds that global students bring to the United States may pose setbacks in English acumen; conscientious effort can resolve this. While many American university instructors may not be familiar with individual cultural mindsets, as our international students increase in number, we are ever striving to be sensitive and responsive to diverse needs. Maximizing academic writing through code switching to formal rather than informal text is essential to appropriately express yourself. American academic writing stresses clear communication in a succinct manner. Meaning is not inferred, as you may have learned previously. Additionally, vague terminology has no place in American academic writing. We strive for explicit words; whereby, allowing the reader to interpret factual meaning through the writing. Complex sentence structures and overt formal language are not necessary in attempting to impress your professors. Remember, less is more! Our rich English vocabulary allows for linguistic manipulation to achieve your goals. In order to guide the reader, we aim for good flow throughout the paper. Furthermore, after introducing the main idea at the beginning of the paper, we follow an outline that maintains the focus while demonstrating the important points. Within the paragraphs, transitional words are utilized to guide the reader toward new ideas, comparisons, contrasts, time sequences, restatements, and conclusions. As a result, smooth flow of your ideas will contribute to good coherence throughout your text, allowing for logical presentation. Typically, the main idea is introduced in the first paragraph of your text. The paragraphs that follow lend support to your main topic, concluding with a short summary at your closing. The subsequent outline is a very

# Recommended Resource

Cathy McCabe, Adult Ed SIG Chair

## *Movie Clips & Grammar*

*Check out this great blog!*

<http://moviesegmentstoassessgrammargoes.blogspot.com/>

The author has put together movie video clips and downloadable worksheets. Just click and you have an instant grammar lesson!

Want to learn more?

The blogger, Claudio Azevedo from Brazil, will be presenting at the International TESOL Convention in March!



simplistic view outlining this format; of course, this design can be expanded upon to include other sections and sub-sections.

### *SAMPLE OUTLINE*

*paragraph #1* introduction, stating main idea  
*paragraph #2* support  
*paragraph #3* support  
*paragraph #4* support  
*paragraph #5* conclusion

Assuredly, language learning is a lifetime session. Attaining skills in American academic writing will certainly sustain you throughout a successful career. I hope this semester will ease your pursuit of writing.

# In the news...

## Interpreter Training Underway by Corrie Wallace

In August, 30 people turned out for an Interpreter Training orientation to find out about the program and have their written proficiency in English and their target language tested. Since that time, 50+ people were tested. Of those, 30 were invited back for an oral proficiency test. Currently, there are 21 individuals who speak 16 languages between them participating in the Interpreter Training program which began November 15, 2011. Participants represent 16 countries and the following languages: Arabic, Assyrian, Bosnian (Serbian, Croatian,) English, Gujarati, Hindi, Hungarian, Korean, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Urdu and Vietnamese.

The Interpreter Training takes place at the Niles Township Schools' ELL Parent Center on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights from 5:30-9pm. Lourdes Lonergan from LARC (Language Access Resource Center) teaches the class which includes a 60 hour course plus a 40 hour externship. Corrie Wallace, the Center's director, has coordinated this training and tailored it to meet the needs of the Niles Township community so that interpreters will be prepared to work not only as medical interpreters but in the areas of health, education and human services as well. Participants are required to have a TB test, drug test and background check. When the program ends, participants will receive a Certificate of Completion for a 100 hour Interpreter Training program. "Translation 101 Workshops" on how to effectively use an interpreter will be held in early spring throughout the township for school personnel, municipal employees and community organizations. This Interpreter Training was made possible by a donation from the Village of Skokie through their Chicago Community Trust Grant.

# Book Review

Review by Jill Bruellman

## *Dictionary Activities*

Cindy Leaney (2007)

Cambridge University Press

Cindy Leaney's book, *Dictionary Activities*, is an insightful, user-friendly book dealing with activities educators can use with learners' dictionaries. For those not familiar with learners' dictionaries, they are dictionaries for English language learners that contain a wealth of information not just about the words, but about other areas as well, such as usage. The hands-on activities that Leaney provides will help students tap into these resources and into dictionaries themselves.

Like many Cambridge handbooks, the book is laid out in an easy-to-follow manner with the aim, focus, level, and time needed for each activity. Many of the activities are short and can be done multiple times. The activities are adaptable, contain useful examples, and can be copied. The book is broken down into different sections such as confidence building and dictionary skills, vocabulary building, grammar, writing, and reading. The integration of these important skills into the focus of the dictionary is one of the strengths of this book.

As a community college instructor, I especially like the focus on confidence and

skills-building exercises, which are vital for college readiness and success. The activities in the entire first chapter would be appropriate for any developmental English course, including one with native speakers. (My office mate, an English instructor, expressed an interest in the book). With the increase of generation 1.5 students and non-traditional students, it is key that instructors do not take it for granted that students have knowledge of dictionary skills or can use them quickly and accurately. Leaney provides quick activities to help build confidence and speed as well as basic dictionary strategies such as spelling and alphabetizing. These strategies can be useful for the traditional ESL student as well who may know how to use a dictionary, but not necessarily one designed for learners or monolingual English dictionaries in general. There are also activities for on-line dictionaries, developing computer literacy as well.

I also like the focus on using a dictionary for vocabulary building including synonyms, idioms, word forms, and collocations. Students often don't realize how great of a resource a learner's dictionary is. For example, students often don't know that they can find information about idioms in a learners' dictionary, and Leaney provides activities that show students how to do this. Students will be able to learn not only new words, but also new strategies for building their vocabulary using a dictionary. This focus on strategic competence is another strength of the book.

I have two criticisms of the book, the first one regarding dictionaries and technology.

Leaney has an on-line section that deals with CD-ROMs and electronic dictionaries. I appreciate this section, but am not sure why it is necessary. Most of the activities in the book can be adapted to online dictionaries or CD-ROMs, so I am unsure why she needs a separate section. Of course, there is the issue of computer literacy and dictionary use, but I feel that could be included in the dictionary skill-building section. Also, many students already have electronic dictionaries which have multiple functions including disabling the bilingual function and providing example sentences, so I often wonder if my focus should be helping my students to better use the dictionaries they already have instead of teaching them to use a learners' dictionary which they may not use outside of my class simply because of convenience and portability.

My other criticism is the price of the book. At \$32.40, I think it is a bit expensive, and there are other books I might use that are less expensive than this one. In addition, to do any of these activities, students would need learners' dictionaries, which are also expensive, or instructors would need access to a set of them. Overall, it could be a costly investment.

However, if you are looking to add a great book to your already extensive collection, or if your department has money to spare, I highly recommend getting this book. It has a lot of great, easily-adaptable, quick activities not only for dictionary use, but for pronunciation, vocabulary, confidence building, grammar, and writing as well. I have used some of the activities in my own classroom, and they have worked very well. This book would be a great addition to anyone's ESL collection.

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