*WAESOL Tri-TESOL Report*

Sunday, January 15, 2012

**By:**

**Ron Belisle (conference chair)**

**Kathy Hunt (conference co-chair)**

The 2011 Tri-TESOL Conference, which took place on October 21 and 22 at Highline Community College in Des Moines, Washington, was a big success. More than 800 participants from all over the Northwest came together to share ideas, gain new perspectives on their teaching and forge connections with other professionals in their field.

WAESOL joined with ORTESOL and BC TEAL to sponsor this event. The conference featured more than 220 presentations and workshops, along with 3 nationally known keynote speakers and more than 30 exhibitors and vendors. The quality and variety of presentations was very impressive. You can still view the complete schedule of presentations on our web site at the link below.

http://tri-tesol.org/presentations/

Several of the presentation handouts can be accessed at WAESOL Community at the link below.

http://waesol.org/community/

In addition, keynote handouts can be downloaded via the Tri-TESOL web site at this link.

http://tri-tesol.org
This was the first Tri-TESOL Conference since 1996. One significant outcome of the conference was the goodwill and cooperation that have developed among the three associations, WAESOL, ORTESOL and BC TEAL. We have realized that by working together, we can strengthen our profession and increase the success of our students in the classroom and beyond.

There is a tentative date set of 2015 for the next Tri-TESOL Conference. In addition, WAESOL and Seattle has been chosen as the host for the 2017 TESOL Annual Convention.

To get WAESOL updates and keep abreast of WAESOL, Tri-TESOL and TESOL news, visit the link below.

http://waesol.org/contact/mailings/index.php

* Presenting for Professional Development

Sunday, January 15, 2012

By:

Karrie Zylstra, ESL Instructor
It was so long ago that I struggle to remember, but I believe my first TESOL conference was in 1992 in Vancouver, B.C. From that first conference until this year, I’ve seen attended innumerable conferences and seen even more presentations but never made a presentation. This past year I decided to stretch myself and present at the 2011 TRI-TESOL conference in Des Moines, WA.

On October 22, 2011, I gave a 20 minute session on a conversation activity I discovered while working on my degree and then refined to fit my students. In the process of putting together “The Buzz of Conversation,” I experienced a few things about preparing and giving a presentation that I thought others might find helpful.

Ideas

After thinking carefully about what I might share with others, I chose the conversation exercise because my students and a substitute instructor seemed to all enjoy it whenever we did it in class. It fit the time frame for the 20 minute session that I felt able to accomplish and seemed useful – something other instructors could try in their own classes right away to improve students’ speaking.

In the future I might find other ideas about presenting by using my own classroom, asking my colleagues for suggestions or asking my students. I have seen presentations with a panel of students talking to the conference attendees and may consider doing this as well.

Checking My Facts

Before organizing my information and putting together my presentation, I checked the instructions from WAESOL and asked my colleague what she knew about presenting at conferences. The instructions let me know what kinds of equipment I would have available and other important details about where I could get what I needed on the day of the conference.

My colleague told me she had never presented before but that it always frustrated her when the presenters didn’t have enough handouts. I also thought of my own years attending conferences and the types of presentations I enjoyed, remembering that I liked best the dynamic presenters with useful information.

Finally, I searched through the handouts I’d received in previous conferences, looking for examples that were similar to what I wanted to do. Finding an example helped me to craft a document that worked well.

Prepare and Organize

I put my presentation together much like I put together my lessons for class. I thought through what I wanted my audience to learn, created a handout to go with my lesson and planned the time and activities I would need to do. It was a 20 minute ‘lesson’ so it wasn’t too complicated.

Backups
The instructions from WAESOL recommended having a backup for my information. I had a thumb drive and also emailed myself my handout so that, presuming the technology worked, I could find a way to display it on a screen in the front of the room as well as having it on a handout. I chose to make enough copies for the maximum capacity of the room because of the warning from my colleague. I am aware that this is not a green practice but, after attending several presentations that day without enough handouts, I felt relieved that I had enough copies to keep my audience from scowling at me.

**Visualize**

Over the years, I’ve found that mentally practicing before I do difficult things helps me tremendously. It is especially helpful if I supply myself with as many details as possible so that I feel fully prepared when the actual moment arrives. I had been at a few WAESOL conferences before at Highline so I knew the location well. I began to imagine the place a week before I got there. I pictured myself feeling confident and satisfied that I had done a good job after the presentation.

I arrived early on the day of the conference and looked at my room as soon as I knew where it was. I even went to a presentation given by someone else in the same room just before giving my own presentation. All of that helped me to feel more at ease.

I avoided dwelling on my thoughts about teachers as a scary audience or about my lack of experience presenting at a conference. Those were not images that I thought would help me.

Overall my experience lived up to my best expectations. My audience was warm and receptive. I learned more about what I do and about how to become a better instructor by extending myself into presenting. Even the process of getting an idea got me to analyze my instruction, looking for things that others might find helpful. I now feel better able to take the next step and move into a full presentation in the future. Maybe soon I’ll be presenting for longer time slots or at a larger conference like TESOL without too many butterflies crowding up into my throat.

Filed in Winter 2012 | Comments (0)

**Pearson Longman Advertisement**

Sunday, January 15, 2012
* Eritreans and Their Coffee Ceremony

Sunday, January 15, 2012
When I lack energy or feel socially disconnected, I indulge in a hot cup of coffee. Whether I am with my mother at her kitchen table, in a friend’s living room, or at the neighborhood café, this is time for me to stop the busyness of my day and simply enjoy the moment. Sitting down to a good cup of coffee is also paramount in my personal relationships as a way to connect. There is an amusing scene in one of my favorite movies entitled, “Good Will Hunting” where Matt Damon, the protagonist, is pursuing a beautiful woman in the bar. The scene goes like this:

Skylar: So, maybe we could go out for coffee sometime?

Will: All right, yeah, or maybe we could just get together and eat a bunch of caramels.

Skylar: What do you mean?

Will: Well, when you think about it it’s just as arbitrary as drinking coffee.

Ethiopia is believed by many to be the birth place of coffee (Zirkle, p. 291). Eritrea, the country that borders Ethiopia to the east, was once a part of Ethiopia before it seceded in 1993. As legend has it, in about 1000 A.D., a young goat herder and poet named Kaldi discovered the coffee bean plant one afternoon while tending to his goats. His goats neglected to appear one afternoon as they ordinarily did when he whistled for them. Kaldi searched and finally found his goats chewing on a strange plant he had never seen. He was concerned these plants may be poisonous, but by the next day when his goats were still alive and once again eating this plant, Kaldi decided to try it too. According to the story retold by Mark Pendergrast in his book, *Uncommon Grounds: The History Of Coffee And How It Transformed Our World*, “Poetry and song spilled out of him [Kaldi]. He felt that he would never be tired or grouchy again (p. 4, Pendergrast).” News quickly spread about this strange and wonderful plant and soon, “coffee became an integral part of Ethiopian culture (p. 5).”

The Eritrean coffee ceremony has been a long tradition in the Ethiopian/Eritrean culture. I was first invited to an Eritrean coffee ceremony when visiting my friends in Spokane. They had recently arrived from Eritrea with refugee status. Coffee is considered a delicacy in Eritrea and a way of showing hospitality to guests. Each time I visit, my friend Yordanos asks me, “Jennifer, can you drink coffee?” I am always secretly amused by the way she poses the question. The warm and friendly atmosphere she and her sister’s home provides lends itself to a relaxing experience where many Eritreans gather to enjoy each other’s company. Yordanos begins making the coffee with white coffee beans she roasts in a pan on the stove. She then grounds the coffee and pours it into a container called a *jebena*, shown in Figure 1.
The jebena is filled with cold water and heated to a boil on the stove. The jebena is then transferred to a serving tray filled with small coffee cups called finjal in Tigrinya, the Eritrean language. From my perspective, there appears to be a moment of silence before the coffee is poured. There are no specific prayers rendered. This silent moment seems almost to possess an unspoken call to communion. However, this observation may simply be a reaction to my busy culture where we never stop moving and are obsessed with multitasking. I have never asked them to explain this. Yordanos then puts several spoonfuls of sugar in each cup, pours the coffee, and tops it off with cream before handing each person their cup. As a way of showing my respect for this tradition, I never reach for my cup on the tray but wait for her to hand it to me. I believe the hostess’ desire to serve her guests is significant. There are usually four of us who enjoy this ritual together. My guess for this is because they may only own four cups. If there are more than four of us there, a playful argument usually ensues in Tigrinya about who should be served first. I look forward to this event each time I visit. I feel nurtured by my friends as we casually and playfully converse. Yordanos pays careful attention to me as I finish my first cup of coffee so she can quickly refill it. I have read that it is polite to drink three cups, so I always accept exactly that amount. Popcorn is a favorite snack to serve with coffee. I was surprised to learn in my research that popcorn is common to serve with coffee in Eritrea and not just an American snack they discovered after moving here. Figures 2 and 3 below show my friends, Yordanos, Zebib, and Semere.
In villages far away from big cities like Asmara, the capital city of Eritrea, the coffee ceremony is slightly less modernized than what I have experienced. The difference lies mainly with the advantage of stovetops and electricity. Traditionally, the beans are roasted in a pan over an open fire and ground onto a mat called a mishrafat (figure 4) where they are then funneled into the jebena. The coffee and water is then boiled over charcoal. According to www.eritrea.be, it is considered “shameful to let the coffee boil over.” Additional information found at this website had this to say about the traditional coffee ceremony: “The hostess may also burn incense of frankincense. The first round of coffee is known as awol. The second and third round is the kale eyti and the fourth is derdja.”

The Independent, a London Newspaper had a section entitled 192-Part Guide to the World, which featured cultural and travel information for many countries. In the section for Eritrea
written in July, 2000, it stated that The Foreign and Commonwealth Office did not recommend
tavel to Eritrea (probably due to the ongoing war). But, if a person was to travel to Eritrea, one
item of importance was included:

“Please take note that refusing to take coffee with an Eritrean is impolite. This beverage is
considered something of a delicacy so if you’re offered some, it’s not a casual invitation. Be
prepared for the coffee ceremony, which includes roasting the beans, to take an hour. And don’t
leave until you’ve drunk three cups.”

The website www.Kwintessential.com is dedicated to teaching general etiquette and cultural
awareness globally. On the Ethiopia page, Coffee Drinking is given its own subheading. Under
the heading, it instructs its readers that while participating in the coffee ceremony one must
“Inhale the aroma of the coffee before sipping.” It also instructs a person to “always sip the
coffee slowly.” This emphasizes the reverence Ethiopians have for their coffee ceremony.

So what does this tradition mean to Eritreans? When I asked my friend, Zebib, this question she
thought it was important to point out that, “It is different in my country, Jennifer. We are not in a
rush. There is no hurry hurry. We relax and enjoy talking to each other.” I asked if coming home
to coffee and Eritrean food is something she looks forward after a long day working in Spokane
as a housekeeper at a hotel. She agreed that it was an important part of her life. She also
indicated to me that drinking coffee is something they do every day, at any time of the day,
whenever people come to visit.

The Eritrean coffee ceremony has become a highlight of my visit to their home. My friends
enjoy each other’s company in an unhurried and authentic way. It has inspired me to be more
like this in my life. I am more encouraged to serve my friends when they visit my home. I am
also encouraged to do less multitasking and appreciate the quiet moments more. Eritreans,
especially those I know who live in a fast-paced culture unfamiliar to them still create time for
joy.

**I offer thanks to my MATESL colleagues, who provided valuable feedback, as well as our
professor, Dr. LaVona Reeves at Eastern Washington University, because I wrote this paper in
her Second Language Acquisition seminar last quarter, and she suggested that I submit it to
WAESOL World Quarterly.**

Filed in Winter 2012 || Comments (0)

**What’s New?**

Sunday, January 15, 2012

By:
A teacher wrote to me and painted the picture of her new assignment: a large class of adult students, completely heterogeneous in terms of ability levels and age levels: “What in the world do I do with so many different levels?” she asked.

Adults, of course, can drop out of a class that doesn’t meet their needs, so it is a neat trick to give enough attention to each level so they come back for more. The cost of this, unfortunately is spending many hours of preparing for three or four different groups. Typically, a teacher burns out, teaches to the middle, and the class gets smaller and smaller as the beginners drop out because they are in over their heads and the advanced students drop out from being bored.

I had such a heterogeneous class of adults a few years back: Fifteen adults ranging in age from eighteen to mid seventies; their educational backgrounds ran the whole gamut: from engineers to construction workers, unemployed, housewives and home health aides. Some were newly arrived beginners, others had studied English in their home countries. All were recent arrivals. Several could speak English, but were having trouble spelling and even forming the letters of the English alphabet. The class was five days a week, provided by Jewish Family Service, but many students had part time jobs, or medical appointments, and couldn’t come to class each day. There were copies of Side By Side available for us to use, but these level-specific workbooks didn’t seem appropriate to the variety of levels in the class.

I discovered a method that would take into consideration the varieties of levels, needs, and interests, and build a socially cohesive group. The students made their own individualized text books. I called it “What’s New?”

Students sat in a horseshoe formation so they could all see each other.

I started the first day with conversational English, and made sure that they could answer questions such as What’s your name, Where do you live, Where are you from, Are you married or single, Do you have any children, and How are you?

I had a large write-on chart so our work could be preserved for later days.

I used puppets to present the following conversation several times: After exchanging How are you’s, Puppet One asks “What’s New?” Puppet Two answers “Nothing much.” I had students repeat this mini conversation in chorus and then practice it: Person A asked person B “What’s new?” Person B answered “Nothing much,” and asked Person C who answered and then asked person D, etc.
Then I had a student ask me, *What’s new?* and I told them: “I started teaching English at Jewish Family Service.” I wrote this on the board in the third person: “Elizabeth started teaching English at Jewish Family Service.” I let them help each other understand the sentence, or use their bilingual dictionaries. We read it chorally, a few read it individually.

Then I asked individuals: “What’s new with you?” The beginners answered “Nothing much,” and more advanced students gave some news: “I started studying English with Elizabeth” “I moved to Fair Lawn.” “My daughter got married,” “It was my birthday yesterday,” “I went to get a job,” “My house has no electricity”.

I helped the speaker with any grammar point in expressing himself or herself and wrote these sentences down in the third person, with the students’ names. I drew tiny stick figures to help students recall the meanings. We read them chorally, then students read them individually. I gave mini pronunciation drills for the difficult sound combinations.

Then I asked questions stemming from the information, and expanding on it: *Whose birthday was yesterday? Whose daughter got married? Who went for a job? When is your birthday? Do you have a daughter?* and so forth. For advanced students, I asked, and let other students ask questions to get more details: *What can you do when the electricity is off? (call the landlord) How old is your daughter? Where was the wedding?* filling in the vocabulary they were struggling with.

After a few days of limiting themselves to saying “Nothing much,” the beginners got into the act. Lev, a 65-year old retired engineer said “Me, big fish.” and used his hands to show the size of the fish. I modeled the sentence, “I caught a big fish,” helped him pronounce it correctly, and wrote on our chart, “Lev caught a big fish.” Students asked Lev questions, so by gestures and stick figures, Lev understood the questions and we found out that Lev caught the fish in a river; Lev’s wife cooked the fish; and his friends came over to eat it. These all became sentences for our What’s New chart.

Students copied the sentences and I gave mini lessons to those who needed help in forming letters. The advanced students helped the slower students in this for a bit. While the beginners struggled with copying, the intermediate and advanced students had the assignment of writing a more detailed explanation of whatever was new in their lives, and working in groups of three or four to read their stories to each other. There was a lot of individualization for grammar as needed. Sometimes a grammar point was relevant to the whole class, so I’d teach the group.

What happened in the class was remarkable, and I didn’t plan it that way. It became like a little soap opera, with daily developments in people’s lives, and the focus was on the relationships and each others’ stories. Each level of student got something out of the lesson, as they could express and get coaching on their expression on their own level. Some learned through their ears, some through reading. There was progress in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary building, self expression, cultural awareness, like a smorgasbord. I think attendance was good not only because students could feel their progress in English, but because they were engaged with each other and formed a caring community.
The young man later was able to tell us that his landlord explained that he had to pay the electric bill and the electricity would be turned back on…. He had no idea he was supposed to pay it. A lesson in culture awareness for all.

The best part of this was that I did not need to prepare multiple lessons for the multiple groupings. The lessons needed became apparent, and I could teach them on the spot, tuck them in between the real part of the lesson, sharing ourselves.

*Waves of Change in the Hermit Kingdom*

Sunday, January 15, 2012

By:

Young-Kyung Min

Korea was once known as the Kingdom of Hermit. As a country of one culture and one people, the Korean people were known for not opening themselves to other cultures and other peoples. I had an opportunity to experience the changing landscape of Korean society when I travelled back to my native Korea this summer. In June 2011, I was invited to give a talk at the Gwangju International Center (GIC) in Korea. Under the title of “Images of Writing across Cultures,” I gave my talk about culturally embedded writing practices across nations and presented some practical strategies that the audience could use in various writing contexts. There were about 60 people in the audience. Half of them were Korean and the other half were expatriates, which included high school students, teachers in private language institutes, K-12 schools, colleges and universities, house wives, retired professors, government officials, and publishers.

The GIC was established in 1999 by the Gwangju Citizens’ Alliance to promote intercultural understanding and collaboration between international residents and local people in Gwangju, the capital of Chonnam Province. It provides international residents with a variety of programs and resources, which include home stay arrangements, cooking, calligraphy, meditation, and pottery classes, game nights, singing, dancing, and mountain climbing events. It also publishes the Gwangju News, the first local English magazine in the nation, which has played an essential role in raising Gwangju citizens’ awareness of globalization. International residents often come to the GIC to check out books, videos, and other resources that have been donated by the local people in the community.

Its major intercultural events include the GIC Talk, the International Community Day, and the May Concert. The collaboration between local people and international residents in the
community is clearly reflected in the GIC activities. One of the best examples that demonstrate such collaboration is the GIC Talk. As the name suggests, the GIC Talk is a weekly talk program that covers a wide range of topics in English. The most significant aspect to be noted about the GIC Talk is the involvement of people—both the local and international residents—who participate in the event as volunteers.

The most important group of volunteers for the talk is students who attend local universities and colleges. They act as masters of ceremonies: they introduce presenters to the audience and coordinate with moderators. They also help presenters set up their equipment and prepare the resources they need for their presentations. Native-English-speaking instructors, who teach in private language institutes as well as in K-12 and university settings, volunteer as moderators for the talk. They meet with presenters beforehand to find out the areas that they should moderate during the talk in order to foster interactions between the audience and the presenters more effectively. The volunteers—both students and instructors—provide crucial support to the presenters who are invited from around the world, which include ambassadors, professors, lecturers, journalists, specialists, and so on. It needs to be noted that invited presenters do not get paid: they also participate in the talk as volunteers.

The active participation of college students in the GIC activities is crucial for the operation of the center because of the strong collaboration between the center and local universities. Since a variety of intercultural activities take place at the center almost every day, the GIC is a great place for students to enrich their intercultural experiences. By participating in the activities, students not only develop insight into other cultures and languages but also familiarize themselves with international ceremonial protocols. They get credits when they submit proof of their attendance at the GIC to their universities; thus, the GIC provides students with great internship opportunities.

One important change to be noted in the Korean educational system is that “개근상” (Award for No Absence), which was once highly regarded in K-12 institutions in Korea, has been recently abolished. Students’ field trips to museums and participation in other cultural events such as ancestral memorial services are now regarded as important as classroom learning: students do not have to be physically present in the classroom. The partnership between the GIC and local universities as well as the abolishment of “개근상” (Award for No Absence) signifies that the very concept of “배움” (learning) has been rapidly changing in the society. The school curriculum in the K-12 settings as well as in the university setting has greatly expanded beyond the classroom boundary.

These days, Korean universities are facing fierce competition as an increasing number of students leave the country to be educated in English-speaking countries. Well-known universities around the world have entered the Korean education market by establishing local campuses in the country. A growing number of Korean students are enrolling themselves in their branch campuses to earn their college degrees from universities that are more internationally recognized. The GIC promoting intercultural understanding between local people and international residents, while utilizing partnerships with local universities, is an innovative way to hold out against the fierce international education market.
The spirit of intercultural collaboration between local people and international residents regardless of their nationalities demonstrates that effective intercultural literacy education essentially depends on active community participation. The way the GIC operates is a great model to explore the notion of intercultural literacy in relation to the notion of community literacy. My participation in the GIC Talk this summer has made me reflect on the social practice view of learning, which highlights that learning is not just an autonomous, cognitive activity; all learning is situated within some activity systems and people learn by participating in activity systems either deeply or peripherally. The social practice view of learning reminds us of the significance of paying closer attention to the student’s routine interactions and their everyday activities to understand their literate activity (Bourdieu, 1980; Engestrom, 1993; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). From the social practice view of learning, this kind of literacy education—to ask students to participate in activities in collaboration with the international residents in their community—can ultimately lead students to look at their everyday experiences and practices in a new lens.

Gwangju, which is known as an artistic city, is very different now from 20 years ago when I attended Chonnam National University. The spirit of intercultural collaboration between local people and international residents suggests that the very boundary between “us” and “foreigners” was disappearing. In fact, the word “international” instead of “foreign” seems to be used more often these days in the society (which is also reflected in the GIC website). The changing landscape of Korean society is also well-reflected in the rapidly increasing number of interracial marriage couples. The term “다문화 가정”, which literally means “multicultural family”, was recently coined to refer to the growing interracial marriage families. A variety of TV programs have been created to educate the public about various issues that are important in understanding multicultural families.

The shifting image of the Hermit Kingdom is also exemplified in the sweeping “Korean Wave” which is also known as “Hallyu”. The term, “Korean Wave”, was coined by Chinese journalists who were surprised by the quickly growing popularity of Korean dramas in China in the late 1990s (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008; Russell, 2008). The K-pop, which is an abbreviation of Korean popular music, has now made its way to the Billboard Chart. It has played a major role in spreading the Korean Wave around the world. Although many critics predicted that the Korean culture boom would die out, the Korean culture exports have continued to grow. The international popularity of Korean dramas has now spread into other fields such as music, food, clothing, cosmetics, computer games, and so on.

The people of Korea who were once described as the isolated people in the Hermit Kingdom have changed in a dramatic way. I am very proud of the huge strides they have made in opening the country to the world. Their earnest desires to embrace linguistic and cultural diversity while sharing their heritages and unique qualities with others are evident in the GIC activities as well as the sweeping Korean Wave phenomenon. Korea is now becoming synonymous with its innovative abilities while at the same time conserving its heritages and cultures. My trip to Korea this summer has made me deeply aware of the far-reaching changes that are occurring in the country, which will ultimately help Korea continue to grow and prosper in the direction that benefits the greater global community beyond its borders.
The Station Agent: Improving Language Communication with Classroom Station Activities

Sunday, January 15, 2012

By:

Olivia Conner

In the middle of winter, when the cold seems to slow down our minds and our bodies, it is important to promote communicative teaching methods in the ELS classroom. This focus will ensure that students do not get fatigued and that teachers do not fall into complacency. Sometimes teachers get so bogged down with marking that it is difficult to muster up that latent creativity that is especially needed in the lesson-planning process. This particular situation happened to me recently at the end of the semester when I was faced with teaching a reading class an extensive text that was accompanied by a dull set of questions that were neither creative nor communicative. It was difficult to motivate myself to work on a lesson plan that was original and interactive but the thought of delivering this lesson—knowing that I too would get bored—
forced me to get creative. This is why I adapted it into a stations activity where the students had to move between groups of tables to complete tasks and it was a success!

Basically, it was an academic reading class with a 50 minute time restriction. The specific reading objectives were to understand the main idea, define key terms, summarize a paragraph, and answer general comprehension questions. The students were broken up into four groups of four and the tasks were broken up into four stations, with 3-10 solvable problems/questions per station. Four different documents were created, with four copies of each, and each station got one document per group (per session) so the students were encouraged to work together to solve the problem at hand. For this particular activity the students had ten minute sessions to work at each station and they moved to the next station when the session was over—even if they were not finished. The groups were also encouraged to choose one “writer” per station, which changed each session so there was not one student doing all the work. Finally, the students were given a two minute warning to increase the pressure to solve the problems.

This activity would be best for a class that has a handful of objectives to cover, even if it is writing, speaking or grammar. You can manipulate this activity and get your students moving and working together while increasing their interaction regardless of the level or the area of focus.

Furthermore, this activity works for three important reasons: it discourages teacher centered teaching, encourages teamwork, and increases communicative urgency. Firstly, the teacher’s only role is to keep time, handout documents for each session and to answer questions, so the students learn kinesthetically. Also, the students must work together since they all have one task sheet per table and the time limit ensures that the students work quickly.

There can be some problems that arise like dominant students finishing most of the work or weaker students not contributing, so teachers should think carefully about their group organization if this is a worry. Conversely, this type of activity can add energy to any class and can get students working together in a creative and team oriented fashion, even if they are at different levels. So, give it a try and spice up those cold winter days with some stations.

Filed in Winter 2012 || Comments (0)

* Blended Learning

Sunday, January 15, 2012

By:

Victoria Denkus
Blended learning, brick and click, tailored learning . . . we are surrounded by these terms today. However, do we know what they really mean? Can they benefit our students? Most importantly, do we really understand the pedagogy behind them?

The **brick** is the traditional classroom setting. The traditional setting promotes a social and cooperative learning environment. It motivates learners through peer interactions and immediate teacher feedback. It allows both teachers and students to address questions and confusions as they arise. The **click** is the autonomous learning environment available through the web. Web-based tools allow learners to practice and acquire new language skills without classroom distractions, as well as self-direct their learning. Merging these two worlds together creates an environment that meets a variety of learning styles, and a variety of both student and teacher needs. This merge is blended learning.

Blended learning blends the social nature of the classroom with the self-paced environment available in a web-based setting (Clark 2001). Blended learning does not mean a reduction of face-to-face class time. Conversely, it requires greater participation of learners, greater interaction with content, and an overall greater level of engagement.

As ESL educators, we understand the importance of students being engaged. Traditionally, the more students are engaged, the more learning occurs. Following a blended learning model can increase learning by over 11% compared to that in a traditional classroom (Sitzmann, Ely 2009). The reason is simple. Students are more engaged with a digital tool over a traditional text outside of the classroom. They can interact with content at their own pace, on their own schedule, receive reinforcement of course content, and self-select exercises and activities. Students have access to their language success outside the walls of the traditional classroom.

Blended learning can enrich our students learning experience through interactive activities and immediate feedback. We as ESL educators can be more informed about our students successes and failures, and perhaps even our own. Lastly, it offers both teachers and students a flexible solution. Students can practice when and where they like. Teachers can choose the most appropriate activities and customize course content to meet curricular and programmatic demands.

Register today for the February 28, 2012 Webinar with Christina Cavage at  [https://pearsonevent.webex.com/pearsonevent/onstage/g.php?t=a&amp;d=599583903](https://pearsonevent.webex.com/pearsonevent/onstage/g.php?t=a&amp;d=599583903)

