



# News Letter

Vol. XX, No. 2, March-April 2010

## Re-imagining TESOL

by Marina Morbiducci

The title of this year's TESOL Intl. convention, held in Boston, on March 24-27, was *Re-imagining TESOL*, and no better umbrella term could be found for the gathering of so many new impulses on the state of the art of English Language Teaching in the world. With the opening plenary "*Five Minds for the Future*", delivered by Howard Gardner, Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the keynote proved immediately extremely vibrant and stimulating. Known world-wide for his Multiple Intelligences theory, Prof. Gardner enlightened the audience with his present theoretical stance: in the future it will be important to develop five kinds of minds: disciplined mind, synthesizing mind, creating mind, respectful mind, and ethical mind.

Dr. Gardner illustrated in depth the developmental sequence and the ways in which the five types may conflict with or complement one another; out-of-the-box thinking, flexibility, problem-centred teams, forms of non-linear thinking, systemic thinking, mastering one or more disciplines, robust and iconoclastic temperament, and many other interesting aspects, are the elements that come into play in order to develop our future learning. The introduction of two types of mind, the "respectful mind" and the "ethical mind", was particularly interesting, because they certainly imply a deeper and deeper understanding of our identity – as professionals as well as human beings – in terms of social interaction and moral responsibility; we should conceptualize ourselves as "good workers", "good citizens" and see how this plays out in a community - like school, aiming at "the good play project" (the very name of the site).

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## Food for thought From TESOL publications



### Teachers' Professional Development, a bee in my bonnet.

by Franca Ricci Stephenson

Teachers' professional development is definitely a bee in my bonnet, and I keep going back to it, as time goes by and I don't see how it is being tackled in the school resulting from the Gelmini reform.

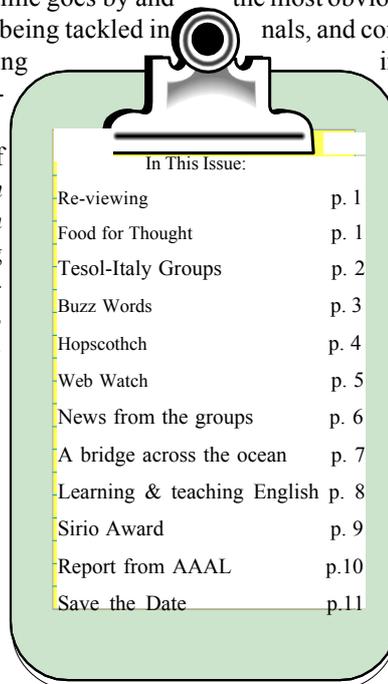
In the first issue of the latest *English Teaching Forum 2010*, the opening article is about "Empowering Teachers through Professional Development". Alice Murray(1), the author, states that professional development gives teachers the "power" to act upon their ideas and to influence the way they perform in their profession. A positive, proactive, assertive attitude is the first step in ongoing professional development, the first step in feeling and becoming empowered, and therefore in becoming more effective teachers.

Teacher development opportunities exist, but even for the simplest of them it takes time, money and a lot of energy. Time, to be stolen from rest, family and the scarce leisure activities. Money, to pay for publications – books and journals, training courses. Energy, to add further activities to teachers' long, crammed days. Yet, in today's world of constant changes teachers must find ways and techniques that suit their individual needs.

The article mentions several activities teachers may choose from, starting from the most obvious one of reading journals, and continues developing the importance of reflective teaching as a fundamental part of continuing professional development. It deals with keeping and sharing teaching journals, with the importance of analyzing critical incidents which occur while teaching. The author explains the importance of collaborative techniques as peer mentoring and coaching, forming a teacher support group, joining a teacher support network, joining local and national teachers' associations, participating in workshops and conferences. All of them useful and practical suggestions.

I would like to pick up the author's suggestion of adopting a **reflective teaching attitude** as a fundamental part of continuing professional development. Reflective teaching offers teachers opportunities to analyze and question their objectives, and to examine **what** they teach and **how** they teach. According to Zeichner and Liston (1966), quoted in the article, a teacher who engages in reflective teaching practices is someone who is able to identify, analyze, and attempt to solve problems that occur in

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TESOL Italy Newsletter è un bollettino informativo a circolazione interna dell'associazione TESOL-Italy. Non è in vendita, ma viene distribuito gratuitamente ai membri dell'associazione.

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TESOL-Italy membership dues for the year 2010: ordinary members: • 25,00; students under 30 and SSIS students: • 15,00; supportes, schools, universities, agencies: • 60,00 (including subscription to EnglishTeaching Forum).

Subscription to English Teaching Forum (4 yearly issues): • 15,00.

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**TESOL Italy Newsletter**

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DTP Claudio Giacinti

TESOL-Italy's mission is to develop the expertise of those involved in teaching English to speakers of other languages, and to foster professional growth and active participation in language teaching. Its mission includes promoting community understanding of the role of language in a progressively changing environment while respecting individuals' language rights.

To achieve this TESOL-Italy

- encourages access to and standards for English language instruction, professional preparation, continuing education and student programs;
- links groups to enhance communication among language specialists;
- produces high quality programs, services and products
- promotes advocacy to further the profession.

**TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) Italy**

TESOL-Italy, an affiliate of TESOL International, founded by Mary Finocchiaro, is a non-profit organization of teachers of English in Italy. Its purposes are to stimulate professional development, to disseminate information about research, books and other materials related to English, and strengthen instruction and research.

TESOL-Italy organizes a national convention every year .

Members receive *TESOL-Italy Newsletter* and *Perspectives*, the academic journal of the association.

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**Tesol Italy Groups**

Si raccomanda a tutti i colleghi impegnati o che intendono impegnarsi nella costituzione di un gruppo provinciale TESOL di inviare all'Executive Committee la seguente documentazione:

1. Elenco nominativo degli iscritti (minimo cinque), con allegata fotocopia della ricevuta del relativo versamento sul c/c postale n. 15774003 intestato ad Associazione TESOL-Italy, Via Boncompagni 2, 00187 ROMA.

2. Verbale dell'assemblea costitutiva del gruppo da cui risultino l'elezione e il nome di un Coordinatore.

3. Programma delle attività che il gruppo intende svolgere nel corso dell'anno.

4. L'Executive Committee, preso atto della documentazione prodotta dal gruppo, si riunisce per deliberarne il riconoscimento ed invia successivamente il testo della delibera al Coordinatore.

Il Coordinatore del gruppo TESOL-Italy rappresenta a tutti gli effetti l'Associazione nell'ambito della provincia in cui il gruppo svolge la sua attività ed è tenuto a presentare

una relazione annuale in sede di National Committee. I membri del Consiglio di Presidenza e la Segreteria di TESOL-Italy sono a disposizione per qualsiasi eventuale richiesta di ulteriori informazioni.

La collega incaricata dall'Executive Committee del coordinamento nazionale dei gruppi è Maria Luisa Cerbone (e-mail: [marialuisacerbone@katamail.com](mailto:marialuisacerbone@katamail.com)).

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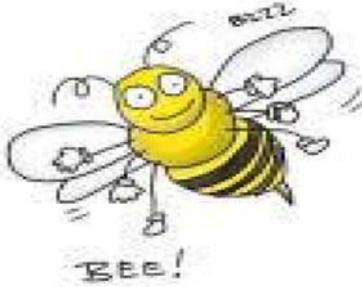
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## Buzz-words

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\*\*\*\*\*

Buzz-word: 'a word or phrase that people in a particular group start to use a lot because they think it is important'

Buzz-word of the day:

***Plagiarism***

“Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal.”

T. S. Eliot

What is plagiarism? Plagiarism can be several things and can be differently understood or enacted by different people.

“Plagiarism is the action of using or copying someone else’s idea or work and pretending that you thought of it or created it. A plagiarism is an idea or a piece of writing or music that has been secretly copied from someone else’s work” (COLLINS COBUILD Dictionary)

So plagiarism involves some sort of action undertaken by one or more people who either deliberately or unintentionally use pieces of work, ideas, phrases, utterances that other people originally thought of, created, wrote about or developed. Plagiarism is stealing a person’s ideas or writing failing to acknowledge the sources from which those ideas or those writings first originated.

We usually hear about plagiarism in the fields of arts, of literature, of science or of technology because paintings, songs, plots, books or discoveries have been either copied or partly reproduced. There are different forms of plagiarism: it can be direct when, for example, a piece of writing is almost fully transcribed without acknowledging the source, it can be a paraphrase, i.e. the original ideas have been paraphrased and inserted into a new text, or it can be an original piece of writing in terms of style or register, but the main ideas do not belong to the writer but to someone else who is not cited. Plagiarism does not only occur in writing, where it can easily be retraced, it is often enacted in speeches, in oral presentations, in debates or even in visual aids supporting presentations such as

Power Point slides.

More and more we hear of university students being accused of plagiarism in their assignments, dissertations or research work. Why do students plagiarize? One banal response to this question is that probably students do not understand what plagiarism is, nor do they realize that they are doing something wrong. With the diffusion of digital technology and easy access to billions of resources online, students more and more tend to resort to online shortcuts, to copy and paste large tracks of text from the internet directly into their papers. It is particularly at school that the seeds of plagiarism grow because of the lack of explicit guidelines on what plagiarism is and on the implications of cheating, while academic integrity is seldom encouraged and individual creativity is rarely valued.

How can plagiarism be avoided? Almost all universities have either specific guidelines on plagiarism, or ask students to sign that they understood what plagiarism is, or have a specific HonorCode, or provide clear instructions on how to use sources. Schools should devote more time and special occasions to discuss the importance of respecting authors while teachers should provide more information on how to use all types of resources, particularly online resources, and correctly acknowledge their sources. But mostly teachers could involve their students in research projects where they learn and use research skills and are guided in developing and sustaining their own ideas.

## References

In order to write this Buzzword, the author resorted to many online resources that are acknowledged in the following references.

Macfarlane, R. (2007). *Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth-Century Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roig, M. (1997). “Can undergraduate students determine whether text has been plagiarized?”. In *The Psychological Record*, 47, 113-122.

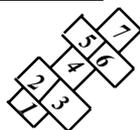
Shahabudin, K, Taylor, A., Turner, J., Reid, M. *Avoiding Unintentional Plagiarism*, University Study Advice Team CETL, Reading, UK

[http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA\\_plagiarism.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html)

<http://www.plagiarism.org/> One of the Internet’s predominant anti-plagiarism resources for educators and students

<http://www.plagiarismdetect.com/> Specific software to detect plagiarism.

<http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html> How to avoid plagiarism, NorthWestern University.



## **HOPSCOTCH**

### *Resources for primary school teachers*

This section is dedicated to primary school teachers. It will address issues that are of interest for teaching English to young learners.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **How a real context and ICT increased motivation in fifth graders**

by Elisabetta Burchiotti

After so many years as a primary school “specialista,” I find that fifth graders can generally acquire simple communicative functions: they can introduce themselves, ask/answer questions about their hobbies, their families, school life, etc; and they can read fluently enough with decent pronunciation.

This year I found something slightly different. These students lacked interest in English and needed work on basic structures and communicative functions.

Talking with them I was struck by how easily they used the internet and their interest in socializing via ICT. “I’ll text you on messenger,” “Can you contact me on messenger,” and “I saw what you posted on FB” were some of the things I heard them say. And not just the students who excelled. These were also from kids who showed little interest in school. I thought this might be the key to get them “hooked” on the subject.

I decided to set up a wiki<sup>1</sup> for them in which they could freely post and upload anything they liked to share. The only rule would be to try and use English whenever possible. I also asked them if they would be interested in connecting with students from other parts of the world. They liked the idea and we started by creating a profile of the class to upload to a specific website.

We used [www.epals.com](http://www.epals.com) where it is possible to search for schools with specific criteria (age, language, country, technology used) or to search for shared projects (environment, intercultural awareness, music). You need to register your class(es) adding a brief description of what you’d like to do with your partners.

My students wrote a general description of their age, hobbies, and what they wanted to learn from the experience. In the first week our profile was up we received about 20 requests from same age classes who were interested in exchanging emails. Most schools were from the US which worried me since our English level is not comparable to that of native speakers of the same age. When I warned my (foreign) colleagues about this problem, they assured me that the exchange would be interesting anyway and their students were thrilled to write to Italians. I chose three different classes: two from the US (South Dakota, Michigan) and one from Canada.

I asked students to write down what they wanted to share about themselves and what they wanted to know about the others. I corrected sentences on the board and asked them to copy them in their notebooks. These sentences were the starting point to begin the correspondence.

In the meantime I set up their individual accounts on epals.com allowing each student to receive their personal email. All incoming and outgoing messages need to be approved by the teacher. Since we don’t have internet at my school, I asked students to write their emails at home using the messaging function on the wiki page. Those students who didn’t have a connection or pc could give me their letters on paper.

Wiki is a space where I posted, among other things, some information on the state/city where the partner students came from. In the page dedicated to the classes involved, I also uploaded photos of mine and the partner students. Other pages were created for students to post their own materials and use material I uploaded for them. Wiki has a message center that we used for the email exchange and to write to one another. Students mostly wrote brief notes to me, such as “Hello teacher,” “How are you teacher,” or “I like the new video.” They also wrote messages in Italian like “Non ho capito bene come si mettono i video/le immagini,” as well as their emails.

I revised each letter and sent it back to them with the corrections.

The immediate effect this project had was that those students who already spend time on the web (no matter how proficient they are) tried to write in English more, either directly to me or in the discussion page. Another effect was that some common spelling mistakes such as “tenk you,” “Whot’s” or “ticher/techer” disappeared. In conclusion, using English in a real context had quick and visible effects not just on their written fluency and oral skills but also on their motivation for the subject. In this case, technology functioned as an attraction, as well as a familiar place where (almost) everybody felt at ease.

1) [www.wikispaces.com](http://www.wikispaces.com) is a free service for educators



# Web Watch

by *Beth Ann Boyle*

## Playing with Pronunciation

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The teachers' room is always an inspiration for the webwatch. In a recent conversation, pronunciation was the issue at hand. We discovered that it really is a rather complex issue and we just touched upon the following: the relationship between spelling and pronunciation, words that have more than one accepted pronunciation, ways of improving one's own pronunciation, the difficulties of certain sounds for Italian speakers, and teaching pronunciation awareness to students. Unfortunately I don't have answers to the questions we were asking but I can share some of the interesting links I have found on the topic.

<http://www.yorku.ca/earmstro/ipa/index.html>

links to **Eric Armstrong's voice and speech source**. This site contains IPA charts. By mousing over the symbols, you can hear the sounds. It seems to be an old site but the charts are useful.

<http://www.howjsay.com/>

is a free online **Talking Dictionary of English Pronunciation**. Write the word you would like to hear in the "Word or phrase" bar, hit "enter" and you will see that word in a list of similar words. If you mouse over the word, you will hear it read.

<http://www.fonetiks.org/>

offers a pronunciation guide to nine varieties of English, including South African and Indian English. You can hear samples of vowel sounds, consonants, stress and tone in the different Englishes. You can also find conversations and famous speeches.

From there, you can link to a page,

<http://www.dictationonline.com/>,

that has graded dictations following four steps. First you hear the full dictation read through at a natural speed. Then you hear chunks repeated twice so that you have time to write them down. Third you hear the text read again at a natural speed and then when you are ready, you are shown the written version of the text. The dictations are graded which means that each one is harder than the next. The exercises provide accuracy practice in listening and writing skills.

### **BBC Learning English,**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/>,

also provides resources for improving your pronunciation. The videos are helpful; if you click on one of the symbols on the IPA chart, you will be linked to a video dealing with that sound. Similar but different sounds are compared for your better understanding. You can also download posters of the sounds to hang up on your classroom walls; there are quizzes to do, radio programmes to listen to as well as their scripts to read. This site is very user-friendly.

At <http://www.rachelsenglish.com/>

you will find **Rachel's English**. Rachel is a young American who has studied music and voice. The purpose of her site is to help non-native speakers improve their pronunciation. There are many videos explaining sounds with scripts to accompany most of them. There are also two kinds of exercises to do. The first kind involves "imitation" exercises; the second kind involves "Benjamin Franklin" exercises. Check them out if your curiosity is up.

<http://www.soundsofenglish.org/pronunciation/index.htm>

is a site for teachers. There are tips for teachers, handouts for the classroom, and activities and exercises that are worth checking out. There is also a list of useful links. One such link,

<http://www.esl-lab.com/>

goes to **Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab** which contains many General Listening Quizzes of everyday conversations.

Finally, on **NPR** (national public radio) at

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=113308537>

you will find an interesting conversation with David Crystal on accents and how people's accents change and develop.

## NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

### The first meeting of the Palermo group

by Ninfa Pagano

Coordinator of the TESOL-Italy local group, Palermo

The first official meeting of the TESOL-Italy local group of Palermo took place on March 5, 2010 when Simon Marshall (Pilgrims, Canterbury) held a seminar on "Putting Glamour into Grammar", at Liceo Scientifico G. Galilei, Palermo, sponsored by Oxford University Press and Pietro Vittorietti Editore.

Simon Marshall gave us a new insight into the teaching of grammar by raising, first of all, teachers' awareness on the type of language used in the grammar exercises we generally find in most textbooks, i.e. a type of English modelled on a few stilted expressions which no native speaker would actually use, therefore quite distant from the way utterances are produced in real life. He also provided us with models of dialogues concerning both spoken and written language. He insisted on the fact that students are generally required by teachers to concentrate on giving grammatically correct answers rather than on paying attention to the way the language is actually used or to an authentic exchange of information, thus building up dialogues which sometimes result even absurd.

In order to clarify this idea he quoted the following example, taken from a dialogue proposed in a textbook and performed by students in class, which aimed at making them practise the simple past:

Student 1: "what did you do last weekend?"

Student 2: "Nothing special. My dog died."

Student 1: "Oh, and what was the weather like?"

Simon Marshall also emphasised and recommended the use of *softeners*, in grammar exercises as well as usual class practice, which provide a more natural response and show to be closer to the way the language is actually spoken, by encouraging the conversation and avoiding interruptions.

The teachers responded enthusiastically to the activities proposed and showed great interest in the new organization of the TESOL-Italy local group and its future meetings. Simon Marshall, for his part, expressed his approval at the news of the 'newly-born' group of Palermo, emphasising how important it is to catalyze energies at a local level and to create a net among teachers who need to 'feel connected' and methodologically updated.

The next activities of the group will include a seminar in April with Lucilla Lopriore (Università Roma Tre) and another one in May with Eleonora Chiavetta (University of Palermo, facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia). After the summer holidays our activities will start again in October 2010.



## Save the Date



by Letizia Corbucci

### MAY

7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> **2nd International ELT Conference**, Maltepe University, Istanbul, Turkey. E-mail [elt@maltepe.edu.tr](mailto:elt@maltepe.edu.tr).

### JUNE

24<sup>th</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> **MATE- TESOL Haiti, Strengthening English Language Learners Success**, Haitian American Institute, Port Au Prince, Haiti.

E-mail [jeanfrancois\\_vilmenay@yahoo.com](mailto:jeanfrancois_vilmenay@yahoo.com).  
28<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> **FEELTA, From Broadcasting to Narrowcasting: Global Englishes, Local Contexts**, The Far Eastern State University of Humanities, Khabarovsk, Russia. Web site:

<http://www.feelta.wl.dvgu.ru/info/htm>.

### JULY

5<sup>th</sup> Lancaster University, **Linguistics and English Language**, Lancaster University Conference Centre, Lancaster, United Kingdom. Web site <http://www.lancs.uk/fass/events/laelpgconference/>.

5<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> **IATED, Education and New Learning Technologies**, Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain. E-mail [edulearn10@iated.org](mailto:edulearn10@iated.org). Web site <http://www.edulearn10.org>.

7<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> **Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA), Redefining 'TESOL' for the 21st Century Language Learning and Teaching for the Future**, Australia 4217. Web site:

<http://www.astmanagement.com.au/acta10/>.

12<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> **ETAI, Linking Through Language**, An International Conference on Effective ELT in all Stages and all Levels, Ramada Conference Center, Jerusalem, Israel. Web site:

[http://www.etai.org.il/ETAI\\_2010.html](http://www.etai.org.il/ETAI_2010.html).

### SEPTEMBER

8<sup>th</sup>– 11<sup>th</sup> **EUROCALL 2010** (European Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning). **Languages, cultures and virtual communities**. Bordeaux, France. Web site <http://www.eurocall-languages.org>.

9<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> 43rd Annual Meeting of the British Association for Applied Linguistics, **Applied Linguistics: Global and Local**, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, Scotland. Web site:

<http://www.baal.org.uk/confs.htm>.

10<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> Association of Teachers of English of the Czech Republic, **ELT: Sharing Ideas and Experience**, University of J. E. Purkyne, Usti nad Labem, Czech Republic. Web site <http://www.atecr.cz>

11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> First International Conference on Language, Literature and Cultural Studies, University of Vlora. **The Said and the Unsaid**. Albania. Web site:

<http://univlora.edu.al/index.php>

## A bridge across the ocean

by Anna Maria Nanni

On March 11<sup>th</sup> the teachers from L'Aquila, were honored to welcome **Dr. Janet N. Zadina** who lectured on **"Using Brain Research to Enhance and Energize Language Instruction: The Multiple Pathway Model"**. Janet N. Zadina, Ph.D. is an experienced high school and community college instructor and reading specialist.

She is currently an Assistant Professor in Cognitive Neuroscience in the Department of Psychiatry and Neurology at Tulane and in Psychology at the University of South Florida and is engaged in neuroscience research. In her career she has conducted research on the neuroanatomy of dyslexia and on neuroanatomical risk factors for developmental language disorders and has presented keynote talks and workshops on brain research and instruction internationally. The seminar, kindly hosted by the Music Conservatory "Alfredo Casella" in the newly built Auditorium, is just one of the very many interesting initiatives in the "Aquila Action" project envisaged by TESOL-Italy and the US Embassy for the teachers of English in the area affected by the earthquake. Among the various activities aimed at improving teachers' levels of competence and expertise in terms of technology and methodology in ELT and EFL, Dr. Zadina's lively presentation literally captured the audience making teachers aware of the many pathways by which the brain can learn, how second language impacts the learning pathways and how learning can become difficult in post-traumatic situations.

It wasn't the first time I had seen Dr. Zadina. I had already met her at TESOL-Italy's 34<sup>th</sup> National Convention held in Rome last November, when Dr. Zadina had specifically asked to meet the group of teachers from L'Aquila attending the conference. She explained that she herself had suffered the effects of hurricane Katrina which devastated New Orleans in 2005 and how shocked she was in seeing our destroyed town on TV. We were all touched by her empathy and her spontaneous wish to come to L'Aquila on her next journey to Europe to talk to

teachers about the possible difficulties of learning under stress. And she made it! On March 9<sup>th</sup> she left New Orleans for New York and then Rome, on the 11<sup>th</sup> arriving at 08:05 a.m.. At 02:00 p.m. she was in L'Aquila. A quick lunch at "Ju Boss" and then a tour of the town accompanied by three nice fire fighters who took care of her; a cup of coffee with torrone at the renown Caffè Nurzia in the main square and, at 04:00 p.m. the seminar for us teachers. You can imagine how tired she was, considering the jet-lag and all the rest! Anyhow she was happy to be able to tell us that things would change in time. She explained that in a brain under stress there is a dramatic decrease in neurogenesis. We may forget the trauma but our brain doesn't do so so easily. She advised us to design lessons that include repetition of information in class and as homework. "Use repetition to wire what you have fired!" - she said - "The more a group of neurons fire together, the more likely they are to wire together" In this way knowledge becomes automatic and easily recalled. She suggested to create multisensory environments in order to facilitate learning and reach also the students who may learn differently, to activate the pleasure pathway and enhance the brain visual-spatial processing with music in order to help students relax and focus on material that can be learned visually.

Before leaving, Prof Zadina also wanted to see the 99 fountains, our only undam-

aged monument. She left L'Aquila around 08:00 p.m. back to Rome. The next morning she was flying to Athens where she had another lecture and where she would have flown directly to NY. People from L'Aquila are said to be as good and strong as the rocks of their mountains: Dr. Zadina possesses many of the peculiar qualities that characterize our simple community: generosity, strength, hospitality, thoughtfulness, and loyalty. In the past people have undergone every kind of hardship here; they were farmers and it wasn't easy to make a living in a mountainous and cold region such as Abruzzo.

Having Janet Zadina in L'Aquila made us feel less lonely, more supported and cared for by many and privileged to have met TESOL-Italy President Marina Morbiducci, the Cultural Attaché of the American Embassy Mr. David Mees and other TESOL-Italy members. From them all we have received encouragement to go on with our lives and be optimistic about our future. I think I can speak on behalf of my colleagues: because of the workshops we now have a more positive way to relate to each other; our emotions have changed and hopefully English will enable us to share our opinions and interests, with the rest of the world. TESOL-Italy has built a bridge across the ocean, between us and the USA and we really feel grateful for that. There are people that can really change things. Thank you.



### LANGUAGE FLOWS

- Fostering learner progression
- Promoting intercultural communication
- Enhancing new media literacy
- Implementing effective language policies

### TESOL-ITALY'S 35<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL CONVENTION

NOVEMBER 19 – 20, 2010

Centro Congressi SGM Via Portuense, 741 – 00148 ROMA

# Learning and Teaching English: what the research in English Applied Linguistics has to say, Università degli Studi di Milano, 8-9 April 2010

by Paola Vettorel

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The Conference organized by the University of Milan, in collaboration with the SILSIS-MI and the USR Lombardia was particularly meaningful thanks to the importance of the speakers, and because it constituted a unique occasion of interrelation between university research in the field of Applied Linguistics/Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and teachers of English.

The session on **Language Acquisition Research**, chaired by Prof. Porcelli, opened with D. **Larsen-Freeman's** *A New theory of SLA: Emergentism*, where the eminent speaker illustrated the theory of emergentism within a SLA paradigm. Emergentism is set within the chaos complexity theory and sees language learning as a dynamic, adaptive and non-linear process. Language patterns emerge within a social use of the language, and are neither fixed nor universally valid for all learners, who develop different paths in using and adapting their language learning processes to the environment – it could thus be described as “adaptive imitation”.

**P. Giunchi** in *Imitation and the Second language Acquisition System* investigated the role imitation can play in language acquisition processes, particularly in the interaction between mind and body. In the learning process language is seen more as a complex “network” than as an “arrow” with a linear trajectory.

**M. Pawlak** in *Researching grammar learning strategies* gave a comprehensive overview of research related to the topic. In presenting the results of recent studies in the field, he underlined the importance of a comprehensive taxonomy in investigating grammar learning strategies including metacognitive, affective, social and cognitive aspects. **A. Nava, L. Pedrazzini's** *'SLA in action': an experiential approach to raising Italian teachers' awareness of SLA research* focused on a project aimed at identifying the awareness trainee teachers have of lexicogrammar, of SLA research and of the consequent ability to interrelate form – meaning - use in classroom practices; the final outcome of the project is a teacher training kit package for trainee teachers.

The **Corpus Linguistics Research** session, chaired by Prof. Iamartino, was opened by **M.T. Prat Zagrebelsky** who gave a comprehensive view of the possibilities and advantages in *Using corpora to explore language and learner language* within the language classroom, including references, examples of activities and projects to be carried out by teachers and students in exploring and perceiving the complex dynamics of ‘real language’ use with corpora.

**L. Pinnavaia** in *Learning idioms with corpora: the case of food and drink* presented the complex area of idiomatic expressions and the possibilities of exploring them through corpora, in order to make learning idiomatic expressions more effective and memorable.

**B. Berti's** *Bilingual dictionaries as a source of collocations?* illustrated how bilingual dictionaries are not always reliable and comprehensive sources for word collocations, underlining how corpora should become a main source for their compilation, particularly as bilingual dictionaries are popular reference tools for learners.

**J. Harrison** presented *The English Profile programme: building a corpus for English Profile research*, a project which is currently being developed with the main aim of compiling an extensive corpus of written and spoken language related to all CEFR levels; teachers interested in cooperating can find relevant information at [www.englishprofile.org](http://www.englishprofile.org)

The last session **Language Teaching Research** was chaired by G. Langé and opened by **M.C. Rizzardi** who explored *THE CEFR and its implications for the Italian language teacher*, examining the manifold opportunities offered by CEFR activity scales, language user competences and learning strategies so that teachers can plan language learning tasks and objectives. **C.M. Coonan's** presentation *Language issues in the CLIL classroom: focus on the pupils* dealt with issues related to language learning and use in CLIL, presenting the results of a project highlighting how communicative competence, metalinguistic aspects, negotiation of meaning and limited use of L1 appear to be characteristic features in CLIL classes, particularly in group work.

**L. Mariani** in *Researching learners and teachers' beliefs and attitudes* investigated the relationship between the two as emerging from the data of research carried out in secondary schools in northern Italy concerning, amongst others, language aptitude, teacher's and learner's roles in the learning process, the role of error correction; results can be retrieved at [www.learningpaths.org/convinzioni](http://www.learningpaths.org/convinzioni). **K. Dorò** investigated *The importance of vocabulary teaching for advanced learner English*, particularly with reference to University students in Hungary, including aspects for vocabulary improvement and assessment.

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## TESOL-Italy *Sirio Di Giuliomaria Award*

**“SVILUPPARE LE COMPETENZE COMUNICATIVE NELLA CLASSE DI LINGUE”**

TESOL-Italy ha istituito un premio annuale per onorare la memoria di uno dei suoi soci-cardine, Sirio Di Giuliomaria, che con intelligenza ed entusiasmo ha dato un contributo sostanziale ed imprescindibile al rinnovamento organizzativo e allo sviluppo delle attività di TESOL-Italy.

Sirio ha creato le basi dell'assetto organizzativo dell'associazione, promuovendo proficui e duraturi rapporti di collaborazione al suo interno, indispensabili a garantirne l'efficienza e la capacità di operare concretamente, per dare impulso alla didattica delle lingue straniere in Italia e per migliorare la professionalità dei docenti e la qualità del nostro sistema educativo.

Di Sirio vogliamo ricordare l'intelligenza e l'entusiasmo che hanno sempre caratterizzato la sua opera di insegnante e di innovatore, il suo significativo contributo alla glottodidattica in Italia, le sue numerose pubblicazioni, tra le quali rimangono memorabili libri di testo di assoluto rilievo metodologico.

### **Destinatari del premio:**

Docenti di Lingua Inglese,

- di ruolo o non di ruolo, italiani o stranieri, in servizio presso una Scuola Media Statale o un Istituto di Istruzione Secondaria Superiore Statale.

(N.B. Non sono ammessi a partecipare i membri del Consiglio di Presidenza e del Comitato Esecutivo di TESOL-Italy.)

### **Obiettivo**

Valorizzare e premiare un'esperienza di insegnamento condotta con i propri studenti, esplicitata in un resoconto scritto che indichi in modo chiaro il conseguimento di esiti di profitto nello sviluppo delle competenze comunicative in lingua inglese.

### **Consistenza del premio**

- iscrizione per un anno a *TESOL International* (valore complessivo, euro 130 circa), comprendente l'abbonamento alle riviste “*Essential Teacher*” e “*TESOL Quarterly*”;
- iscrizione gratuita al convegno annuale di TESOL-Italy e contestuale *membership* dell'Associazione della durata di un anno, con relative pubblicazioni più abbonamento gratuito per un anno al trimestrale *English Teaching Forum*; euro 85 circa
- libri utili per la formazione professionale e culturale del docente di lingue, a scelta del vincitore, fino ad un valore complessivo di euro 400.00

### **Modalità di partecipazione**

Gli aspiranti dovranno presentare il resoconto della loro esperienza di insegnamento, in italiano o in inglese, attraverso una relazione scritta su carta, corredata da supporti audiovisivi e/o multimediali che contribuiscano ad evidenziare il valore e la qualità dell'intervento condotto.

I dettagli della modalità di partecipazione si trovano sul sito [www.tesol.it](http://www.tesol.it)

Il tutto dovrà essere inviato a

**TESOL-Italy**

**Sirio Di Giuliomaria Award**

**Via Boncompagni 2**

**00187 Roma**

entro e non oltre il **15 ottobre 2010**. Farà fede la data del timbro postale.

Sarà escluso il materiale che non si attenga alle regole indicate.

## *AAAL in Atlanta*

by Lucilla Lopriore

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The American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL) is the United States affiliate of the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA). Founded in 1977, triple AL, as it is usually referred to, is a professional organization whose members engage in research and practice in applied language issues. The AAAL conference takes place every year, usually in the USA; it is often held immediately before the TESOL Intl. Conference and in the same city, but while many TESOLers attend AAAL, fewer AAAL members attend TESOL. This year both in Atlanta and in Boston there were special sessions devoted to the commonalities between the two organisations. AAAL is generally attended by applied linguists working in academic contexts and usually involved in diverse research work and by a growing number of young people. As explicitly highlighted by Heidi Byrnes, this year AAAL conference chair, "AAAL's advocacy enables graduate students to become valued and valuable voices in our field".

This year the AAAL annual conference was held in Atlanta, GA, from 6 to 9 March 2010. Organised into sessions subdivided according to AAAL 16 strands (Language acquisition, Language & learner characteristics, Assessment and evaluation, Language cognition and brain research, Language and ideology, Second and foreign language pedagogy, Discourse analysis etc.), colloquia, plenaries and poster sessions, the conference lasted four full days. There were 6 plenaries, 655 presentations, numerous poster sessions – usually on the research work of PhD students – which attract most people, and 34 colloquia (6 of them 'invited', i.e. specifically organised

by AAAL). A colloquium is one of the most interesting formats, where 6 to 8 major experts in a field present the latest research results or discuss together emerging topics in applied linguistics.

This year some areas and topics emerged as pivotal in the conference: re-defining applied linguistics, the role of language policies and of ideology, implications of research on bilingual learners for Second Language Acquisition (SLA), and new perspectives for child language acquisition. All of these areas were explicitly addressed by some of the plenary speakers and by the majority of colloquia. In his video plenary conference M.A.K. Halliday addressed the issue of the definition of applied linguistics, a field that has always included a vast amount of areas while providing the foundation for insightful analyses of text. Halliday suggests the idea of calling functional linguistics 'applicable' rather than 'applied' in order to neutralize the distinction between the theoretical and the applied and better mirror current AL orientation. Diane Larsen-Freeman in her plenary on complex and dynamic systems, discussed the need for a transdisciplinary perspective where disciplines are superseded by new forms of activities. The relevance of research in linguistic anthropology was discussed by Richard Young in his engaging plenary where Young suggested to look at language learning and teaching as discursive practice and illustrated how learning or teaching a language "positions learners and teachers politically". Lourdes Ortega in her passionate plenary faced the emerging issue of research on bilingual learners in SLA research – too often biased by a monolingual preconception. The main theme of

Mary McGroarty's insightful plenary was how frameworks using orientations and ideologies emerging in language policies should be further investigated in education as well as in applied linguistics. Michael Tomasello - from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig – described in his closing plenary how research on child language acquisition has shown that when children process the language they experience in discourse interactions with other persons, they exclusively rely on their social and cognitive skills and gradually build more abstract linguistic constructions.

Invited colloquia addressed both theoretical and practical issues, as: the acquisition of several languages in school contexts, major perspectives in the research on writing, the connection between psycholinguistics and pedagogy, current critical approaches in technology and research perspectives in content-based second language instruction. Among the most thought provoking colloquia: the one on Language and Diaspora Identities that explored linguistic constructions of identity in diasporic contexts, the one on Theoretical Perspectives on English Language Variation that investigated the development of World Englishes, the one on Post Structuralist Challenges to Applied Linguistics on the radical reorientation that a post-structuralist approach determines in SLA, the one on recent theoretical and empirical evidence of English as a Lingua Franca and the one on Language and Context that dealt with the question of linguistic features of situated discourse in different genres.

Next AAAL conference will be held in Chicago March 26-29 2011. For those interested, visit <http://www.aal.org/>

## Re-imagining Tesol

by Marina Morbiducci

(continued from p.1)

The plenary sessions were four in total; on the following day “*TESOL: Past, Present, and Future*” was presented by three outstanding speakers: Andy Curtis, Kathy Bailey, and David Nunan who dealt with the three temporal levels of development of an association like TESOL, in particular asking, with a highly postmodern style, where the association is going.

“*The Implications of the Evolving Reading Brain for Cognitive and Linguistic Development and Our Teaching*” was the impressive topic of Maryanne Wolf’s plenary. Her presentation provided an overview of how the brain learned to read across time and across different writing systems, connecting such development with implications for the future: very engagingly she asked how learning to read in a digital culture can change our way of thinking. The evolutionary perspective on the reading brain may have, according to Wolf, intriguing consequences on children learning how to read - and think - in a second language.

The last presidential plenary was “*Re-Imagining the Leadership Power of TESOL*” and was delivered by TESOL Intl. President Mark Algren (who, by the way, will be in Rome on the occasion of the Spell Event to be held on May 8). The focal point was that as language is such a basic commodity, everyone has an opinion on it; similarly, the profession of teachers isn’t respected enough because everyone thinks that teaching can be done without any special professional training; on the contrary, as an association, we aim at strengthening our profile especially in terms of leadership; and President Algren openly asked us: “Are you ready to lead?”.

An interesting answer was provided by the colloquium “*Re-imagining Leadership of ELT*”. Among the participants there were Mary Ann Christison and Denise Murray (whose interesting paper, in absentia, was read by her colleague Mary Ann) who are certainly the most interesting experts in the field (it is worth reminding their recent publication *Leadership in English Language Education: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Skills for Changing Times*, Routledge, New York, 2009); drawing from Hofstede’s models on leadership, considering Goleman’s work focused

on emotional intelligence, and Gardner’s multiple intelligence theory, they depicted a clear and attractive portrait of the “ideal” leader where both universal attributes and culturally contingent attributes of leadership were presented, and empathy and social skills, humane orientation and team capabilities were observed. Eventually it turned out that the ideal leader should be sincere, visionary, inspirational, decisive, diplomatic, administratively competent, team integrator, performance oriented, able to anticipate, intra-group conflict avoider, but also risk taker, self-effacing and willful: in other words, we all have a lot to learn!

“*Perspectives and Opportunities of International Representation within TESOL*” was the topic of the Affiliate Colloquium where Christine Coombe, President Elect 2010-11, together with Jun Liu (President 2006-07), Gabriel Diaz Maggioli and Guillermo Poex Andrade (Ministry of Education in Mexico) discussed the role that the 150 different countries represented within TESOL Intl. may play within the professional association: diversity, variety, vitality are features that already exist and can also be further enhanced, Jun Liu encouragingly maintained.

And the academic session “*World Englishes: (Multi)Cultural Implications toward English Language Learning and Teaching*”, where panelists from Singapore, Australia, China, India, UK and US took part, opened up new perspectives on how World Englishes research can contribute to intercultural communication and English language teaching; once again, the role of culture can shape significant differences whose variety becomes mental richness.

In fact, we always learn a lot from TESOL Intl. annual convention: not just for the great quantity of talks, in different formats, featuring different types of sessions - from research-oriented to practice-oriented, from colloquia to discussion groups, from academic lectures to teaching tips, from workshops to video theaters, and so forth - but also for the in-depth treatment of many of the most important areas - from technology to teacher education, from materials writing to dynamic grassroots advocacy, from presentation skills to time management, from strategic planning to policy and governance issues. A whole world of TESOL can be imagined and re-imagined. Therefore, it is always so good RE-IMAGINING TESOL!

## Food for thought

by Franca Ricci Stephenson

(continued from p.1)

the classroom;

- is conscious of and questions his or her beliefs and language teaching;
- is cognizant of the institutional and cultural contexts in which he or she teaches;
- is responsible for his or her own professional development.

Regarding the first of the above points, an EFL teacher in Italy is very likely to find himself/herself facing the problem of **language improvement** as one, if not the greatest, of the problems to solve throughout his/her career. The whole long article does not mention language improvement specifically as part of teacher development, but I think it is the fundamental background against which any teacher development technique should be developed. It was fundamental for teachers of English when I went to school more than 50 years ago, and it still is, in spite of decades of technological progress.

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The deadline for submitting articles for the 2010 May- June issue is May 30th





# LANGUAGE FLOWS

Fostering learner progression  
Promoting intercultural communication  
Enhancing new media literacy  
Implementing effective language policies

## TESOL-ITALY'S 35<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL CONVENTION

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CONVEGNO NAZIONALE DI AGGIORNAMENTO E DI FORMAZIONE PER INSEGNANTI DI LINGUA INGLESE NELLE SCUOLE DI OGNI ORDINE E GRADO TESOL-ITALY – ASSOCIAZIONE QUALIFICATA DIRETTIVA MIUR 90/2003

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