



News Letter

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Examining the “E” in TESOL

by Marina Morbiducci

Examining the “E” in TESOL is the title of TESOL International Convention 2011 which will take place in New Orleans, on March 17-19. One may well wonder what the capital “E” which is being “Examined” could stand for; and one may also easily venture to suggest that, considering TESOL’s mission, the “E” might refer to: English, Education, perhaps E-learning... Or what else?

Let’s consider the “Vision Statement” of the convention “In today’s world where English has become the primary language of business, education, science and technology, it has evolved and changed to meet these and other global and local or glocal needs. What implications does this globalization of English have for TESOL and for you? This year, as we continue to re-imagine TESOL, we invite you to consider what E means in your contexts and to examine what E we teach, for what purposes, how, to whom, and with what results.

“We invite you to examine the E in TESOL in a context where e-communication, easy travel, and e-pedagogy are changing the English language and effecting current approaches to the learning and teaching of the language; where these changes are influencing our experience, expertise, and evaluation of the field; and where issues of equity, excellence, and effectiveness have taken center stage. In such a context, it is essential for us to understand what it is that we teach and how that understanding can influence our actions, theories, and practices”.

Indeed, the hypotheses for the “E” multiply in a myriad of options: not just

(continued on p.6)



Food for thought From TESOL publications



Working for better “reading literacy”

by Franca Ricci Stephenson

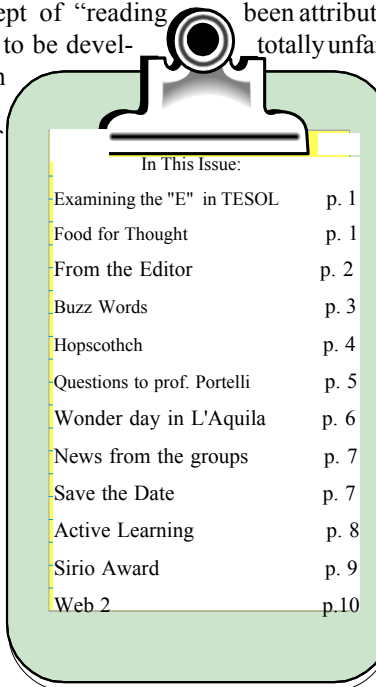
The 2009 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) survey was based on the concept of “reading literacy”, an ability to be developed not only in young learners, in their first years of school, but rather an ability based on a complex combination of knowledge and strategies in continuous evolution and life-long development. The results of the PISA 2009 survey, assessing 15 year old students’ key competencies in reading, mathematics and science, will be released in December 2010. How will Italian students

Our unsatisfactory ranking in past issues of the PISA survey have often been attributed to tests that would be totally unfamiliar to Italian students, who, according to many experts and teachers possess competencies that the PISA tests do not assess or reveal. There is probably some ground to such objections, but among the backwash effects of the PISA assessment there is a debate on the effectiveness of the school system to enable students to meet the challenges of the future, to prepare them to analyse, reason and communicate their ideas effectively, and to

fare in “reading literacy”? Hopefully better than in the past, when they reached only the 20th place (2000).

equip them to continue learning throughout life.

(continued on p.11)



In This Issue:

Examining the “E” in TESOL	p. 1
Food for Thought	p. 1
From the Editor	p. 2
Buzz Words	p. 3
Hopscotch	p. 4
Questions to prof. Portelli	p. 5
Wonder day in L’Aquila	p. 6
News from the groups	p. 7
Save the Date	p. 7
Active Learning	p. 8
Sirio Award	p. 9
Web 2	p.10

Knitting together communities and people

by Fleur Cowan
Deputy Cultural Attaché at the U.S. Embassy

Recently I had the great pleasure to visit L’Aquila to congratulate the latest graduating class of TESOL’s L’Aquila Action project. It was a real pleasure to be hosted by the Scuola Media Dante Alighieri. I am very proud of the achievement of all the teachers involved, and I am sure that the new center at the Scuola Media Alighieri will be a great resource for teaching and professional development. It was also wonderful to return to Abruzzo, with its beautiful mountains that remind me of my home in Seattle.

The courage and determination of the teachers I met in L’Aquila was a great inspiration and reminded me of people I have met around the world while serving as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer, and the strength and generosity of communities in the face of great

(continued on p.8)

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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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From the editor

Connections

by Anna Rosa Iraldo

The articles in this issue show a range of different interpretations of what “connecting” implies. Edith Stein’s image quoted by Morbiducci - “*human knowledge is like a bridge linking the two separate banks of personal and collective life*” - fits well with Fleur Cowan’s statements that “*education is the key to knitting together communities and people who have been damaged by terrible tragedy*”, and that “*through language learning we connect different people and cultures*”.

As a matter of fact the image of “knitting together”, linked as it is to the process of keeping together a whole by adding stitch to stitch, calls to mind the patient work of educators especially FL educators, as this work involves creating and solidifying connections between the language, the learner, and the educator. It applies to the process of reading which, as the “Food for Thought” article states, is based on the fundamental strategy of making connections, thus creating the basis for understanding and enjoying a text.

Connection in a more technical sense underlies the new widespread offer of on-line education referred to in the “Buzz Word” column, even though its educational effectiveness is to some extent questioned as it limits and devalues “*the pedagogical role and potential of encounters between learners and teachers and among learners themselves*”, which are a form of connection indispensable to all educational processes.

Connection is what Sandro Portelli in his interview refers to as “*an effort to listen for and understand the others*” also underlining that “*listening means a different kind of cultural attitude*”.

Connection is at the basis of a Comenius exchange such as the one described by Simonetta Romano, while the urge for connections is what drives Lina Vellucci to ask colleagues “*to send suggestions on how to promote activities and share information with the teachers of L’Aquila, to facilitate communication and give them the chance to continue the great work they have been doing*”. And a similar need for connection is at the basis of the work of local groups.

We seem to live in a world of connections. Knitting together different teachers and different experiences is what TESOL Italy strives to do, following its belief in such values as “*collaboration in a global community of interaction of research, of reflective practice for educational improvement, and of respect for diversity and multiculturalism*”. It is in the hope of continuing this active connection next September that the editorial board of the Newsletter wishes all Tesolers a serene and restful summer vacation.



Buzz-words

Lucilla Lopriore

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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: On-line?

On-line or online is a loan word mostly used in Italian as a collocate with *apprendimento, formazione, insegnamento, servizio, corso* etc., while in English it is less frequently used than, for example, 'distance' used as a collocate with *learning* or courses. Distance learning is an educational system in which learners can study in their own time, at their own pace, and without face-to-face contact with the teacher: it is a non-contiguous form of education. Online education involves two-way communication usually between teacher and student and uses technology to facilitate and support the educational process.

We are facing an unprecedented offer of distance language learning and language teacher education courses both at national and international level. Many are the reasons for this unavoidable trend: the tremendous potential of the Internet for rapid dissemination of knowledge and information to a worldwide audience, the inexpensive distribution of online resources, the reduced need for technical support, the immediate accessibility for an unlimited number of users, the limited amount of study time available for learners and teachers and, in Italy, the opportunity to gain some sort of a bonus for progress in teachers' careers. Online education is more common than ever; policy makers view distance teacher education and language learning as the panacea for all educational issues and as a wave of the future. We do not know, however, what the real impact of information technology on education is (Warschauer, 1999; Cummins, 2000; Murray, 2000). This would require longitudinal studies on teachers' and learners' achievement.

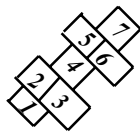
There are certainly several advantages in distance training for the learners: the easy and affordable training delivery at learners' own pace and location; the opportunity of saving travel time and expenses, of having direct access to web resources, of becoming 'digital' (Negroponte, 1995) independent learners and of participating in chats (if available)

with other learners. It also depends upon the final objective of the training: reaching a required level of language competence or achieving competence in specific language teaching fields such as digital technology, content based instruction or language education. What will the 'online training' enable the course participants to do as a result of the training? And how? How will it impact the education system in the long run? While distance education has achieved a new prominence, much about the processes involved - the background preparation and effectiveness of online tutors, the appropriateness of the materials used and the quality of participants' response - is insufficiently investigated and understood. Important aspects of the learning experience are transformed in the distance context such as learner motivation, an understanding of the distance learning context, the demands it places on the participants, the responsiveness of the teacher. The particular nature of distance learning contexts means that it is crucial for learners to develop the ability to engage in it without direct mediation from the teacher, in ways which are personally meaningful and useful for themselves (White, 2003). Teacher mediation has an important place in distance learning but it is different in both the attention it pays to each individual learner and the way it operates (e.g. in asynchronous communication) and this represents a major point of adjustment for learners. Real-time interactions in face-to-face encounters can structure and support the learning process by providing immediate feedback and opportunities to develop learners' own identities and understanding. The balance between online and face-to-face training of the current circulating proposals for distance language or teacher education courses is almost non-existent as it is mostly in favour of the online option only, thus limiting and devaluing the pedagogical role and potential of encounters between learners and teachers and among learners themselves. Is online thus better?

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HOPSCOTCH

Resources for teachers

This section addresses issues that are of interest for teaching English to young learners

* * * * *

The Franklin Global SpellEvent Championship in Rome

by Stefano Mochi

Like last year, also this year the 2nd local SpellEvent of the Franklin Global SpellEvent Championship for EFL students has been held in Rome. The local SpellEvent, organized by Tesol-Italy in collaboration with TESOL International and sponsored by Franklin Electronic Publishing, took place on 8 May 2010 at the *Istituto Tecnico per il Turismo 'C. Colombo'* and enjoyed the participation of 48 students aged 15 or younger belonging to six different secondary schools, five of which are located in Rome and one in Terni.

The SpellEvent championship has been a tradition in American schools for more than one hundred years. It consists in asking students to spell English words in front of a panel of judges. The words, chosen by Franklin from the Merriam Webster's Advanced Learner's English dictionary, are read by a 'pronouncer'.

After the pronouncer says the word, the learner has various options to choose among such as asking to hear an alternate pronunciation, its definition and origin, and a sentence using the word in question.

Once all these options are exhausted, the student has to spell the word within the allowed time set by the SpellEvent rules. If the spelling of the word is considered correct by the judges, the student enters the next round, otherwise he/she is eliminated. The competition goes on for as many rounds as necessary until only two students remain.

The first two contestants in each local SpellEvent participate in the finals to be held in New York in August 2010. This year's championship has involved 12 countries: Argentina, Chile, China, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Russia, Senegal, South Korea, Turkey and United Arab Emirates. Each of the countries above has organized a local SpellEvent and has selected a first and a second-

place winner. The first-place winner in the SpellEvent in Rome was a student from Liceo Classico 'E.Q. Visconti', the second-place winner a student from Liceo Scientifico 'M. Malpighi'. These two contestants will receive an all-expense-paid trip to the US, both for themselves and for a parent or a guardian, while the winner in the finals in New York will receive a \$10,000 scholarship.

Tesol-Italy has contributed to the event by finding a suitable venue, selecting participating schools, establishing contact with them, keeping them informed about the rules of the championship as well as about all the other administrative commitments (various forms and release notes to be filled in) and finally, by providing the staff on the day of the event (organizer, pronouncers, one of the two scorers, the Master of Ceremonies). TESOL International provided two judges

The considerable effort Tesol-Italy has put into the organization of the championship has had its reward since the event proved to be a great success, both among students and teachers as well as among the parents who attended the SpellEvent in Rome. A hearty thanks go then to all Tesol-Italy's members who painstakingly and enthusiastically did their best to realize it: in particular, Tesol-Italy wishes to thank Beth Ann Boyle (the organizer), Mary-Beth Flynn (the Master of Ceremonies), Rosanna Morozzo Fiorentino and Paolo Coppari (the two pronouncers), Lucilla Lopriore (a scorer). Special thanks also go to Marina Morbiducci, President of Tesol-Italy, who has supported the initiative and delivered the welcome speech to all participants; to Professor Ester Rizzi, Headmistress of the Istituto Tecnico per il Turismo 'C. Colombo' who generously hosted the event in her school and provided the necessary equipment (stage, microphones, chairs, tables to accom-

modate the event) and finally to the staff of Franklin Electronic Publishing, who made the event possible.

Even though opinions vary about the pedagogical and educational implications raised by the spelling championship - especially concerning the emotional impact that competing under stressful conditions to win a prize may have on young adolescents - the event has provided the possibility of exploiting spelling skills as a tool to teach pronunciation. As regards this point, all the teachers who participated in the SpellEvent in Rome agreed that it gave them a fruitful opportunity to focus on a language skill which is often neglected. While training for the competition, in fact, they reported seeing their students trying to come to terms with phonetic symbols in order to pronounce new words correctly and in an autonomous way, the latter skill being all too often taken for granted.

Another beneficial effect that teachers reported is that spelling practice helps learners to focus on specific phonetic rules and sounds which they may find difficult to grasp. Just to give an example, students could learn how English verbs like *try* or *carry* change their final 'y' into 'ies' (e.g. *tries*, *carries*) in the third person singular.

To conclude, for all those who think that teaching spelling skills is an activity worth trying, a few sites, containing videos, games and teaching tips, are provided below:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spelling_bee
- <http://www.timesspellingbee.co.uk/>
- http://www.google.it/search?q=spelling+bee&hl=it&lr=lang_en&sa=G&as_qdr=all&tbs=lr:lang_1en,vid:1&prmd=iv&source=univ&tbo=u&ei=L5wMTI3ND4-X_QbZjpwE&oi=video_result_group&ct=title&resnum=9&ved=0CFcQqwQwCA
- <http://alittlebritofus.blogspot.com/2009/07/gara-di-spelling-spelling-bee-di-times.html>
- <http://www.spellingbeethegame.com/>
- <http://www.quia.com/pop/94708.html>

“Orality, writing and the logic of non-standard English: the case of ‘Huckleberry Finn’”

Questions to prof. Alessandro Portelli

by Rosanna Fiorentino Morozzo

As in every TESOL-Italy Convention the highlights are the presentations of the plenary speakers, which at the 2009 Convention topped the number of six. Among them was Alessandro Portelli, professor of American literature at the School of Human Sciences of the University of Rome, “La Sapienza”, who delivered a talk entitled “Orality, writing and the logic of non-standard English: the case of ‘Huckleberry Finn’ and was kind enough to answer a few questions.

1) The issues you deal with in your talk match the general theme of our convention “Multiplying Voices”. As you pointed out, in his novel “*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*”, Twain presents us with seven different languages: four dialects and three variants. Do these different voices produce a break in communication and forms of misunderstanding, or do they represent the rise of new scenarios in the American society which need to be attended to?

What happens is that each English speaking reader is asked to make an effort to understand what the other person is saying in their different variant, and Twain is not talking about different languages, he is talking about variants of one language. So what he is doing is telling us that we must move away from a normative perspective in which there is one correct way of using the language, and move towards a plurality.

Once we admit plurality, then each one - while being free to retain whatever the variant is - needs to make an effort to listen for and understand the others. And what it does is what Twain points out implicitly, that this effort calls for imagination; it requires an effort in listening. Listening means a different kind of cultural attitude. And imagination means that the kind of listening that we have been asked to do is a lot closer to poetry than to everyday prose. So the characters of the book always understand one another even though they all have different variants. To us they sound like minor variants, but they mean a lot to them.

Somehow Twain anticipates the philosophy of listening, the education to listening, which has been developed more and more nowadays. He intuitively understands that.

His background is not so much literary as journalistic. Even before that, he is part of a story-telling society. He is at the frontier and the frontier is a melting pot of many stories and languages. Communication is spoken; it is oral. So he grew up listening. In fact, one critic says that Huck’s speech is patterned very much after the speech of some young black children that he knew when he was growing up. It’s in the ear a lot more than in the eye. It’s through becoming near to the practice to what speakers do, rather than through what speakers are supposed to do that he generates his sensitivity to language.

2) As teachers of English today we are faced with the challenging task of developing our students’ awareness of the wide spectrum of varieties of Englishes, even though we ourselves were trained to achieve a sound command of Standard English. As far as ELT is concerned what suggestions or guidelines could you offer teachers of English in Italy? *As teachers of English, I think a sound command of standard English is OK. I do not think that we need to give up the standard language, for example to give up Italian, so that we all speak different dialects, which, in the case of Italy, means that we do not communicate.*

In the case of English, what we should be aware of is that standard language is one variety that serves certain purposes and certain contexts. For one thing it is more of a lingua franca, it is the variety upon which writing has developed, it is a variety that is used mainly in institutions. So it’s good for citizens to be able to speak it. On the other hand, it does not mean that it is a better variety. So we should all become multilingual; we should be able to use the different varieties of the language we know in the appropriate contexts, including using them in an inappropriate context in order to make a point, but being aware of their history, of the social space and of the different backgrounds and pur-

poses. This, of course, is even more complicated in the case of current migration because when we are talking about dialects, we are speaking of people talking their own native language. When we are talking about immigrants, we are talking about people who are being forced to speak a foreign language because nobody knows their language and it’s not a variety of their language, it is a foreign language. So, if the English spoken by a Senegalese immigrant - who speaks his own native language and French - isn’t perfect, it’s for the same reason why the English that a lot of us speak is an imperfect language: it’s a foreign language. On the other hand, if you get some people from Kenya, Nigeria or from a certain social class, then it’s also one of their native languages. And India is a great example. Indian English is not an imperfect English, it is Indian English. We ought to be aware of the fact that, if we are asking a Chinese person to speak English it’s like asking an English person to speak Chinese. It won’t be perfect.

3) We know that your interests stretch far beyond literature, namely history – both oral and written - drama, music, folk and popular music. How do these different fields connect?

Well, I guess in two ways. I have been asking myself the same question. One reason is language: I’m truly fascinated by language and language in history. I don’t mean so much history as oral history. Our relationship to the past is couched in language. The other thing is, not just language in the abstract, but also language in terms of the social subjects of language: who the speaker is, which means on the one hand we have been talking about dialects, about folklore, about oral history, uses of language of people who are not part of the institutional literary canons of authorized usage of language. That is one of the keys through which you can have the sense of what I call the class struggle in culture, the class distinctions in culture and the ways in which culture becomes an expression of social and personal difference.

(continued to p.11)

Wonder Day in L'Aquila

by Lina Vellucci

Tesol-Italy and the U.S. Embassy in Rome are sponsoring what has been called the 'L'Aquila Action' program. Within the **Language Improvement Course**, I held a seminar and workshop on 'Project planning: Fun activities in the Classroom' on 17th March 2010 for teachers of English of L'Aquila and the surrounding area.

I must say that I had the opportunity and honor to meet a number of committed teachers who have been able to carry on, notwithstanding the difficulties, their work in primary, middle and high schools in the region that was so badly destroyed by the 2009 earthquake.

I'd like you to consider this as a page from my diary in memory of what I experienced there and not a report on the seminar itself.

I had never been to the city before. On the evening when I arrived I visited some of the historical sites that were not completely damaged and some of the modern houses that had been built since the quake. Even if it was almost dark, I could perceive from the scaffolding all around the place and the desert streets what a great blow it had been for the population.

But only the following morning when I was chaperoned around the city centre by a wonderful colleague who hadn't been there since the quake, and explained to me what had happened to every single building, street and shop of this beautiful city surrounded by snowy mountains and blessed by a unique air, did I fully understand what the population had gone through - and I was totally stunned.

Words and images can hardly express what everyone in this city has had to cope with to overcome every day difficulties, to find a reason to carry on their lives. But what struck me most was the will to improve, not to let go, not to allow the psychological strain get the best of them.

After the one-year commemoration this month, I would like to address the readers of this Newsletter, from L'Aquila and elsewhere, to send suggestions on how to promote activities and share information with the teachers of L'Aquila, to facilitate communication

and give them the chance to continue the great work they have been doing together with their students that have wanted to go back to their city because it was, in their own words, "where we are supposed to be".

We know it's not easy, and as my brave chaperone put it, "I have to keep my spirits high for all those around me. I cannot let go and I won't let go. I want my city back".

This is probably what each and every one of us says every day but I'd like to consider it an added value to those who have resisted and are still doing so there in L'Aquila.

Thank you all for this touching and rewarding experience.

Examining the "E" in TESOL

by Marina Morbiducci
(continued from p.1)

"English", but also what kind of English; not just "Education", but also "Evaluation"; not just "E-communication", but also "E-pedagogy". We can therefore add more clues to the "E" than we initially thought. Besides that, the above statement also refers to "Experience" and "Expertise", both aspects that TESOLers certainly want to share; and what about "Equity", "Excellence", "Effectiveness": aren't they TESOL values too?

The New Orleans convention program appears so rich and stimulating, full of "Elan". And yet, we would like to try and suggest one more magic word, still beginning with an "E", which in our opinion is "Essential", as it stands at the basis of TESOL advocacy: that is, "Empathy".

We have lately come across that anthropological term while revisiting some notions from Edith Stein's seminal work on "Empathy" – namely her thesis with the philosopher Husserl written as early as 1916 – where, among many other intriguing intuitions, she proposed a fascinating view: human knowledge is like a bridge linking the two separate banks of personal life and

collective life; in this projection of the individual into the life of the many lies the foundation of mutual understanding, thus constituting a sort of basic grammar which eventually aims at defining the true essence of empathy: "the experience of subjects different from us which allows us to grasp their consciousness". In other words, only if and when we plunge into somebody else's experience, and share it, truly and wholeheartedly, we become "Empathic", and can reach genuine understanding of the others – of their beliefs, actions, problems, aspirations, failures, successes, etc.

On closer consideration, such a stance seems very similar to what we would like to achieve through associations like TESOL: sharing knowledge and expertise, exchanging experiences, developing others, leveraging diversity, believing in a community of practice. And in order to implement those views we would also like to recall Margaret Mead's words: "*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizen can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has*". Re-examining the "E" in TESOL can eventually lead us to that, too.

To contributors

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The deadline for submitting articles for the 2010 September-October issue is September 30th



NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

TESOL Venice Group

Activities

by Paola Vettorel

The TESOL Venice Local Group has been active since 2003, organising meetings and seminars on a number of diversified ELT subjects, involving teachers working both in primary and secondary schools. In 2009 the activities of the group were opened by Nancy Rose Steinbock, a member of the Venice group, with a seminar on dyslexia, followed by Gina Rodriguez' talk (in cooperation with OUP) "Motivating Children through stories, culture and DVDs in the Primary classroom", which was held both in Campalto (VE) and in Sedico (BL). In September Franca Ricci Stephenson illustrated "Il Divertinglese e l'ambiente di formazione FOR"; all meetings were attended by a good number of teachers. In Autumn Finn Kirkland (Macmillan speaker at the National 2009 Conference) in "ELT For The Digital Generation: Enhancing language learning through technology" gave a comprehensive view on ICT in the language classroom to teachers in Belluno.

The group, in cooperation with Ca' Foscari University- Dipartimento Scienze del Linguaggio and SSIS Veneto, also had the honour to host Prof. Janet Zaidina, plenary speaker at the 2009 TESOL National Conference, in two meetings: "Language, Learning, and the Brain" (Venice University doctoral students) and "The Multiple Brain Pathways Model for Language Learning" (open to all language teachers).

This year Nancy Rose Steinbock and *Inglese Dinamico* have offered TESOL members the possibility of attending a series of weekend seminars on diversified aspects of language learning as dyslexia, phonology, English acquisition for children, films and novels in language learning. Last April the group met on the occasion of Alun Phillips' stimulating and rich seminar "Blogs and Twitter, putting them to good use in the language class" (in cooperation with Loescher).

The group is planning its activities for the autumn, with topics including "Dic-

tionaries in the language classroom" (in cooperation with Macmillan), "English as a Lingua Franca" (P. Vettorel, Group coordinator and researcher at the University of Verona), both to be held in Campalto and in Belluno. As regards ICT, a series of meetings will be held in September in Campalto (VE) with D. Menga (a member of the local group), including topics such as Moodle, Hot Potatoes and Web Quests. G. Ludbrook, (researcher University of Venice) will then deal with the latest developments in CLIL, and D. Callegari, an active member of the group, will present the use of wikis in the language classroom.

In these last years the group has tackled a series of diversified up-to-date topics, especially ICT competences, which are becoming an essential tool in dealing with our digital-native students. Seminars both in the Venice and Belluno areas have been planned with the aim of setting up a closer link with the territory, thus also giving a greater number of teachers the chance to meet and get to know TESOL Italy.

LANGUAGE FLOWS

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

TESOL-ITALY'S

35th NATIONAL CONVENTION

NOVEMBER 19 – 20, 2010

Centro Congressi SGM

Via Portuense, 741

– 00148 ROMA

Save the Date



by Lina Vellucci

June 2010

International Business English

Summer Conference 2010

University 'Roma Tre', Rome. Italy

Faculty of Economics

Via Silvio D'Amico, 77 – 00145 Rome

25-26 June 2010

Keynote Speaker: Patrick Boylan,

'Teaching Business English as Culture'

August 2010

The European Society for the Study of

English (ESSE)

10th ESSE International Conference

24-28 August 2010

Turin

LEND Portonovo 2010

Humanism in Language Teaching

25-26 August 2010

Portonovo, Ancona, Italy

September 2010

The European Day of Languages

26th September 2010

The Council of Europe – The European Union

One Day Symposium in Italy

27th September 2010

Pisa University – Campus Lucca

I don't know if it's too early to write about the TESOL Int'l Convention.

45th Annual TESOL Convention

New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

17-18 March 2011

Ernest N. Morial Convention Center &

The Hilton New Orleans Riverside Hotel
Convention Center

ACTIVE LEARNING BY ACTIVE TEACHING

*Learning from each other
Comenius Multilateral-Partnership
at Liceo Ginnasio-Statale Tacito
(Rome)*

by Simonetta Romano

During the week May 10th–14th at my school was the last meeting of the Comenius Project,

“Young people dealing with diversity in their daily routine”.

This project was a great opportunity for my students to come in contact with different customs. The main goals of this Comenius were to make the students aware of cultural diversity and to convey the importance of becoming European citizens. We worked for the last two years with five other countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Spain, and the UK.

Some of our schools are located in national capitals or larger towns, while other partner schools are located in small villages and the cultural diversity has always been part of the daily (school) life. Some of our pupils have specific needs: “immigrant” pupils need some special guidance to help them integrate into their new home society and to prevent them from being socially excluded; the “autochthonous” pupils have to learn to live with the cultural diversity they are confronted with. Some of our schools have also welcomed pupils with special physical needs in the past few years. In this context working on diversity is crucial.

According to all the partners involved, the motivation to take part in this two year European cooperation was the importance of dealing with the theme of diversity in an international context. Apart from the opportunity to compare different school realities, the international aspect of the exchange has offered many advantages, such as:

- the unforced, spontaneous ability to practice foreign languages outside the context of the language classes;
- the fact that young people can learn a lot directly from each other about their different cultures without studying from books (learning within the peer group)
- the fact that taking part in a European project would show our pupils how to work together with people elsewhere in the world (i.e. Europe) by means of the ICT-world; working together on such a

large international scale also requires good organisation by both teachers and pupils.

The subjects or problems we addressed were:

Young people are often confronted with problems in their daily lives related to diversity. Their way of dealing with diversity is often determined by prejudices they are not aware of.

Objectives

We wanted our pupils to:

1. become aware of their prejudices;
2. discover how prejudices arise;
3. be able to get rid of existing prejudices and to avoid acquiring new prejudices.

Approach

We opted for the “self-discovering” approach, since we were convinced that the pupils’ mentality could only be altered by themselves; it was not a change that we, the teachers, could impose. Our pupils investigated their own situation related to diversity by means of two questionnaires. Both our 10 and 14/15 year old pupils completed these questionnaires. The 14/15 year olds in Rome (the last meeting) analysed the results of their own school themselves and compared them with those of the partner schools, trying to find clear conclusions to be reported in a series of “Behaviour Codes” (the final charter).

Knitting together communities and people

by Fleur Cowan

(continued from p.1)

adversity.

Before arriving in Rome to work as the Deputy Cultural Attaché at the U.S. Embassy, I was posted to Kabul, Afghanistan, as the Embassy spokeswoman and press officer. It was an extraordinary year in a ruggedly beautiful country where I got to know many tough yet welcoming Afghans. Some of the most dedicated people I met were women and teachers determined to close the gap in education left by 30 years of war and destruction. Civil war and the Taliban regime denied a generation of children, especially girls, formal education. Between 2002 and 2007 the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) invested \$343 million in education and, since 2007, has allocated another \$96 million every year. Today the Afghan Ministry of Education, in partnership with USAID, has a five-year National Education Strategic Plan and over 6 million children attend school. Every year the need for classrooms and teachers is far outstripped

by demand. Parents, fathers included, understand that education means opportunity - a key to options and choices that would be otherwise unavailable. Education is also key to understanding and contributing fully as a citizen and member of the community.

One afternoon during my year in Afghanistan I spent a couple hours talking with a group of female students who were studying English. They were just like teenagers anywhere, making jokes and wearing jeans and fashionable tops with neatly folded headscarves. Just like teenagers I meet here at high schools in Italy, they talked about getting jobs after university, or studying for an advanced degree or perhaps one day traveling abroad. They knew that learning English was a key to new opportunities for them, and speaking together we bridged our very different cultures through a common language.

I also spent time at the University of Kabul, where in green and shady lanes students with arms full of books walked together, some sitting in groups on the grass drinking tea and chatting animatedly, some hurrying off to the library or the next class. One professor I met talked about how the University was an oasis in many senses in the bustling traffic-choked city. Not only is it full of trees and greenery, as compared to the brown mountains that circle the city, but it is also a peaceful place for students and teachers to meet and build a future out of the pieces of their past. Much like the professionalism and patience of the teachers I met in L’Aquila last week, my Afghan friends and colleagues in the field of education are building and rebuilding their society and culture in the place where it is most important - the hearts and minds of their young people.

Although I am biased, having a mother, a grandmother and a grandfather who were all teachers, I really think that education is the key to knitting together communities and people who have been damaged by terrible tragedy, be it natural or manmade. In addition to Italy and Afghanistan, I have lived and worked in Pakistan, Darfur, Haiti and Iraq. I know very well that no tragedy is the same. But what I also know is that the most important things we learn when traveling the world are the things we learn from the people we meet - the incredible kindness and generosity, the determination and tenacity to protect and strengthen families and communities. It is deeply humbling to meet individuals who have lost so much and yet continue to give to others. Through language learning we connect different people and cultures, through communication we realize how much more unites us than divides us. The gift of understanding, of language, of learning is, as the cliché goes, priceless. But also, nothing can ever take it away.



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*; (• 85 circa)
- libri utili per la formazione professionale e culturale del docente di lingue, a scelta del vincitore, fino ad un valore complessivo di • 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

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.

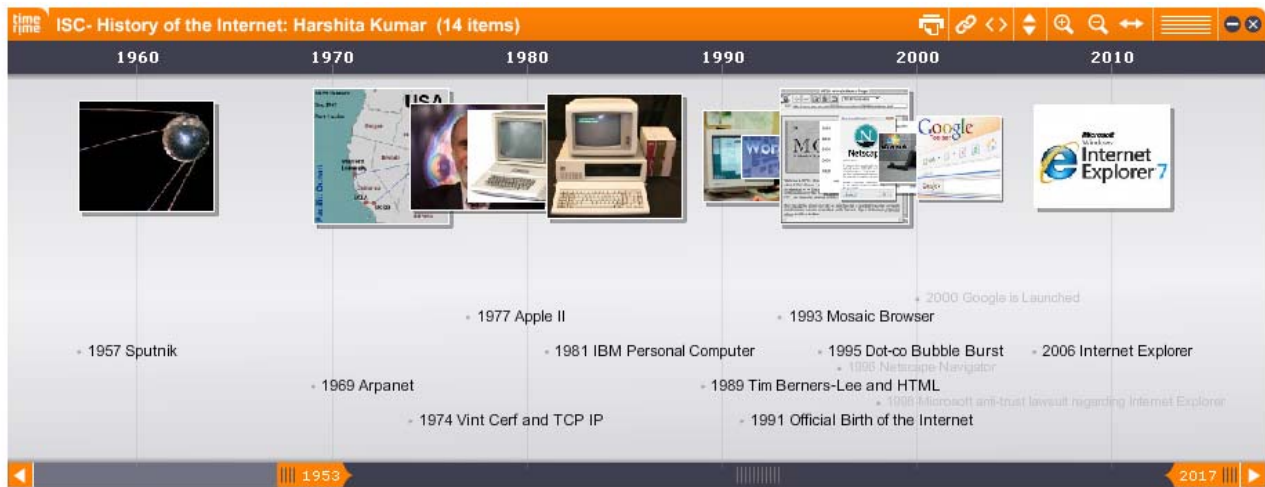
Sarà escluso il materiale che non si attenga alle regole indicate.

WEB2- Everyone can participate

by Valentina Dodge

Timelines in next to no time!

Chronologically displaying events has never been exclusive to history lessons or grammar books. Many of you probably already use timelines to tell or recap a story, to reinforce understanding or to add visual impact to a theme. By arranging events around timelines learners can sequence important pieces of information, summarize key elements or capture and share their perspective of a topic. Timelines are more than just effective visual representations of historical dates, they offer endless opportunities of personal interpretation and language production.



Office software such as Microsoft Office Excel with its SmartArt and callouts might already be familiar to you and your learners. For years it's been a super way to make a quick timeline more visually attractive. Now, with web 2.0 timeline tools we can easily include more than text and arrows. Teachers and learners can add hyperlinks, multiple images, and even videos. Online timelines can be shared on our class blog, wiki or virtual learning environment or simply produced as an additional part of each learner's personal private learning portfolio.

Timelines support story-telling tasks, they provide graphic enhancement for discussions or presentations of events. Creating them can appeal to a range of learning styles, the kinesthetic learner will benefit from the hands-on fun, the visual/spatial learner from the look and feel and the verbal/linguistic learner will enjoy the challenge of summarizing details succinctly. The multi-dimensional features of timelines will be enjoyable to all.

Here are a few ideas that teachers might use with learners:

Use existing timelines—search the internet or get learners to search the internet to explore the great timelines already available. These can be used to present or discuss a topic, to compare with the brainstormed suggestions your learners have produced around a subject or as a lead-in. They are great as a concept checking summary to a reading text.

Create timelines to illustrate—with a tools such as <http://www.timerime.com> and <http://www.capzles.com>. For lower levels start a school year with a simple "A day in my life" 24-hour timeline to share information about yourself and give a model. Enhance the timeline with some personal photos to add a human touch and help learners get to know you.

Get learners to create their own - this is the fun part! Learners can make timelines about their life, a film they've seen, or a hobby they have. Any topic that includes progress or changes can easily be described via a timeline, whether it's a familiar subject such as my school, my town, my clothes in time or a more abstract and complex discussion area e.g. crime rates, human rights, environmental disasters, a timeline will capture and frame the key ideas and with its multimedia elements allow learners to meander in new directions.

Work collaboratively

Uploaded to your virtual environment timelines can consolidate group work or be central to it. As we've seen with other virtual tools, web 2.0 resources allow learners to work collaborative. Once each learner is more familiar with adding or editing events to a their own timeline, project work around one topic can start and be motivating and very engaging. They can be stored, shared and developed over time.

There are many free tools which are easy to use – some also offer a library of categorised timelines that can be a great starting point. Try www.timerime.com/ and www.capzles.com for rich multimedia experiences!

(continued to p.11)

Questions to prof. Portelli

by Rosanna Fiorentino Morozzo

(continued from p.5)

So basically these are the two elements: language per se, as performance, as spoken by somebody; and the speakers' identity.

4) What is the area of research and study that you have been carrying out recently?

I've just finished printing the manuscript of a 400 page book which is an oral history of Harlan County in the US. It is a mythic place of coal-miners in Kentucky, on the border with North Virginia. There has been a film on it. This is the closest thing I've ever seen to the American novel, because it begins in 1785 and ends in 2007. It's got 200 characters, and everything in it: the Frontier, the Civil War, slavery, industrialisation, unions, migration, environment, drugs, literature, music; it's got the whole thing. The first interview dates back to 1973 and the last one was done last October. Basically I have been going there, to Harlan County, every year to do interviews since 1984 and now I feel very lonesome because it's finished.

Thank you for participating in our annual convention and contributing with such an interesting talk.

It was my pleasure. I enjoyed coming here to your convention, meeting friends and seeing former students of mine who are now teachers.

Rome, November 20 2009

WEB2

by Valentina Dodge
(continued from p.10)



You can use these tools to generate a timeline to display during classwork or set learners homework around their own individual timeline. Give class an issue e.g friends, holiday trends, the life of a famous person then get learners to collect their ideas and jot them down before going online.

Some other interesting timeline ideas:

- for more advanced reading – check out <http://newstimeline.googlelabs.com/> this organises search results chronologically and allows users to view news on a browsable, graphical timeline.
- for your course syllabus – start a timeline at the beginning of term and use it to keep track of work covered or ideas for future months. Embed learners' work for an active record of their progress.
- for info gap and true/false - add false information to the timeline.

Remember : timelines can be timeless and can be made in next to no time!

Timeline tools and resources

X timeline <http://www.xtimeline.com>

TimeRime <http://www.timerime.com/>

Capzles <http://www.capzles.com>

Food for thought

by Franca Ricci Stephenson

(continued from p.1)

Without stepping into such a debate, but thinking of teachers' work in the classroom, it might not be useless to dedicate renewed attention to the teaching of reading comprehension strategies, and we find plentiful food for thought in Judie Haynes' article "Growing better readers"(1). The author reminds us that in previous columns she had written about four reading comprehension strategies which help English language learners become better readers: making connections, visualizing, inferring, and asking questions. In this article she develops the point of teaching a) how to determine relevant information in a text and b) how to synthesize information.

Ms. Haynes writes that good readers can make a distinction between relevant and irrelevant information in nonfiction text, and for this it is important to teach students to use titles, table of contents, bolded words, photographs, captions, headings, and labels to preview information. An example is given of a young learners' class where the teacher guided the learners to understand the focus of a specific chapter in a science textbook, by first pre-teaching relevant vocabulary, then explaining the key idea, and finally dividing the learners in small groups to determine which information, relating to the key idea of the text, could be considered relevant, and which ones irrelevant.

About teaching ELLs to summarize information, Ms. Haynes explains that good readers "know how to summarize important information and add their own schema to the information that they have learned." They take the new information and incorporate it into their schema. "As they read, they carry on an internal conversation that includes what they understand or don't understand, whether they agree or disagree, and what they wonder." She reports of second-grade students who were told by their teacher, Ms Wondra, that there are two voices speaking when they read. They were told that the voice they heard was their actual voice, while the other was the one inside their head. It is this inner voice which helps them think about what they are reading. According to Ms. Haines, when students in Ms. Wondra's class synthesize information, "they do more than retell what they have read. They demonstrate understanding of the reading comprehension strategies that they have used. They retell the story from two points of view. One is based on their own experience that they bring to the reading. The other is based on the experiences of the story's characters". Ms. Wondra organized work with her students pairing ELLs with native English speakers. Each pair was asked to decide how much of the text they would read before they stop and make comments about it. Students were taught in advance what language to use in making their comments, such as *This reminds me of*, *I felt that*, and *I didn't understand it when*. The whole process greatly helped students to understand and therefore synthesize, as synthesis cannot occur without understanding.

According to Ms. Haynes, synthesis is the culmination of the reading strategies, and we all agree with her, don't we? By the way, wouldn't reading strategies be a perfect common ground for work with colleagues of other subjects in planning for the next school year?

1 *Essential Teacher* – Volume 6, issue 3-4, October 2009



LANGUAGE FLOWS

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

TESOL-ITALY'S 35th NATIONAL CONVENTION NOVEMBER 19 – 20, 2010

Centro Congressi SGM Via Portuense, 741 – 00148 ROMA

**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**

TESOL-Italy Via Boncompagni 2 00187 Roma Italy Tel. +39 06 46742432 Fax +39 06 46742478
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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) e Simonetta Romano (simonetta_romano@infinito.it)

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