
Review

Respite for Teachers: Reflection and Renewal in the Teaching Life

Christine Pearson Casanave and
Miguel Sosa. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press,
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Reviewed by Barry McKenzie
Bunka Women's University

Authors Christine Pearson Casanave and Miguel Sosa come to the aid of beleaguered teachers with practical suggestions on how to meaningfully connect their inner selves with their work. The authors also coach teachers on extending this inner self-connectedness to how they live day to day. In the preface they state how the burdens of teaching can arrest teachers from viewing their own learning, listening to their students, and tasting life. Teachers' neglect of such opportunities for personal renewal and development ironically deals loss to "a satisfying teaching life" (p. v).

Helping teachers find their way in living a satisfying teaching life is the aim of this book. To this end, the authors urge teachers to cultivate their skills of observation and reflection in their work and daily lives. Teachers are encouraged to exercise these skills through such practices as connecting with people, events and things in their lives in order to achieve balance and understanding, mentoring as a way to restore teachers' faith in the work they do, and finding time for solitude when teachers can reflect, renew themselves

and achieve inner peace.

The authors' recommendations for varied experience in observing and reflecting evidently stem from each one's own interesting mix of education and experience that helped shape their individual views of teaching and learning. Chris's formal education is in art and applied linguistics. Miguel's fields are music and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). Both have studied second, third and fourth languages, and have taught English as a second/foreign language for several years. Having come to know each other through an online course at Teachers College, Columbia University in Tokyo, the authors began conversing with each other mostly via e-mail and shared ideas about art, language and teaching. These conversations enabled the authors to "uncover" aspects of these issues to find "insights and inspiration in the familiar territory of [their] teaching and learning, and of [their] reading and conversing about them" (p. viii).

The authors' approach in presenting the book's themes and topics is in itself an interesting study in diversity. The book's emphasis on varied opportunity for observation and reflection in helping teachers toward a satisfying working life appears early as the authors tell the story of how *Respite for Teachers* came together. The observation and reflection theme is further illustrated in variously formatted chapters that include anecdotal essays, personal reflections and topical lists on teaching, learning and life experiences. In addition, the authors reinforce their message on the pages with a thoughtful design of how the reader's experience unfolds throughout the book. The text is carefully interspersed with artistic illustrations, themed lists and examples of various writing genres from many contributors that enable the reader to experience and practice the very things that the authors promote as ways for reflection and renewing one's perspective.

A view of the various sections in a chronological walk through *Respite for Teachers* would enable an appreciation of its artistic, experiential layout; however, for purposes of this discussion, content

is considered in theme areas.

A few chapters address the challenge of “difficult students”; that is, students who are capable but unresponsive in the classroom. The authors recount instances of unreciprocated efforts to include such students in the mainstream pursuit of the course syllabus, and the feelings of frustration and helplessness that followed. Teachers are cautioned about falling into the trap of taking personally the conflict between teacher and student agendas. The writers counsel teachers to seek and understand the reasons behind the difficulty as a way to adjust their perspective of difficult students so that teachers feel more in a position to help these students than to be antagonistic towards them. Such students may have, understandably, lost trust in an education system that has written them off as misfits and that seems uninterested in helping them. The authors argue that teachers can connect in some way with difficult students by offering support through observing, conversing with and encouraging them as a means to demonstrate that teachers believe in these students’ potential. This belief, say the authors, “may be compared to an act of faith” (p. 44).

Another theme area is list-formatted chapters in which the title represents a topic and the authors provide several illustrative examples or instances of the topic. Here the authors present ordinary life events in a way that helps the reader see them from a viewpoint different from everyday experience. This fresh perspective is witty and illuminating with respect to how seemingly disparate things come to be linked through our similar feelings or responses towards them. For example, this reader would unlikely put the concepts of “spam” and “bullying” together in the same sentence, but the two ideas are somehow not so dissimilar when grouped under the chapter topic, “Loathsome Things” (p. 29). These list chapters show a novel connection among life experiences, and so help readers see these life events through new eyes. The ability to see things differently is important for renewal in the teaching life, say the authors.

A third theme addresses a checklist of discrete but connected factors in teaching and learning that the writers encourage teachers to consider in their work. A chapter is given to each of the following: *Grading*; *Fear and Curiosity*; *Conductors, Orchestras and Choirs* (regarding the teacher's role in affecting curiosity in students); *Connections*; *Mentoring*; and *Solitude*.

The book raises questions about an overemphasis on grading in schools. Grading, an effective tool for enforcing conformity, is contrasted with raising students' curiosity in discussing the pursuit of authentic education. The authors also discuss the sensation of fear that students and teachers have about failure, loss of dignity, or any of a number of things. The willingness to take risks that fear can curtail is critical to learning. And curiosity, the authors' weapon of choice against fear, is essential for risk-takers to work at learning in order to have more eventful and satisfying lives. Teachers must raise their own levels of curiosity and "become absorbed in other people and events and in interesting and challenging tasks" (p. 53). And it is the task of teachers to arouse such curiosity in their students.

The authors compare teachers to orchestra conductors who act as catalysts for meaningful class performance by ensuring that there is a measure of trust and unpredictability present to foster vibrant interaction among class members. Teachers (conductors) project their enthusiasm for a topic and, rather than wring token participation out of students, affect them such that they are driven to active discussion. Students' own reasons and desire to question are given impetus by teachers' genuine interest in the topic and in the students. Teachers who show their passion for a topic raise the classroom experience such that it transcends seemly classroom behavior and focuses students' hearts and minds on learning.

The chapter on connections deals with how connecting with people, things and events help us achieve balance and understanding. Teachers need to refresh, get comfort and experience connecting not

only for their own sake, but also in order to extend care to students and help them connect with their studies and so facilitate their learning.

The authors also relate stories of mentoring in which teachers, in giving help and advice to their students over an extended period, helped their students see their own potential. The authors see mentoring as a long-term investment in which a teacher's soul stands to gain much in return. In addition to mentoring as a means of self-support, the authors encourage teachers to seek solitude in physically spacious surroundings or in space created by their own thoughts. Solitude helps teachers deal with the stress and loneliness of their work by enabling them to become reinvigorated, to reflect and to be creative - all things good for the soul.

The final theme is embodied in "Epilogue," where readers are given an update on Hiroshi, a difficult student introduced in the opening chapter. The young man who had been let down by his home country's education system is in exuberant pursuit of his studies (in another country) to fulfil his dream of becoming a music producer. This is an encouraging sign for teachers that they should stay the course, that their efforts can reach students, and that they should not lose faith in themselves as teachers. Such faith sometimes has a way of spreading to students.

The authors' effectiveness in achieving their aim of helping teachers find their way in living a satisfying teaching life is evident in a sound strategy for empowering teachers to pursue this aim. The support that the authors give teachers in the following four areas makes this book a useful resource for teachers in need of guidance to leading a satisfying teaching life: (1) kindling teachers' trust; (2) showing the teacher's heightened valuation that comes with following the authors' suggestions; (3) showing teachers that they are able to carry out the authors' recommendations; and (4) inspiring teachers to find their way in living a satisfying teaching life.

Firstly, the authors offer a candid account of the ups and downs

of their teaching experience, and share their misgivings about the uncertainty that often surrounds the rewards of teaching. This sharing by the authors establishes a basis of commonality with teachers who can identify with what the authors have to say, and the authors' openness engenders a feeling of trust on the part of the reader teachers.

Secondly, the authors convey their profound belief in the value of diverse experience and thought in a teacher's personal development, and also a belief in the primacy of the teacher in shaping students' classroom educational experience. This viewpoint recognizes the necessity of teachers' welfare in promoting students' education, and so values teachers highly.

Thirdly, the authors draw teacher readers into the book's discussion by giving them opportunity to relate their own feelings and experiences to the issues under discussion, and by encouraging teacher readers to reflect on their own teaching and learning as well as on how they live their own lives. This approach enables teacher readers to feel involved with the book's discussion and to feel comfortable with their ability to apply the book's concepts to real classroom situations.

Finally, through thought-provoking discussion, the artistry of the book's illustrations, and the book's stimulating format, the authors present a model for living that places the teacher in the role of principal designer. The authors encourage teachers to be their creative best in this role, giving them inspiration to become artists of their own life work.

In closing, the personable, conversational style of Christine Pearson Casanave and Miguel Sosa makes this a comfortably readable and engaging book. It is, also, "an academic work of art" (p. 158), bold in its unconventionality, fresh in its creativity, and stirring in its spirit. *Respite for Teachers* was a unique opportunity for this reader to observe, question, and reflect on the teaching life in his own dialogue with the authors. If, in your reading experience, you have never felt that a book has listened to you, try reading this one.

Review

A Convenient Classroom Package for an Inconvenient Truth

Keith Ford

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*When the coast of California
Sinks into the ocean
And the ice poles are water
And England's green and pleasant land
Is all desert sand
No one will answer you when you call*

.....
*Make me a drink Caroline
Tall and icy*

(From "California," lyrics by Richard Butler)

*

There is something about a song—a musical mood, a telling lyric—that can carry a message in a succinct and effective way when perhaps an hour's worth of dry rhetoric and proselytizing remains unconvincing. But come on, the coast of California sinking into the ocean, and England all desert sand? Isn't this taking global warming too far? Well, yes, perhaps, but to a certain extent, isn't selling the man-made global warming argument partly about playing on emotions and relying on sentiment, fear and exaggeration? And using a popular medium like music or film is undoubtedly one way to get across such a serious message to a mass market. Indeed, one could say that this is how Al Gore goes about trying to put across his message in the film documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, that through increased emissions of carbon dioxide we—as opposed to a natural process of climate

change—are directly responsible for global warming and for all its dreadful and seemingly apocalyptic consequences.

In having to deal with such a responsibility and potentially disastrous reality, just like the character in the song above it is easy to reach for a drink in despair (“Tall and icy”—bitter glacial irony there perhaps?) rather than face up to the horrendous future that may await the planet for our children and future generations. But then hopefully, *if* we accept that we are the cause, we *can* actually do something about it, and without attempting to excuse my own shameful inactivity or alcohol consumption in response to any apparent crisis, perhaps something I can do is encourage the next generation to really pick up the thematic oar when I belong to a generation that may well have missed the boat: for as ELT agents we are undoubtedly in a privileged position to do this, but hopefully without coming across to our students as being too prescriptive. Using *An Inconvenient Truth* as classroom content is, I suggest, one interesting and very visual way of doing this, while at the same time keeping in mind the need to question some of the arguments and evidence that it presents.

With a twice-weekly, first-year, high intermediate-level four skills English class I used *A Young Person's Guide* version of the *An Inconvenient Truth* book in conjunction with the DVD of Al Gore's presentation and documentary, as well as providing my own vocabulary lists and notes for helping students' understanding of context and cultural references. *A Young Person's Guide* follows the documentary film almost exactly in terms of both content and language. Also, it works as a relatively high-level graded reader in that it is a simplified version of the original accompanying book. The readings are shorter and more concise while keeping the main ideas from the documentary presentation and the keywords and concepts relating to geography, climate, and other issues related to global warming. Also in the book can be found most of the excellent visual images that Gore uses as the basis for his speech.

Initially I used a PAL version of the DVD from the UK, which unfortunately involved carting to class extra equipment, but the Japanese version of the DVD came out in Japan on 6th July 2007. It has clear, accurate English captions and has many chapter divisions - 32 in all - with most chapters only a few minutes long and therefore making it convenient when locating a particular section or using the chapter menu display. The timings and chapter references mentioned below are from this Japanese version.

I used the DVD and some of the short readings from the book as something of an experiment to challenge my class with an input-oriented project (reading, vocabulary preparation and video/listening) after having already done projects/presentations on global issues and developing countries that involved plenty of speaking opportunities. We began the whole process with a short pair discussion/brainstorm on causes, effects and solutions of global warming and to what extent we are responsible.

I divided the DVD into four parts of about 20 minutes each, using it over four class periods. Conveniently, each part seemed to have a clear focus: what global warming is and how it is caused (00.36 seconds to 24.40), general effects of global warming (28.06 to 39.24 and 41.46 to 51.25), effects with a specific focus on Antarctica and Greenland (54.13 to 1.09.29), and misconceptions and solutions (1.09.29 to 1.29.30).

Each viewing was preceded by vocabulary preparation and a few short readings from the book (done for homework) highlighting some of the main issues covered in each section of the documentary. I divided each of the 20-minute parts again into two sections (of approximately 10 minutes each) and after viewing each of these sections students answered some review questions. We then watched the whole 20-minute section again and later checked answers. Finally, in the last 15 minutes of each class students wrote a 100-word summary of the 20-minute section using the vocabulary sheets I had provided to help them recall some of the main ideas and concepts and to recycle topic-

related vocabulary. Given more time, as opposed to just four classes at the end of the semester, the whole theme could well have been extended into a mini research project as students might investigate how an area and/or people of the world have been badly affected by ice melting or rising sea levels, such as the Inuit in Alaska, or the inhabitants of the Pacific islands of Kiribati.

In addition to presenting the key points about global warming (e. g., process, causes, effects), supported by charts, computer graphics and cartoon images, Gore makes good use of a few literary references and quotations to support his argument. To demonstrate denial? Mark Twain: “It ain’t what you don’t know that gets you into trouble, it’s what you know for sure that just ain’t so” (07.48). In cataloguing the misdeeds of a White House official in editing unfavorable research findings? Upton Sinclair: “It’s difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on him not understanding it” (1.16.48). These quotes could well be used as freeze-frames in class with further explanation from the instructor, discussion or multiple choice questions about what point made in the documentary they were used to exemplify.

As well as adding variety to his presentation style through anecdotes, exceptional visuals and such quotation touches, there is a good deal of wit in dealing with this most serious of issues. There are also some appropriate digs at a couple of former Republican presidents demonstrating their contempt for the whole debate: Ronald Reagan (50.24) dismissing air pollution by making a trite comparison with the Big Smokey haze in The Rockies as being the result of nitrogen oxides from decaying vegetation; Bush the elder in vitriolic mood and defending business at all cost, damning Gore as “This guy is so far off in the environmental extreme we’ll be up to our neck in owls and out of work for every American” (50. 40).

There are, however, a few points on which Al Gore’s approach in this documentary might come under particular scrutiny. One is the

rather self-laudatory nature of Gore's catwalk scenes as he arrives for giving what he calls his "slideshow" at various locations around the world and the scenes showing him being photographed and received by an adoring audience. This is something we could have done without, just in case we are tempted to question Mr. Gore's motives as an ex-politician for going so public and up front on this issue.

Another critical note is that there are undoubtedly some rather personalized sections of the documentary (not least, reference to his son's accident and long-term hospitalization, and to his sister's premature death from lung cancer) as it weaves together the actual presentation and Al Gore's personal experiences that led him to first understanding carbon dioxide measurements and then making a growing commitment to exposing carbon dioxide as the chief cause of global warming. He does, however, in referring to his sister's death, draw a good parallel: how the cigarette companies dismissed research in the 1950s showing the damaging effects of smoking and how many of us only tend to react to a social problem or world crisis when things start to touch us personally. And while there is no question that Al Gore tries to play on emotions in getting his message across, it may well be an effective way of getting people to consider the global warming issue when otherwise they may not have even entertained the idea.

I would at this point like to add something of a balanced view of this issue. In a recent BBC radio program *The Moral Maze* the question was raised as to whether the acceptance of human causes of global warming has reached such a state of orthodoxy that morally it is beyond debate. However, a strength of any democratic society that values the freedom of speech is that even such an overwhelmingly popular view can be criticized. Following the initial release of *An Inconvenient Truth* in 2006, and its public recognition at the Cannes Film Festival, Martin Durkin wrote and directed *The Great Global Warming Swindle*, which is billed as "The definitive answer to Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*." It presents strong evidence and compelling arguments from respected

scientists and meteorologists to show that man-made global warming is a falsehood, and that the phenomenon is actually due to changes in the sun's radiation. In fact, it turns the Gore argument on its head, pointing out that higher temperatures lead to more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere rather than the other way round. It also points out that the climate science agenda for supporting the carbon dioxide view was originally politically motivated back in the Thatcher years in Britain to promote nuclear power plants as a solution to energy dependency and potential crisis.

These contradictory views, both apparently supported by scientific research, can make for something of a dilemma. Whose scientific truths do we believe, convenient or otherwise? Anyway, having viewed the Durkin documentary, I feel it is only fair to offer students a balanced view of this issue, and so for a follow-up to classes on *An Inconvenient Truth* I am planning to do a few classes using selected scenes from *The Great Global Warming Swindle*. However, as the documentary is apparently only available in the UK at present in a PAL version, I'm afraid I will be going back to carting that extra equipment to the classroom. Furthermore, somewhat inconveniently, it does not have English captions, so it will involve a good deal of transcription if it is going to be accessible for the students.

Finally, I'd like to conclude this brief review with a final comment on Al Gore's take on global warming. Even if the Gore camp have got it wrong, and global warming is an inevitable consequence of natural climate change, surely encouraging people to reduce carbon emissions in the developed world can be no bad thing. Al Gore's documentary, after highlighting various solutions and ways that we can all contribute to reducing carbon emissions, ends with a pertinent, though perhaps rather sentimental comment that the planet we live on "Is our only home." This leads into the song "I Have Got to Wake Up" while various recommendations for action for making a difference are shown on screen, and indeed, using the song in class and looking

at the lyrics can be an appropriate way to finish the last class on this topic. Among its lyrics are the following lingering questions that we might ask ourselves:

*Have I been sleeping?
I've been so still
Afraid of crumbling
Have I been careless?
Dismissing all the distant rumblings
(From "I Have Got to Wake Up")*

I just wonder how easy it will be for me to find such an emotive song to support the viewing of *The Great Global Warming Swindle*?

Note

If you wish to have a Word document of the vocabulary lists and context notes, please send me an email and I would be happy to send them to you: fordkeith@hotmail.com

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Review

2007 CUE Mini-Conference Report

Umidahon Ashurova
Nanzan University

The 2007 CUE Conference, held on the 23rd and 24th of June at Sugiyama Jogakuen University, Nagoya, Aichi, offered attendees an excellent opportunity to expand their knowledge of recent theoretical and practical issues in the TEFL field. This two-day event lived up to its statement of “Promoting Lifelong Learning,” drawing a capacity crowd of around 100 people with two invited speakers and nearly forty participants delivering presentations. Based around key themes such as “increasing learner motivation,” “promoting lifelong learning,” and “developing critical thinking,” the content of the conference focused on topics that are highly relevant to the work of the majority of college and university educators today. Due to the excellent program, attendees were able to attend presentations that met and stimulated their interests. Also, Special Interest Groups (SIGS) such as LD, CUE, and GILE promoted their upcoming events and distributed recent journals, while several publishers displayed a large number of their latest books and assisted book authors with their presentations.

Day 1

On both days, two to four 45-minute sessions ran concurrently, so it was always difficult to decide which presentation to attend. John Spiri’s (Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology) presentation entitled “The World at Work” attracted my attention. To start off, the speaker

engaged the audience by asking them to brainstorm the difference in meaning between the words *vocation*, *job* and *occupation*, and then he introduced his main argument that “most Japanese learners do not see the connection between education and the reality of work.” To overcome this problem he has developed several teaching materials, composed of *readers* – stories of different people from several countries in Asia (Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese and other Southeast Asian states) talking about their “world at work,” – and also *handouts* to help students prepare for job interviews, including suggestions for personal appropriateness, tips for interviews, and self-evaluation sheets. With comprehensible text at a conversational level and abundant information, students are given confidence in finding the kind of job appropriate to their personality. Through assignments that get students to interview people, John believes in developing students’ communicative skills. In addition, this project helps learners to have big hopes for their futures, and to focus on their future professional careers.

The workshop entitled “First Steps Towards Lifelong Learning” featured talks by Suzanne Bonn, Shannon Kiyokawa, and Donovan Clarke from Sugiyama Jogakuen University. Talking about motivation, Suzanne stated that it would be useful for university language programs to consider motivating teachers in addition to motivating students. To encourage both full-time and part-time instructors to work more enthusiastically, Sugiyama has a policy of supporting new teachers, empowering them, recognizing and rewarding them, asking for their input, establishing a good network through professional dialogue and peer observations. While Shannon reported on her findings in stimulating learning, Donovan shared a classroom experience on the development of critical thinking among his students. By conducting constant self-evaluation and providing opportunities for peer observation, Shannon’s teaching strategies definitely fill what formerly was an unmet need. In his short talk, Donovan gave some practical tips for getting students to interact in his class: restricting the usage of

long monologues was one of them. The variety of discussion topics and in-class activities also serve as key factors. It was surprising for me to hear that government and environment are the least popular discussion topics among university students.

The presentation by the invited speaker Professor Deryn Verity (Osaka Jogakuin College) was very informative and mainly focused on “Neo-Vygotskian Psycholinguistics: Putting Theory into Practice.” The focal points in her talk were the controversial questions of “what learners can do alone” and “what becomes feasible with others.” She spoke about a common episode in language teaching, where “the teacher knows what the goal of an activity is and the student doesn’t.” Drawing on the scheme of *teaching through interaction*, Professor Verity persuaded teachers to constantly dig into the existing knowledge in their students’ brains. With this technique, learners can move from “no hope” towards “big hope” in accomplishing any language task. Having the role of facilitator, teachers need to work to get students to perform better in groups. Professor Verity highlighted that the goal of any learning process should be self-regulation, where the ultimate result is the ability to act autonomously, in the process having been challenged countless times. Any portion of new information needs to be repeated several times, until it becomes a part of the learner’s automatic knowledge. She also spoke on the importance of training our students to seek help, as this is one of the well-known learning strategies. She concluded her speech by noting that “second language acquisition is a second chance to symbolize the world.”

Mark Rebeck of Nagoya City University conveyed his thoughts of “motivating by authentic materials” by presenting his idea of “LEAL (level excessive authentic listening) lesson.” In LEAL classes the following are privileged: comprehension levels are constantly checked; repeated playing is preferred; and students are given a good deal of time to reproduce the language they have heard. The questionnaire response showed that students find the following the

most difficult aspects of authentic materials: fast speech; unknown vocabulary; interruptions/stopping and omissions; and different accents with muffled sounds. The presenter generally used listening materials from accessible media, especially BBC Radio talks. He has also highlighted that the use of the term *authentic* compared to the one of *advanced* generates a more neutral attitude among learners and therefore, naming the course as he did builds students' perceptions on what to expect from it. In their feedback, students have also pointed to the usefulness of having a script and playing a recording several times. However, making no script available can shape another way of dealing with unexpected language. Bearing in mind the significance of minimal pre-teaching, Mark has the objective of demonstrating to learners the "achievement gap," a journey from "unable to understand anything" to "able to understand everything." He recommended that teachers conduct LEAL lessons once or twice a semester in order to add some tension to the general course.

Tetsuya Fukuda, from Dokkyo University, in his short talk "University Presentation Class: Developing a Lifelong Skill", described a recent shift at Japanese high schools and universities in the appreciation of the value of teaching presentation skills. Although the *Joho* (Information Studies) class is not a part of entrance exams, lately around 50 books have been released on *Joho Japan*. According to Tetsuya, it is a sad reality that only 40% of high school students actually take this course and, moreover, they just learn how to make beautiful power-point slides. Tetsuya's teaching method is intended to improve this situation by encouraging his students to talk clearly, to maintain eye contact, be able to use other types of visuals, and lastly, discouraging them from memorizing notes during their presentations in his class. He inspires learners to handle unexpected problems during staging.

Day 2

On the second day of the conference, being responsible for the LD SIG table and also preparing for our own presentation, I could only manage to listen to the presentation of the invited speaker, Heidi Nachi Evans. Heidi addressed the topic of “Self-assessment and Learner Development: Instrument Design and Implementation” in her talk. The goals of the workshop were to discuss the challenges of self-assessment (SA) while analyzing its forms and model instruments, in addition to applying certain frameworks to create these instruments, while at the same time, considering the support that SA offers for lifelong learning. The workshop kicked off with warm-up questions asking, “What kind of SA instruments do you use?” and “How does SA aid your instruction and/or student learning?” Rather than throwing the audience directly into the less-familiar world of terminology, Heidi prompted it to come up with personal definitions for terms such as *assessment*, *alternative assessment*, *evaluation*, *non-referenced evaluation*, *reliability*, *rubric*, and *validity*. Then the numerous purposes of using SA in academic contexts were considered. As with any aspect of the teaching process, SA faces challenges and limitations: in groups we discussed the effectiveness of SA and some shared their opinions on the challenges of designing their own SA instruments and /or using the guiding principles. At the end, Heidi introduced a very constructive idea, that of collaborative student-instructor SA style, and concluded her talk by highlighting the consequence of implementing SA in promoting lifelong learning.

Overview

The event provided an informal environment for sharing ideas and experiences. All the sessions were worthwhile attending, with speakers ranging from good to great. At the close, participants were invited to join round-up sessions and reflect on the workshops. With

several coffee breaks and a lively pizza party, this gathering helped newcomers like me get to know colleagues outside the work place and so build a sense of community.

A big round of applause should go to the organizers for their thoughtfulness on scheduling the workshops only for the first half of the second day. This might have given a chance for the attendees to have a relaxing afternoon before the start of the regular working week.

I'm sure you have many more questions about the Conference! Please look for answers in the up-coming "2007 CUE Conference Proceedings."

Review

TESOL 2007: The View From Seattle

Gerard Marchesseau

Naruto University of Education

The 41st annual TESOL convention was held last spring in Seattle, Washington. TESOL is one of the world's largest applied linguistics associations, with several major publications and approximately 13 000 members located around the world. Recognized as an (NGO) by the United Nations, its mission is to "ensure excellence in English language teaching to speakers of other languages."

The convention spanned the week of March 19th, with preconvention ticketed events being held on Monday and Tuesday and regular concurrent sessions extending from Wednesday through Saturday. The concurrent sessions included academic sessions, paper presentations, workshops, exhibitor sessions and discussion sessions. Poster sessions and other types of discussion meetings were also held through the lunch break and into the afternoon. It might suffice to say that the event was really big. You may be familiar with annual JALT conferences held in Japan. The general orientation was similar to JALT, with several keynote speeches, an array of sessions to choose from, a large exhibitor hall, and so on. Inevitably though, the TESOL conference draws more participants and attracts leading linguists from around the world. However, as the majority of participants are from the U.S. and Canada, there is a slant towards Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). The theme this year was "Tides of Change," which recurred in some of the keynote speeches and sessions to a limited extent.

I attended the conference interested in teaching language to young learners, collaboration between Native Speaking Teachers of English

(NESTs) and non-Native Speaking Teachers of English (non-NESTs), and academic writing. There was a substantial number sessions dealing with writing for specific purposes. Most of these sessions dealt with academic writing issues for high proficiency non-native speakers of English studying at the secondary or post secondary level in the U.S. I attended about five of these, which proved to be interesting, although not always applicable to my circumstances. For instance, while listening to a colorful secondary school teacher from Brooklyn, New York speaking about her experience teaching racial minorities was certainly interesting, her situation was very dissimilar to my own in a Japanese University.

Sessions dealing with ESL in the Asian context were more limited, though I attended a couple which addressed NEST/non-NEST issues in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Similar to research I have been conducting, these paper sessions indicated strong commonalities between Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan. I also attended two discussion groups focusing on issues relating to teaching young learners in Japan and elsewhere. Discussion sessions are commonly held in the evening between 7:00 and 9:00, when participants are a little more relaxed, though perhaps jet-lagged and exhausted after a full day attending sessions. The quality of discussion sessions depends on the preparedness of the presenters and the contribution of the participants. Presumably the presenters are well prepared, (though this was not the case in one of the discussions I attended). Some presentations, however, only seemed to attract one or two participants, which was unfortunate.

Due to jet-lag, I missed the first couple of plenary presentations but managed to see the presidential plenary by Jun Lui on Friday. In his presentation, entitled "Tides of Change: From Seattle to Shanghai", Lui spoke about his life, from his experience growing up in China during the Cultural Revolution, through to his current success as a prominent applied linguist. Lui is a charismatic speaker, and the content of his speech was both accessible to all and interesting. It was a pleasure

and a nice change to sit back and be passively entertained for an hour. Aside from merely amusing us though, Lui drew important connections to the broader theme of this year's conference as well as the current status of English around the world. There are more English teachers who speak English as a second language than "native speaker" teachers today, just as there are more users of English who speak it as a second language than a native language. These trends appear to be increasing and Lui suggested that choosing a non-Native English speaking president of TESOL is a reflection of the changing use and function of English. It would appear that TESOL, as an organization, is healthy, progressive and in good hands. Hopefully Lui will help to motivate passive members of TESOL such as myself, to become more active ones in the future.

Overall, the TESOL conference appeared well organized, but obviously a conference of this size is not without its headaches. One problem that did affect many was presentation cancellations. A list of cancelled presentations was given out along with the program. By the second day though, all but the most organized of us had probably lost it amongst the many handouts that we were constantly accumulating. One presentation I had hoped to attend had been cancelled, which I only found out upon walking into an empty room. It had likely been written in the appendage, of course. Another presentation had not been cancelled according to the latest information but none of the three presenters showed. Evidently, the presentation had been much anticipated. The room was full of disappointed people and there was grumbling about other similar incidents.

Generally the quality of the presentations was high, but this is also difficult to control for such a large event, especially when presentations are chosen based on relatively short proposals. One might expect that the quality of the presentations at the TESOL convention would far surpass those of national associations such as our very own JALT, but this is not necessarily the case. Some presentations are better and more

prepared than others. Some speakers are better than others. JALT is no different in this respect. Disappointment with the occasional lackluster session though, should be more than offset by the sheer variety of sessions available, spanning more than three days from 7:00AM to 9:00 PM. Besides, the occasional bad presentation might be equally interesting in its own right, depending on one's purposes. For those who might wish to present at a future TESOL conference, as prestigious as the organization is, and as stringent as the screening process is (only one in five proposals was accepted this year), one needn't feel that the presenters form an exclusive and inaccessible club. Good research and a well-written proposal stand a fair chance at being accepted, and you can submit more than one proposal. The Asian contingent is probably under-represented and I'm certain that we have a lot to offer.

This year, Seattle proved to be a very suitable location for the event. The convention Center is in the center of the city, and Seattle itself has a healthy downtown, which means there were many restaurants to choose from. There were also a variety of ways to "wind down" after a full day of academic discussion, and the recommended hotels were all convenient. This was in sharp contrast to last year's conference in Tampa, where shuttle buses ran from the Convention Center to the hotels, and the downtown area offered less in the way of restaurants and nightlife. The Washington State Convention Center itself was fairly easy to negotiate. There was a reasonable variety of restaurants located within the Center. Some events were also held in the Sheraton and Grand Hyatt, adjacent to the Convention Center, and the staff were helpful in providing directions at these locations.

With Seattle behind us, next year TESOL goes to New York City. TESOL has held conventions in New York City before and I've heard that attendance is particularly strong. The city itself is no doubt a huge additional attraction. If you've never been to a TESOL conference before, next year might be a good opportunity to attend, and to have fun in a great city.

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Or contact Dexter Da Silva <dasilva@keisen.ac.jp>

From the Coordinator

CUE had an eventful year in 2007. The 2007 CUE Conference, held at Sugiyama Jogakuen University in Nagoya, was a resounding success with over 100 participants in attendance (<http://jaltcue-sig.org/node/24>). We also co-sponsored the GALE Two-day Mini-conference at Temple University Japan Osaka and Kansai University of Foreign Languages, as well as a special Donald Richie lecture in Kobe (<http://jaltcue-sig.org/node/27>). And we awarded the very first CUE Scholar Award to Paul Wicking, of Meijo University.

The biggest event, however, is the journal you now hold in your very hands: Volume 1, issue 1 of *OnCUE Journal*, which now sports a registered ISSN number, a new format, and an expanded editorial board. We hope that OnCUE Journal will continue to inspire language instructors and researchers in Japan for many years to come.

If you're attending the JALT international conference this November 22nd to 25th, you can help CUE plan events for 2008 at the CUE Annual General Meeting (Friday, 5:55 to 6:55 p.m. in Room 309). Also, if you think you'll have an hour to spare during the conference, please contact John Gunning (kinkajapanmtb@yahoo.com) and sign up to sit at the CUE desk and greet potential CUE members. Finally, don't forget to stop by the CUE Forum (Sunday, 9:15 to 10:50 a.m., Room 309) as Peter Neff, Harumi Kimura, Phil McNally, Peter Carter, and Matthew Apple discuss various statistical techniques that commonly occur in academic publications.

Thanks for your patronage, and hope to see you in November!

Matthew Apple
CUE SIG Coordinator