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MITESOL, P.O. Box 3432
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

President’s Corner

Dear MITESOL Members,

I hope that this message finds you well rested and that the summer has treated you well. As we are gearing up for a new school and academic year, I encourage you to stay involved or get involved in MITESOL as our organization has been a great platform for professional development for all ESL professionals, from teachers and teacher-trainers to researchers and administrators. The unwavering commitment of our volunteers as well as the participants of our annual conferences and other events deserve many thanks. To stay abreast of new developments in the field, please consider attending our annual MITESOL conference on October 4 and 5, entitled Realizing Transitions: Common Core, College, Career. Please see this newsletter for more details on this wonderful professional development opportunity. As the preparations for this year’s conference are in full force under the skillful leadership of Jeanine Clever, President-Elect and Rick Rojas, Conference Co-Chair, the planning is already underway for our 2014 Conference (!), which will take place on October 17 and 18 in Grand Rapids, as Colleen Brice, 2014 Conference Chair, reports. Many thanks to all for great work on our future conferences! As we always strive to find new ways to improve how we serve MITESOL members, I would especially like to thank Morgan Cox, Membership Coordinator, and other Executive Board members for working diligently on changes that will make future conference and membership registration more user-friendly for all parties involved.

We can be truly proud of the accomplishments and growth our field experiences in Michigan in so many ways. What an exciting time to be an ESL professional! As an ever-increasing number of English language learners enter Michigan schools and universities and our immigrant population grows and diversifies, we are at the cutting edge of cultural and social changes affecting our state and the nation. To this end, I am happy to report that Jane DeGroot represented MITESOL at this year’s TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit in D.C., which took place in June. We know she had a chance to meet with Senator Debbie Stabenow’s office and other officials. Thank you, Jane, for representing us in D.C. Special thanks to Carmela Gilette and Joel Boyd for providing logistical support. We look forward to hearing more about policy trends affecting our field at the national level.

As we all enjoy timely updates on our website, words of appreciation go to Heidi Enck, Communication Coordinator, and her wonderful team for keeping up with never-ending flow of demands to disseminate, revise, and edit information. Finally, I would like to thank all who contributed to this issue of our newsletter, and especially to its accomplished editors Aiman Wesley Mueller and Allison Piippo. Enjoy the remaining days of summer and I hope to see you all in Lansing at the next MITESOL Conference, October 4th and 5th.

Andrew Domzalski, President
We know nobody wants to admit it, but another beautiful Michigan summer is drawing to a close. Hopefully you have had a wonderful (although unseasonably cool!) summer full of Traverse City cherries, and hopefully you are enjoying August fully. As we prepare for the upcoming school year or fall semester, we look forward to new students, overly ideological lesson plans and semester preparations, and, most importantly, our aspirations for the 2013 MITESOL Conference – Realizing Transitions: Common Core, College, Career! All your conference updates are right here in this issue of MITESOL Messages, pp. 5-7, including an introduction from President Elect and 2013 Conference Chair, Jeanine Clever.

This fall will also usher in other transitions besides the weather. As the state implements changes in K-12 curricula, please take note of K-12 Special Interest Group Leader Karen Morrison’s write-up of important information for K-12 teachers regarding where to obtain WIDA help and a summary of Novi Schools’ SIOP training workshop on p. 4. On that same page, you will also find informative notes on board activities provided by Secretary, Ellen Brengle. In addition, the MITESOL Board is looking for nominations to fill posts vacated by the changing of the guard. You can view the open positions and information on who to contact to nominate yourself or a colleague on p. 3, where a list of current leadership is also available.

In this edition’s Updates from the Field section, you will read about a new ESL program in India by Carol A. Hart from Cornerstone University (p. 8-9) and an innovative way to teach academic writing through teaching creative writing, by Patrick Randolph from Western Michigan University (pp. 10-15). Get a glimpse of the TESOL 2013 International Conference on p. 15. In addition, read about your Michigan colleagues’ professional achievements in “Michigan Presenters at TESOL 2013” and “MITESOL Member Publications” on pp. 16-17 and 17, respectively. We want to celebrate your achievements in the future as well, so if you have a professional achievement (or, as always, a teaching tip or research write-up), please feel free to share it with us for publication in the next edition of MITESOL Messages!

Finally, if you are from the Upper Peninsula, be sure to check out the offer of assistance to attend the 2013 MITESOL Conference on p. 7. The award is still available!

Have an excellent last summer hurrah and a fantastic start to fall.

Sincerely,

Allie Piippo & Aiman Mueller
MITESOL Messages Co-Editors
apiippo@emich.edu
aiman.w.mueller@att.net
A word of sincere thanks, first and foremost, to outgoing board members, whose terms will expire at the November Transition meeting.

MITESOL 2013 Open Positions

All nominations are for 2 year terms, unless specified. A description of Executive Board positions and positions appointed by the president can be found in Article XI of the MITESOL Bylaws, available online at http://www.mitesol.org/about/by-laws/. Descriptions of Special Interest Group Leaders are available online at http://www.mitesol.org/leadership/sigs/ (click on the appropriate SIG on the left).

Executive Board
President-Elect (1 year term)
Treasurer
Membership Coordinator

Advisory Board
K-12 SIG Leader
Post-Secondary SIG Leader
Workplace SIG Leader
Professional Development SIG Leader

Appointed by President
Socio-Political Concerns Officer

Nominations for Executive and Advisory Board Positions can be submitted to Joel Boyd, Jr. at joel.boyd@wmich.edu. Nominations for positions appointed by the president can be sent to Andrew Domzalski at adomzalski@madonna.edu.

Current MITESOL Leadership

EXECUTIVE BOARD
President-Elect/Conference Chair
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Conference Proceedings Editor
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jpperren@emich.edu
MITESOL News

Board Notes
Ellen Brengle, Secretary

Snow and cold have come and gone since our February publication, and with the passing of winter and spring, MITESOL board members have seen the results of their many collaborative efforts take shape and take flight. Among those accomplishments:

- An attractive and informative newly formatted February edition of MITESOL Messages edited by Aiman Wesley Mueller and Allison Piippo.
- Helpful and much appreciated year-long announcements and job opportunities from Listserv Manager, Pamela Bogart.
- Initiation of Wild Apricot subscription by Morgan Cox to handle many aspects of running our nonprofit organization - registrations, payments, contact lists, newsletters, etc.
- Organization and hosting of the MITESOL reception in March at the TESOL Convention by Joel Boyd.
- Continued work on MITESOL 2013 Conference in East Lansing, including theme, programs, speakers, locations logistics, refreshments, materials for participants, proposal system and readers, and more by Jeanine Clever and Ricardo Rojas.
- Planning for 2014 MITESOL Conference to be hosted by Grand Valley State University and chaired by Colleen Brice.

Looking forward to seeing many of you at another well-planned and engaging MITESOL Conference, October 4-5, 2013 at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing.

K-12 SIG Update
Karen Morrison, K-12 SIG Leader

Professional Development Workshops

Please check the Oakland Schools website for upcoming professional development opportunities about WIDA English Language Development Standards for English Learners and about Elementary, Middle School, and High School ESL Curriculum for Levels 1-3: 

WIDA

Explore the WIDA website this summer to discover more about WIDA ELD Standards, Can Do Descriptors, and the various WIDA assessments. The Download Library is of particular interest and has helpful information about the WIDA Model.  
See http://www.wida.us/

SIOP Training Novi Schools

Alice Smith, Sandy Hagman, and Karen Morrison led a four-day SIOP training workshop June 17 – 20 at Novi Schools. Thirty teachers/administrators from the local area attended the workshop and gained insight into the 8 components and 30 features of the SIOP model. Teachers received a comprehensive model of instruction for planning and implementing lessons that provide English Learners access to grade-level content and develop students’ academic English skills. This SIOP training provided teachers and administrators a tool to help them plan and deliver quality instruction for English Learners with the goal of promoting their academic gains.
Conference News

Jeanine Clever, President Elect, 2013 Conference Chair

If you would have told me just four short years ago I would be integrating my English Language Arts background into the world of English Learners and helping to put on a statewide conference, I would not have believed it. Well, here I am. It is very exciting to see the efforts of a great MITESOL team come together in preparations for the October 2013 Conference. We would also like to thank the efforts of our Michigan State University team in helping prepare at the Kellogg Center for this great event.

The state of Michigan is in a major transition from our English Language Proficiency State Standards and ELPA testing to a new set of standards from the WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) Consortium for K-12 ELL students. At the same time, schools are transitioning from our current state standards into the Common Core State Standards for all students K-12.

The state department will begin working on presenting the new WIDA Standards and the impact it will have not only on K-12 students but also on Michigan’s teacher training institutions. The integration and connections between the new Common Core Standards with the new WIDA Proficiency Standards have a direct impact on all English learners, providing them with opportunities to engage in cognitive challenges represented in those content standards they will face on into college and career.

In addition to the plenary sessions, we will have a large group session addressing the new WIDA Standards and how they will impact the K-12 education system. We also will have over fifty break-out sessions that address a great variety of issues which are of interest to the diverse groups that make-up our profession, from K-12, post-secondary, and adult education teachers to teacher-trainers, administrators and researchers. Many thanks to all who submitted their proposals, thus making our conference possible!

Please make plans to attend this year’s conference. For special hotel rates, the Kellogg Center is offering Single and Double room rates of $98.00. Remember to let them know you are with the MITESOL group for those rates. Gerund and the Infinitives will be the band for Friday evening’s entertainment! Visit http://www.mitesol.org/conferences/2013-conference and pp. 5-7 of this newsletter for more info.

MITESOL 2013—Realizing Transitions: Common Core, College, Career

MITESOL 2013
October 4th – 5th
Realizing Transitions:
Common Core, College, Career

Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center
Michigan State University Main Campus, Lansing, MI

As the state of Michigan begins the process of transitioning to the new Common Core Standards for K-12 as well as the new WIDA (World Class Instruction and Design and Assessment) Standards, we encourage you to join us for focus on how these transitions will impact education in the state of Michigan for all English Learners.
We are excited to invite you to attend this year’s keynote speakers’ presentations.

**Friday Evening, October 4, 2013**

**Dr. Randi Reppen—It’s Elementary: A Look at Academic Language from Elementary School to University**

**Abstract**

As native speakers of a language we typically have good intuition and use of our native language in oral situations. But as we look at literacy demands, or school language, we see that we need to use language in different ways. It is exactly these differences that can cause problems for certain English dialect speakers and also for our non-native English speaking students. This presentation will explore some of the differences and challenges faced as students (both native and non-native English speakers) move through the school system and encounter different demands on their language skills. In particular, the effect of task and context of language use will be explored, including a relationship with the available instructional materials.

**Dr. Randi Reppen** is Professor of Applied Linguistics and TESL at Northern Arizona University (NAU) where she teaches in the MA TESL and Applied Linguistics Ph.D. programs. She has extensive ESL and teacher training experience, including 11 years as the Director of NAU’s Intensive English program. Randi has a keen interest in using corpus research to inform language teaching and to develop better language teaching materials. She is the author of *Using Corpora in the Language Classroom* and the lead author of Cambridge University Press’s new corpus informed grammar series, *Grammar and Beyond*. In her spare time, Randi enjoys many outdoor activities, especially road biking, Nordic skiing and tennis.

**Saturday, October 5, 2013**

**Dr. Catherine Reischl—Getting Reinvigorated: Using Curricular Changes to Renew Your Teaching Practice**

**Abstract**

Like all educators, K-12 teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs) and their higher education colleagues are riding the rough waters of change. In this talk, we’ll look specifically at two major changes shifting the ways we frame the teaching of ELLs: the Common Core Standards and the transition to using the WIDA assessment system. We’ll seek images of the possible as we look together at ways these two initiatives have the potential to reshape the roles of ESL teachers and reinvigorate our teaching practices. Using video, student work, and sample lesson plans, I’ll share units of instruction teachers, university professors, and teaching interns have designed and taught in a collaborative summer program for 3rd – 8th grade ELLs in Ann Arbor over the past four years. These units offer lively, practical examples of drawing on the new standards and framing who ELLs are: people who are, at their core learners of content who are also adding a new language. This will be an interactive talk that will include multiple opportunities for sharing reactions, experiences, and ideas with colleagues.

**Dr. Catherine Hindman Reischl** is a Clinical Associate Professor of Education in the School of Education at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Cathy teaches courses and designs professional development for beginning and experienced teachers in the areas of elementary literacy instruction, teaching in multilingual contexts, literacy and language development for multilingual students, and children’s literature. She is especially interested in creating contexts for beginning and experienced teachers to collaborate in field-based settings as they develop their literacy teaching practices in linguistically diverse classrooms. Her research interests focus on the intersection of language, culture, and schooling in the personal and professional lives of teachers. Cathy has taught in K-12 schools and universities in Thailand, India, New Zealand, and the United States and held a faculty appointment at the University of New Hampshire prior to coming to the School of Education. She earned a bachelor’s degree at St. Olaf College; a master’s degree in reading and language development at Harvard Graduate School of Education; and a PhD in curriculum, teaching, and educational policy (literacy emphasis) at Michigan State University.

(see p. 7 page for registration, inquiry, and volunteering info)
2013 Conference Information

Early Bird Registration Info AND Contacts for Questions and Volunteering

Early bird pricing on MITESOL 2013 Conference registration is available through, Friday September 20, until 11:55pm. You can register at [http://www.mitesol.org](http://www.mitesol.org).

You can also initiate or renew your membership in MITESOL at [http://www.mitesol.org](http://www.mitesol.org), and then just pay the member registration fee.

**Complete Registration Price List**

- **Early Registration - member (full-time) -** $90.00 (USD)
  For full-time teachers, staff, faculty [Available until 9/20/2013]
- **Early Registration - member (part-time) -** $72.00 (USD)
  For retired, part-time, and student members [Available until 9/20/2013]
- **Early Registration - non-members -** $115.00 (USD)
  [Available until 9/20/2013]
- **Executive Board Member -** Free
- **Exhibitor -** Free
- **Must be pre-approved**
- **Invited Speaker -** Free
- **Standard Registration - members -** $105.00 (USD)
- **Standard Registration - non-members -** $130.00 (USD)

**Have Questions or Want to Volunteer?**

If you have any questions or would like to volunteer to help out with the preparations for the conference, please contact:

**Registration Inquiries:**
Morgan Cox, Membership Coordinator, at morgan.e.cox@gmail.com

**Conference Proposal Inquiries:**
Jeanine Clever, Conference Chair, at jeanine.clever@farmington.k12.mi.us

**General Conference Inquiries:**
Rick Rojas, Conference Co-Chair, at rojasri@northvilleschools.org. Please include “MITESOL Conference” in the subject line of your email.

**UP Registration Giveaway!**

The MITESOL Board is pleased to announce the following giveaway for current members who reside in the Upper Peninsula.

**Offer:**

In order to encourage conference attendance and participation by MITESOL members who live a great distance from the 2013 conference site in East Lansing, the MITESOL board wishes to offer four (4) free conference registrations for current members* living in the UP.

*To be considered a current member, individuals must have joined/renewed within the past 12 months.

**How to Apply:**

Please e-mail MITESOL Membership Coordinator Morgan Cox at morgan.e.cox@gmail.com with the subject line "Complimentary MITESOL Conference Registration." Registrations will be awarded in the order the e-mails of interest are received. Individuals are permitted to apply in conjunction with one or more colleagues. If a recipient is unable to attend the 2013 conference, the award will then be offered to a subsequent applicant.

Sincerely, MITESOL Board
A New ESL Program in South India

Carol A. Hart, M.A., TESOL, Cornerstone University
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Three years ago while working on courses for the TESOL MA at Cornerstone University, I was asked to consider developing an ESL program for Bethania Kids (www.bethaniakids.org), a ministry to poor children in south India with services provided to nearly a thousand children, primarily through orphanages (called “homes”) and children’s care centers. My own family had been connected with Bethania Kids (BK) for over a decade, as members of the Board of Advisors, and in other capacities. This made the ESL opportunity a natural way of extending our involvement there.

After completing my degree in December 2011, I began to dialogue with Indian and American board members about possible directions for the program. It turned out that the Indian Board had already taken action to bring “spoken English” to Bethania, believing that this skill would greatly increase the children’s prospects for success in school and later in life (Tamil and Telegu are the L1s, depending on location). An expert from the state education system had recommended a curriculum consisting of a booklet of commonly used English words and expressions accompanied by a CD. Each child living in the homes had received these materials. It was hoped that the children would practice listening and speaking as part of their daily routine. When several of the Indian program directors visited the U.S. in spring 2012, I learned that the program had not progressed as they had hoped due to schedule demands on both staff and children and, perhaps more significantly, a lack of English-speaking staff to work with the kids.

Meanwhile, a long-time supporter and former President of the American Board of Directors had begun to envision a novel approach to strengthening the American support base for Bethania Kids: a program designed to foster a dynamic, relational connection between the children of Bethania and their U.S. supporters in English. Donor-visitors travelling to India would prepare in the U.S. to use the program with the children upon their arrival, while all necessary materials would be ready and waiting in India. The Indian leaders and staff agreed that this approach might also be an effective way to jumpstart their goal of bringing “spoken English” to Bethania.

What’s the ESL Visitors’ Kit?

Against this backdrop, I developed the ESL Visitors’ Kit in the fall of 2012 and was among three American visitors and an Indian administrator who piloted the program at all of the home sites and one care center in February 2013. The stated purposes of the program in this initial phase are to:

1. Foster interaction and grow friendships between Visitors from Bethania USA and the Bethania Family of India.

2. Assist the children and adult staff of Bethania in developing their skills in spoken English.

My assignment for this first phase was to create an ESL program that could easily be transported and used in the field by visitors who are not trained teachers. Since there is a considerable geographic distance between BK locations, visitors touring more than one site on their trip to India must also be able to transport the curriculum and materials with them, and teach/lead activities without the aid of electronic technology.

A major challenge was how to help non-teacher visitors apply current second language acquisition theory to their encounters with the children. We certainly did not want the children to be discouraged from participating because of a wrong or ineffective approach. I created some of the activities but our final format relied heavily on two main sources: Zero Prep for Beginners (Pollard, Ness, and Herron, 2001), and New Ways in Teaching Young Children (eds., Schinke-Llano and Rauff, 1996). These excellent resources are theoretically sound, and adapted well to the need for a compact and portable set of materials.

(Continued on p. 9)
A New ESL Program in South India

(continued from p. 8) A graphic designer was engaged to create a design system for a flipbook of activities to be used in the field along with clear acrylic storage boxes containing basic supplies such as paper, pencils, crayons, markers, whiteboards and easels, soft balls, and so forth. Four complete kits were fitted to one large suitcase on wheels along with laminated, free visuals downloaded and printed from the internet. The flipbook begins with a letter of welcome from the Indian CEO and Board of Directors followed by a statement of the purposes of the ESL program and a list of suggestions on how to use the kit. The curriculum is divided into six sections: Let's Get Acquainted, Let's Sing Together, Let's Learn English, Let's Play Games, Let's Tell Stories, and Let's Say Goodbye. Some 31 activities, many with variations, are included along with a selection of songs that can be accompanied by motions. Each routine is numbered and named, with the learning aim, materials, and procedures clearly spelled out.

How did it go?

With four of us travelling together by air and road in south India, we toured Bethania sites in four main locations in eight days. Each of us worked with our own set of curriculum and materials. We planned the ESL activities as we went, modifying our approach to suit each situation according to the age and gender distribution of the children at each site, and the length of time we had there.

The program did what we had hoped—it facilitated connection with the children in English through fun and engaging group activities, and created many wonderful memories. We were able to use the materials successfully in a variety of situations, and English was spoken by all. We discovered, too, that the children are building a strong basis in English vocabulary through their school studies in their Tamil and Telugu medium schools, the power of which is waiting to be released through their speaking.

I've recently heard from the leader of a group that visited Bethania in June. I was very encouraged to learn that he and his group also used the ESL Visitors’ Kit with great success. A third group will go in August, and a fourth this fall. Momentum for the program is building with each successful visit.

What Comes Next?

We were fortunate to have time to meet with Bethania CEO, Dr. Perumalla Gnanakan, and members of the Indian Board of Directors on our first day in India. Our sense that the program will need support in both the U.S. and India was confirmed. These are some of the goals we set:

1. To find effective ways to prepare and support Visitor-Donors here at home. Our donors come from across the U.S.
2. To design and implement an ESL program for the Indian adult staff so they can more confidently mentor the children in developing their spoken English.
3. To discover ways to support the children in developing their speaking skills throughout the year, including the forming of English Clubs, speaking competitions, and the like.

These are ambitious goals. It will take years to achieve them, but we’ve made a good start. Having shared the Bethania ESL story with the MITESOL community, I look forward to dialoging with you about your ideas for Bethania, and similar experiences you may be having in the exciting world of TESOL.
Developing Critical Thinking through Creative Writing: The Three Step Short Story and Evidence Such Activities Work

Patrick Randolph

“My business is to create.”
—William Blake

What is one of the most useful genres to get ELLs interested in writing and improve their skills at the same time? What nurtures digging deep into your students’ inner psyches to pull forth their emotions and simultaneously fosters the art of critical thinking? The answer? Creative writing! There really is no form of writing that does as much for ELLs as creative writing (Randolph, 2011). It helps them with sentence and paragraph structure, enhances their formal and informal knowledge of vocabulary, develops their ability to elaborate on detail, hones the craft of concision, and naturally nurtures their capacity to think both critically and creatively—all the while allowing them to have fun and become personally involved in the task at hand.

The Project

The Three-Step Short Story

One extremely effective activity within the vast network of creative writing genres is the three-step short story. Through this project, students develop an understanding of strong versus weak lexical items, examine the use and power of various sentence types, learn how to create the characters of a story, produce realistic dialog, and evoke emotional responses from the reader.

The completed project is a two and a half to three-page short story based on the meaning and feelings behind the word “Saturday”. The reason why Saturday is the focus will be discussed in the procedure. These stories contain all the basic literary elements of a short story; that is, setting, character, plot, conflict and theme.

The Procedure

DAY ONE: From Poetry to Prose – The Significance of Words

I always start this project with a poem. This gets the students to feel, think, and discuss the sensory qualities and representations of words. Let us use “Finger Kiss” as an example.

Finger Kiss

What color
Do our fingers see
When they close
Their eyes and kiss—
Swinging between
You and me
On this Saturday
In the park?

(Randolph, 2011, p.79)

(continued on p. 11)
After reading the poem, I have the students pair up and discuss its meaning and answer the question the poem poses. After these are discussed in pairs, I open it up for a lively class discussion. Then, we examine the sensory qualities of the words. For example, “What is the sense that fingers experience?”; “Can fingers see, smell, or taste?”; “What image does ‘swinging’ elicit?”; “Describe some sounds of a park.” Next, we talk about the significance of Saturday in the poem, and this takes us down the path of rediscovering all the wonders and magic of this day. We consequently examine what really makes Saturday the best day of the week.

This is followed by a brainstorm session in which we look at all the senses and their relation to Saturday. The diagram below is used to elicit their responses.

To get the students thinking more about this, I ask them such questions as “What color comes to mind when I say Saturday?”; “What sounds do you associate with Saturday?”; “Whose face comes to mind when I mention Saturday?”; “What is your favorite memory of Saturday?”

The homework for the next day is to write a descriptive paragraph on the following prompt: “Why is Saturday important to you? Describe why this day is so significant and explain what you like to do on this fantastic day of the week.”

**DAY TWO: The Three-Paragraph Story**

On the second day, check over your students’ paragraphs. You will most likely find they have given you an impressive list of all the things they do. What we do next is to turn one of those points into a three-paragraph short story.

After checking over the paragraphs, start a discussion on the elements of a short story. You can have the students choose a favorite TV series and explain why it is interesting and why they enjoy it. During this discussion, you can elicit the elements of a short story: characters, setting, plot, climax, and theme. For the purpose of our activity, you can simplify the plot as (1) the set-up, (2) the problem, and (3) the resolution.

(continued on p. 12)
The homework for the next day is to create a three-paragraph short story based on one of the points they wrote about the day before: the first paragraph is a set-up of the situation, which includes the main character and the setting; the second paragraph describes a problem; and the third paragraph offers a resolution.

For example, one student recently discussed all the things he and his wife like to do on Saturdays. However, he also mentioned that due to his busy school schedule, he even studies on Saturday nights. So this became the basis for his short story: paragraph one set up the image of a happy international student enjoying the early evening with his wife; paragraph two introduced the conflict of not having enough time to share with her; paragraph three showed how he would work harder during the week so that he could be with the one person he treasures more than anyone on that special evening of the week.

DAY THREE: Making it all come alive

This lesson focuses on adding a second character and dialog to their stories. If they already have a second character, as was the case in the above example, then there is no need to add another.

In the first part of this lesson, you can work with the students on their stories by teaching useful adjectives and creative metaphors; for example, “She had crescent-moon shaped eyebrows” or “Her laughter was as soft as an April morning sun.”

A fun and effective activity is to have each student pair up with a classmate and write a “physical character sketch” by describing their partner as precisely as they can. The instructor can then read these to the class and have the students match their classmates with the character sketches by listening to the descriptions.

The second part of this lesson should be devoted to adding dialog to their stories. You will need to go over the basic format and punctuation style of dialog. It is also wise to discuss the variation of verbs that can be used in dialog instead of just having the students use the “he said, she said” formula. For instance, instead of, ”’Oh no!’ she said,” you could use, “‘Oh, no!’ she cried.” or, ”‘Oh, really,’ she whispered softly.” This will help the students see the importance of assigning particular verbs to particular statements to reflect the emotion or connotation of the utterance.

The homework, then, is to complete the first draft of their stories by adding a character and dialog. They may also wish to elaborate on the previous day’s work and enhance the stories to their liking.

DAY FOUR: Four Eyes are Better Than Two

On the fourth day, the students pair up and read their stories to each other. Here, they are asked to peer-edit/critique their respective stories. It should be noted that this activity is most effective if both partners simultaneously critique one story at a time. If students read each other’s at the same time, the peer-edit/critique session does not work, for it becomes an isolated activity. The whole point of this particular edit/critique activity is to get the students to dialog with each other and make changes on the story together.

It should also be noted that this session can easily turn into a grammar editing session, so monitor the pairs as closely as possible to make sure they are critiquing the content and the elements of the short story. It is best to provide them with a rubric for the activity and go over it before starting. The homework for day four is to have them work on the final touches of their first draft.

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DAY FIVE: The Stories Revealed to the Class

The project culminates with the instructor reading sections of the stories aloud to the class. This is best done after the instructor has had time to go over each story and highlight the sections that he or she feels the class would benefit from the most. I like to read their work to the class for two critical reasons: first, it inspires the students and instantiates the idea that their stories are something to be taken seriously; and, second, it creates a sincere sense of mutual admiration among the writers (Koch, 1978).

Depending on the time you want to take on this project, you can do a second or even third draft of the stories. These rewrites can be done as in-class activities or assigned as homework. From personal experience, I would say a minimum of two drafts are necessary, and three, if you are thinking about submitting them to an ESL writers’ journal like The ESL Literary Review.

The Benefits: All Right, Skeptics, Neuroscience Officially Supports Creative Writing

I am certain there are still a few instructors who are not convinced creative writing will help their students with writing, nor do they believe it will enhance their students’ critical thinking skills. It is for these skeptics I dedicate this section of the article. In order to make my point, I’d like to call on neuroscience, statistics, and student survey responses.

Neuroscience

Recent studies in neuroscience (Willis, 2006; Jensen, 2008; Medina, 2009; Iacoboni, 2009; Sousa, 2011; Paul, 2012) continue to show how important three factors are in the learning and retention of material: (1) emotion, (2) personal involvement, and (3) the senses. Each of these three plays a significant role in creative writing. The more emotions used in writing a particular scene, the more the ELL is going to remember the vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structures that go into that scene (Sousa, 2011; Paul, 2012). Medina (2009) and Willis (2006) tell us that the more personal involvement one has with learning, the more the student is invested in the material and the more ownership he or she takes in mastering the topic in question. Personal poetry and short stories epitomize the idea of personal involvement in writing. And the senses, as we have known for ages, are the foundation of our own private epistemology. Our brains, whether those of native speakers of English or EL learners, react and retain narrative vocabulary and expressions like “lavender,” “cinnamon,” or “velvet voice” much more readily than non-descriptive or non-metaphoric language (Paul, 2012, p.1). In short, it cannot be denied that the elements of style used in creative writing help our students learn and develop their language skills.

Statistics from an American IEP Creative Writing Program

I have set up three successful intensive creative writing programs for non-native speakers: one abroad and two domestic. To show the breadth and effectiveness of creative writing, I’d like to point out that one was for beginning writers, one for intermediate and one for advanced ELLs. For the purpose of our present discussion, I will focus on the second group—the intermediate writers. At my former ESL institute, students at the intermediate level were having issues with developing their writing skills; consequently, only 50% to 60% would pass the writing exit exams and move on to the next level of study. These students were working with a pure academic writing system; i.e., they only wrote academic summaries, paragraphs, and essays. However, once I instituted an intensive creative writing program for the students at that level, there was a significant increase in skill improvement, critical thinking, and control in style. After working within my creative writing system, 80% to 90% of the intermediate students passed their writing exit exams and moved up to the next level of skill.
Updates from the Field

Developing Critical Thinking through Creative Writing: The Three Step Short Story and Evidence Such Activities Work

(continued from p. 13) study. Furthermore, “the exit test graders… noted a dramatic improvement in these students’ language control, vocabulary knowledge and willingness to be risk-takers” (Randolph, 2011, p.73). It is hard to argue that this increase in successful level promotion and skill improvement is not beneficial for our students.

Student Survey Responses

Lastly, I’d like to offer some results of student survey responses taken from 2008 to 2013 regarding their opinions about creative writing. The following responses come from former ELLs who are now studying in these respective university PhD or Masters programs: electrical engineering, chemistry, chemical engineering, civil engineering and computer science. The question I think many instructors will find intriguing from the survey is, “Has creative writing helped you and how?”

Five Responses

(1) “Yes, I learned how to take an idea in my short story and develop it with my own creativity. I learned how to think.”
(2) “I think it helped me become confident. I actually feel comfortable writing now.”
(3) “I learned how to play with English. It is more than a language now. It’s a bit of me.”
(4) “Yes. I can imagine ideas and communicate them clearly.”
(5) “Yes. I learned how to think beyond the box. I feel free. Thank you.”

Concluding Remarks

I do not claim creative writing will magically solve all the problems that students encounter in their writing process, but I will argue that it is a fun, effective and helpful way to get them more involved with the dynamics of writing. It will foster a positive way in which they can gain more control over their writing skills and develop confidence in both their writing and in themselves as writers.

The Saturday short story is a great example of this, as it will get your students to experience the full process of working with the various writing tools and putting them into action. Moreover, they will benefit from the critical thinking involved in both the writing process and in the analysis required during the peer review and editing sessions. If you want your students to learn to love writing and experience the fun of creating, give this exercise a try and watch their brilliance unfold.

Patrick T. Randolph currently teaches at Western Michigan University where he specializes in creative and academic writing, speech and debate. He has created a number of brain-based learning activities for the language skills that he teaches, and he continues to research current topics in neuroscience, especially studies related to exercise and learning, memory and mirror neurons. He lives with his wife, Gamze; daughter, Aylene; and cat, Gable, in Kalamazoo, MI. Randolph has published two volumes of poetry; Father’s Philosophy and Empty Shoes – Poems on the Hungry and the Homeless. Proceeds from the latter go to benefit Feeding America and other American food bank and homeless programs.

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Developing Critical Thinking through Creative Writing:
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Pictures from Dallas: TESOL and Wild Salsa

You’ll probably recognize some MITSOL members and others you may know in these pictures, but thanks goes out to all those who kept national and even international connections strong by attending the TESOL 2013 International Convention and English Language Expo and the MITSOL reception at Wild Salsa restaurant in Dallas, TX this past March. See Sue Brokaw and Wendy Wang (left to right in photo), right; Joel Boyd (reception organizer), far right; Thom Cullen with EMU grads Lauryn Gallo, Jing Jing Wei, and Catherine O’Keeffe (left to right in photo), below; Lindsay Vecchio, lower right; and a wide shot of Wild Salsa restaurant, lower middle.
Congratulations to the following presentations by Michigan presenters at the TESOL International Convention in Dallas, Texas this past March. Well done, Lauryn Gallo, Sara Okello, Zuzana Tomas, Jolene Jaquays, Katherine O’Keefe, Akiko Ota, and Patrick Randolph!

[Ed. note: We thank Heidi Enck, MITESOL Communications Coordinator, for keeping us in the loop regarding these presentations and we sincerely hope that we did not neglect to include any Michigan presenters from this list. In the future, please feel free to submit notice of any presentations, publications and/or other professional achievements for publication in future MITESOL Message editions! Send an email to Allison Piippo at apiippo@emich.edu or Aiman W. Mueller at aiman.w.mueller@att.net.]

Lauryn Gallo, Eastern Michigan University

Graduate Student Forum
Title: L2 Writers’ Understanding of Plagiarism and Identification of Unconventional Source-Use
Abstract: This study examined how university L2 writers conceptualize plagiarism and the extent to which they can identify problematic source use. The results suggest considerable variation in L2 writers’ understanding and abilities. Presenters will discuss teaching implications, including the need to differentiate instruction on avoiding plagiarism and will provide example activities.

Electronic Village Fair
Title: Free and Effective eTools for Writing
Abstract: Classroom implementation of web-based tools allows students to actively engage in the writing process in a more meaningful way. There are countless available internet resources for teaching writing, but with so many options, it can be difficult and time-consuming to locate quality sources to teach the desired skills. This presentation demonstrates the applicability of various free and effective web-based tools for helping students develop their writing at each stage of the writing process. Presenters will discuss how the tools have been used in the classroom for this purpose, and in what ways their use can be adapted in different contexts.

Jolene Jaquays, UM Flint; Sara Okello, UM Flint; Zuzana Tomas, EMU

Title: Teaching Grammar Using Engaging Contexts
Session Summary: This presentation aims to help teachers present grammatical structures in meaningful, communicative, and contextualized ways that go beyond simply including the target grammar points within a reading. Specifically, the presenters demonstrate how teachers can utilize music, comics, drama, and technology to provide an engaging context for grammar instruction.

Katherine S. O’Keeffe, Eastern Michigan University

Graduate Student Forum
Title: Increasing Literacy through Parental Engagement in a School Diversity Project
Abstract: This session presents a school diversity literacy project that explains why parental engagement is the key to increasing literacy. Included in the presentation are the project implementation and outcome, and the activities and the questionnaire used in gathering the data. The data demonstrates illustrations and culturally sensitive statistical results.

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Michigan Presenters at TESOL 2013

(Continued from p. 16) Akiko Ota, Michigan State University

Title: Factors Influencing Chinese ESL Students’ Social, Cultural, and Academic Transitions
Session Summary: The Chinese student population is growing significantly in U.S. higher education and ESL programs. However, little research has been conducted regarding their social, cultural, and academic transition into the U.S. This presentation provides research findings focusing on 8 Chinese students’ transitional experiences during their first year in an ESL program.

Patrick T. Randolph, Western Michigan University

Title: Opening Eyes and Minds With Local Community Based Research Projects
Session Summary: This dynamic presentation looks at successful projects that get ESL students to examine their local communities through human behavior, conversation analysis, body language, and academic policy changes. The presenter demonstrates, in detail, the steps of these projects and supplies a sample lesson plan complete with student examples of written work.

Title: Research in Action: Classroom Projects Based on Qualitative Research Methods.
Session Summary: This colloquium presents ESL classroom projects from university settings around the world in which students learn and then apply key facets of qualitative research methods. In completing these projects, students investigate aspects of their local communities and gain insight into local cultures, heritages, and language use.
Presenters: Paul McPherron, City University of New York, USA; Amy Alice Chastain, Shantou University, China; Kyle McIntosh, Purdue University, USA; Patrick T. Randolph, Western Michigan University, USA; David Williams, Shantou University, China

MITESOL Member Publications

Congratulations to Paul McPherron and Patrick T. Randolph, who recently published an article entitled "Thinking Like Researchers: An ESL Project That Investigates Local Communities" in TESOL Journal. The article focuses on two project-based activities that get students out into their local communities to research the social actions of Americans. The article is available to read free of charge online at: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/tesj.80/abstract

MITESOL Members are encouraged to submit recent publications for inclusion in this section of future editions of MITESOL Messages! Send an email to Allison Piippo at apiippo@emich.edu or Aiman W. Mueller at aiman.w.mueller@att.net.