

## The 2009 MATSOL Conference

May 7-8, 2009

Over 700 individuals attended the highly successful 2009 MATSOL Conference, entitled, *Multiple Literacies: Launching English Language Learners into a New Era*. Pre-conference institutes addressed differentiating between language differences or disabilities, with reknown researcher, Dr. Catherine Collier, began building a community of guidance counselors working with English language learners, and provided needed professional development on the Massachusetts English Language Assessment – Oral.

2009 MATSOL Conference Participants



### Multiple Literacies

Launching English Language Learners into a New Era

By Robyn Dowling-Grant

This year's successful conference focused on literacy for English learners, a timely subject, especially as we transition from a twentieth century economy dominated by a belief in "what's good for industry is good for America" to one that knows that workers must be trained and protected.

We know that the economy is in flux, and is being remade into one that replaces the one we knew. Tomorrow's opportunities demand that our students be fluent and literate in ways not asked of previous generations. In addition, they cannot count on the jobs of yesterday, which brought workers along through apprenticeships and guilds. Our students are required to have 21st century literacy upon entry to the workforce, while we still argue about the pedagogies of the past.

Dr. Jim Cummins and MATSOL Vice-President, Linda Vinay



What do we owe our students? We owe them rigorous preparation that will enable them to participate in the political and economic conversations that impact their lives. We owe them the language skills necessary to take advantage of academic and professional opportunities that will surely come their way, as America's labor transitions to a more multicultural workforce. Finally, we owe them the language that enables them to



**Multiple Literacies...**  
continued from page 1

participate in and achieve the satisfaction of laying the groundwork for their part in the American experience.

The presentations of researchers, practitioners and publishers at this conference, demonstrated how far our field has come in knowing what is required to reach these goals. For instance, there is a body of research that supports programmatic models and pedagogies that realistically allow students to gain full fluency, and to reach the achievement of other “sub-groups”, even if it takes 5-7 years, even as the political climate seeks to punish students for their status, rush them out of language instruction, and asks them to “make it” in spite of the fact that we ignore what they need to succeed. There is a body of work that underscores the need to teach students the language of academia, even as the political winds demand that these students be immersed, forcing them to somehow acquire what other students are explicitly taught. There is a body of work that proves that students who learn abstract content in their native language out-perform those who learn it in a second language.

As professionals, as practitioners, and as advocates, what is our role in working to provide our students with the opportunity to reach the dream, to allow our students to build what we built in this grand experiment? This is the question we must answer, as we prepare our students to face the challenges of the new era, and to claim their place in the new American dream of tomorrow. ■

**2009 Conference Highlights**

**Dr. Stephen Krashen**  
Keynote Address  
Thursday, May 7, 2009

Dr. Stephen Krashen’s highly entertaining keynote address, *Anything (But) Reading*, also had a highly important message: Access to quality libraries and sustained reading can improve reading skills, close the achievement gap, and assist English language learners with skills to be successful in the 21st century. This message was especially important, considering the recent fiscal crisis that has threatened access to neighborhood libraries. Who knew that Sweet Valley Kids could have such an impact on reading?



*Drs. Cummins and Krashen*

**Dr. Jim Cummins**  
Keynote Address  
Friday, May 8, 2009

Dr. Jim Cummins, in his keynote address entitled, *The Challenge of Learning Academic English*, reiterated the necessity and the impact of preparing English language learners for the de-contextualized academic arena. Connecting his research to the current political climate in Massachusetts, Dr. Cummins sounded a call to action: Success for English language learners is dependent not on MCAS scores, but dependent upon a responsive educational system that values and accesses native language and culture, promotes academic literacy, and believes in success for all.

**Dr. Carol Numrich**  
Higher Education Keynote Address

On Friday, May 8, 2009, noted author Dr. Carol Numrich also addressed a crowded Amphitheater, with her presentation -*Moving Toward a More Authentic Listening Practice*. Dr. Numrich discussed the value of using authentic speech instances, from a variety of genre, in the language classroom. She gave examples of interviews, reports, lectures, and broadcasts, emphasizing three aspects of authenticity in classroom activities: authentic listening content, authentic purposes for listening and authentic listening tasks.

The 2009 MATSOL Conference 1

INSIDE

**Multiple Literacies** 1

Launching English Language Learners into a New Era  
By Robyn Dowling-Grant

**MATSOL Conference Highlights** 2

**Interactive Bulletin Boards** 4

Unmasking Hidden Learning Opportunities  
By Nancy Nunes

**Time for Advocacy in Massachusetts** 6

By Kara Mitchell,

**TESOL is coming!** 7

**Co-Teaching Math at Stacy Middle School Adds Up to Success** 8

By Renee Abramson

**RI-TELL Conference** 9

Supporting Immigrant Students and Families in an Anti-Immigrant Political Climate

**MELLC Happenings!** 11

By Robyn Dowling-Grant

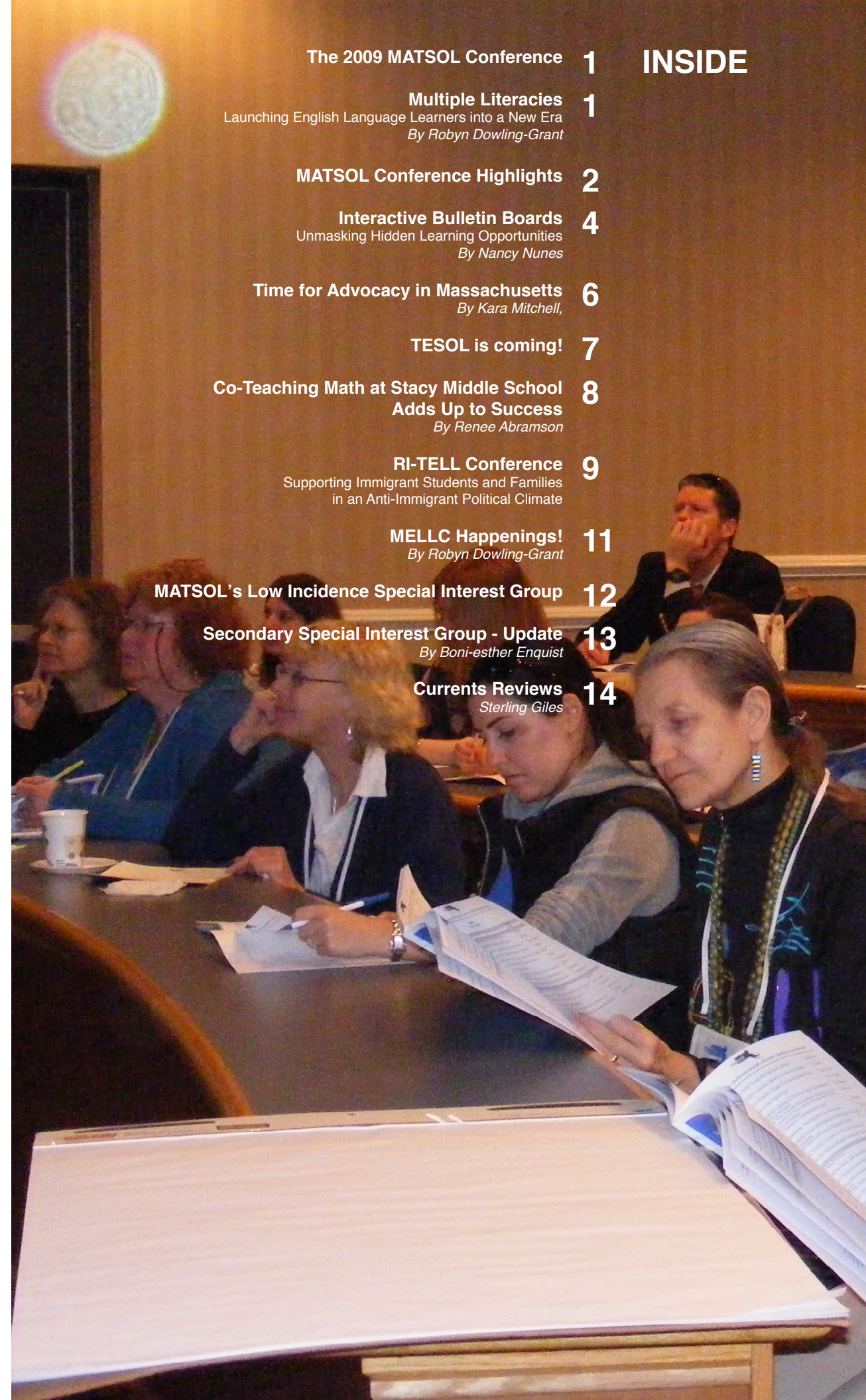
**MATSOL’s Low Incidence Special Interest Group** 12

**Secondary Special Interest Group - Update** 13

By Boni-esther Enquist

**Currents Reviews** 14

Sterling Giles





## Conference Highlights...

continued from page 2

By integrating real speech recordings, teachers can prepare activities that [CUT] expose students to spoken language in real-world settings.

### Dr. Maria Brisk and Dr. Suzanne Irujo Invited Speakers

On Thursday, Drs. Maria Brisk and Suzanne Irujo shared their current work in the area of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and academic language with a standing-room only crowd. Their presentation, *Uncovering the Secrets of English: Teaching the Language of School*, introduced many to SFL, a theory that moves beyond simplifying classroom language to make it accessible to English language learners. It assumes that cultural and linguistic norms of academic language are implicit in instruction, and often not obvious to learners. As ELLs make choices about which vocabulary and grammatical functions to use, they may not be aware of the contextual cues or requirements of the learning activity. Therefore, it is important to explicitly teach academic language and its functions to students; helping them to become more aware of such aspects as field, tenor, mode, purpose, and medium. Dr. Brisk focused on the value of this approach in the teaching of writing, while Dr. Irujo presented a model for integrating academic language into math and science classrooms. ■



2009 MATSOL Conference Participants

## Interactive Bulletin Boards

Unmasking Hidden Learning Opportunities  
By Nancy Nunes

Many districts have adopted a standards-based curriculum model to meet the demands of high-stakes testing even at the Kindergarten level. Teachers are left scrambling to meet curriculum guidelines within the current constraints of the school day. How to increase learning with no additional learning time has challenged teachers to create more innovative teaching practices. Interactive bulletin boards became a teaching/learning tool in my classroom that exceeded my expectations.

When the idea of creating door bulletin boards first presented itself to me, it was due to the lack of bulletin boards in my classroom for my theme-based units. I already had math, vocabulary, and sight word walls, but they were static and only of interest when students were looking for specific information. I was desperate to find space to draw my students' attention to specific monthly themes and decorating my door was the perfect solution. But in this process, I realized that it was meeting another need—how to keep the attention of my students while they were lining up at the door. I then noticed that students were intrigued by the displays, and this generated a lot of conversation. My students are all English language learners so generating conversation is essential—generating academic language created an unexpected sense of satisfaction.



My next challenge was to create a display that students could interact with and view more as a diversion rather than just something to look at and share conversations. I never expected the interactive bulletin boards to be so successful. Previously, getting students to line up quickly was not an easy task.

Now students jostle to be at the front of the line so they would be closest to the door. I began the interactive style with a science lesson based on the book *The Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree*. Students were excited to take turns guessing the season and then checking their answer. I lost a few pieces of the display, but it was well worth the learning outcome.

Then I thought that perhaps a bulletin board that incorporated my students themselves would be an interesting topic. We had discussed activities that could take place during the winter

season during a science lesson. Students chose an activity that they enjoyed or would like to try. Using penguins named after students, I adapted each one to the student's chosen activity. Not only did the display generate a lot of conversation, but it also gave students an opportunity to participate in generating the theme.

In addition, I was able to incorporate another theme of what animals do in the winter—hibernation, migration, and those that stay active. I'm always looking for opportunities to make connections between topics and this happened to be a convenient match.



During the month of April, my district provides students with a public speaking unit. We use Mother Goose nursery rhymes to teach students proper speaking skills. Although students learn only one nursery rhyme for the presentation, my students were able to learn more than ten of them. This was due, in large part, to being exposed to the nursery rhymes on the door bulletin board at several intervals during the day.

As each display comes down, it is interesting to note that students become excited to find out what the next topic will be. A simple idea to display monthly themes has become a popular teaching/learning tool that has generated a lot of conversation, additional learning prospects, as well as involving my students in decision-making opportunities to enhance their own learning. It couldn't have been any better (or easier) than that and it didn't require any additional teaching time! ■

*Nancy Nunes has a Master's of Education in English Language Learners and one in Moderate Special Needs. She has spent the last three years working as the Kindergarten SEI teacher at the Fitzgerald Elementary School in Waltham, MA, and previously taught ELL adults for more than 15 years.*



## Time for Advocacy in Massachusetts

By Kara Mitchell,  
Advocacy Representative on the MATSOL Board of Directors

At MATSOL, we are incredibly concerned about the overwhelming data emerging from a myriad of sources. These reveal sweeping proof that the education of the state's public and public charter school ELLs is failing.

The Gastón Institute Report (2009) about the Boston Public Schools found that since Question 2 passed in 2002:

- the identification of students identified as ELLs declined
- the enrollment of ELLs in programs for English declined
- the enrollment of ELLs in substantially separate Special Education programs more than doubled
- the service options for ELLs narrowed
- high school drop-out rates among students in programs for English learners almost doubled
- the proportion of ELLs in middle school who dropped out more than tripled
- academic gains of ELLs have not matched those of other groups resulting in a wider gap between ELLs and other BPS populations (p. 6).

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) report to the state legislature (2009) reported that, "We have a critical shortage of licensed ESL teachers in the state" (p. 2). The DESE estimates the state needs roughly 2,150-3,250 additional elementary and secondary SEI content teachers and around 500 additional licensed ESL teachers. In the same report, we learned that:

- Approximately 8,200 English language learners receive no ESL instruction
- Approximately 2,800 English language learners at the lowest levels of English

proficiency (beginning and early intermediate) receive no ESL instruction

- Approximately 5,160 English language learners receive 1-5 hours per week of ESL instruction (p. 8).

The report further states that, "If we expect English language learners to achieve academic levels of English proficiency that enable them to reach high academic performance, we have to provide robust programs of ESL instruction. At present, this is not happening in many districts and for many students" (p. 8).

From our own data gathering and analyses of every available measure, including MCAS data, graduation rates, drop-out rates, competency determination rates and the National Assessment for Educational Progress, we have found that ELLs in Massachusetts are the lowest performing sub-group of students. Further, they are often taught by teachers who are unqualified to teach them and, in some instances, have no access to any language support programs at all. This must change.

On April 23, approximately twenty members of MATSOL spent the day visiting legislative offices in the State House, sharing this data, offering suggestions for improvement, and sharing our desire for House Bill 486 to receive a prompt hearing from in the Joint Committee on Education. In January 2009, Representative Jeffrey Sánchez filed House Bill 486 that, if passed, will promote much needed state and district accountability for ELLs, comprehensive research-based programs for ELLs and increased parental involvement. The MATSOL Board of Directors is reaching out to various stakeholders, across the state, to discuss this bill. Currently, is the bill is working as a placeholder, ensuring that legislative attention is focused on supporting the education of ELLs in MA. We are working to ensure that the bill is heard. To read the bill, visit <http://www.mass.gov/legis/bills/house/186/ht00pdf/ht00486.pdf>

If you are concerned about the state of education for ELLs in MA, please join our efforts to inform policy makers and the public about the various issues and concerns that we have for

the English language learners in Massachusetts. This is a critical time to for hearing House Bill 486. There are many things you can do:

- Contact your representatives at the State House as well as the Joint Committee on Education requesting a hearing for H.486.
- Write letters to the editor sharing your concerns about the current situation and demand stronger educational opportunities for ELLs.
- Organize teachers, students, parents and districts to show their concerns and voice their opinions. Have these groups request a hearing for H.486. Also have these groups inform your local communities about the concerns and problems we are facing.
- Keep your membership in MATSOL current to receive notification of any new advocacy initiatives.

If you have any ideas or suggestions for our continued advocacy as an organization, please contact Kara Mitchell, Advocacy Representative on the MATSOL Board of Directors, at email [mitcheku@bc.edu](mailto:mitcheku@bc.edu). As always, we are interested in more engagement and ideas. Now is the time for us to band together and share our expertise, experiences and ideas to shift the tide and make dramatic improvements to the education of ELLs in MA. ■

**References:**  
**Chester, M. D. (2009). English language acquisition professional development: Line item 7027-1004. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.**

**Tung, R., Uriarte, M., Diez, V., Levan, N., Agusti, N., Karp, F., et al. (2009). English learners in Boston Public Schools: Enrollement, engagement and academic outcomes, AY2003-AY2006. Boston MA: The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy.**

## TESOL is coming! TESOL is coming!

*Listen dear colleagues and you shall hear,  
TESOL's going to Boston next year.*

*Expand your knowledge, learn a new skill,  
Connect with TESOL experts, what a thrill!*

*Thousands will join us, from here and from there.  
Start planning your travel, bus train or by air.*

*Start the countdown and arrange the time,  
Boston's Convention Center is where we'll next shine.*

*With great pleasure we announce a full program . . .  
Suzanne Griffin will speak on education in Afghanistan.*

*Howard Gardner our plenary will be,  
Maryanne Wolf will talk about literacy.*

*Also Jim Cummins and Joan Wink will speak,  
On the K-12 Dream Day early that week.*

*John Fanselow and Jean Handscombe will be there too,  
And now the rest, is all up to you!*

*See you in March of 2010,  
TESOL goes, both women and men!*

**Re-Imagine TESOL**  
The Boston TESOL "Party"  
March 24-27, 2010  
Boston Convention Center

Please help us re-imagine TESOL by being active participants and providing your input for a stimulating program. We ask you to focus on transforming the organization with fresh ideas and broad perspectives. The type of workshop presentations have been revised and improved to encourage more inclusive and interactive sessions. The proposal rubric has also been updated to help both the proposal authors and the evaluators understand the ratings system for greater transparency and clarity. With new federal leadership, many more things may be possible in the future if we can re-imagine TESOL and move the organization forward! See you in Boston! Please contact Allison Rainville at [arainville527@gmail.com](mailto:arainville527@gmail.com) if you can commit to volunteering during the Convention.

**Submitted by Robert Vitello, MATSOL Local Publicity and Communications Team Leader for TESOL Boston 2010 (508)675-4584**



## Co-Teaching Math at Stacy Middle School Adds Up to Success

By Renee Abramson

“Gladys! You got a 92 on your Math test. I want everyone to look at Gladys! (Pause). She came to this country a year ago. She didn’t know English. She is only now just learning English and she got one of the highest grades in class. Bravo!” said Mrs. Brandt.

These words were honored with a worthy round of applause for the shy, quiet girl from Ecuador who sat in the back of Carrie Brandt math class at the Stacy Middle School.

“Why did she do better than most of you? Because, she wants it. She came to this country for an education. She does her homework. She studies. She writes down new vocabulary and she will go to college and beyond and get a Ph.D. and she will not have to pay for it because those colleges will be looking for her.” Gladys sat beaming as she called me over. “Mrs. Abramson,” she whispered, “I like math very, very much”.

Gladys and other English Language Learners from the Stacy Middle School are part of the second year of a pilot program where ELL students are integrated into the mainstream math classroom. The class is co-taught by a master mathematics teacher and an ELL/ESL teacher. I felt very strongly about my students receiving a solid math education from a master mathematics teacher and was eager to partner with her in this co-teaching model.

When I approached Carrie Brandt about the idea of team teaching, she was enthusiastic. She had completed the ‘category trainings that she needed to become highly qualified and understood the unique needs of our English

Language Learners. We were willing to try to co-teach our students. We were very open-minded and optimistic about trying the model. We took care in making sure that the ELLs were seated among English speaking peers and frequently reconfigured our groupings to foster a peer mentoring model.

We share joint responsibility for course content, presentations, and grading. Students see our collaborative interactions and our differing perspectives. Our lessons have clear content and language objectives. Carrie focuses on the



2009 MATSOL Conference Presenters

language of math while I focus on language ambiguity and my students various English learning needs. We observed that all of our students benefit from this collaborative style. For example, we might focus on transitive and intransitive verbs such as less than and fewer. All of our students have the opportunity to use the language of math.

The benefits of using this model have been many. ELLs are more likely to take risks to speak. The anticipated ‘silent period’ that I expected would occur

with my ELLs has been shortened. Friendships have formed beyond the classroom. For example, when Dan came from El Salvador, he was a beginning learner of English. On the first day of school, he said, “Me. Daniel. Me, El Salvador.” Dan told another student that her vest was on “inverse” rather than ‘reverse’. Using the collaborative model, we observed Dan using mathematical language quickly and immediately applying it to using social language. One of the biggest benefits were seen in the benchmark testing of English language learning and fluent English speaking students. No differences were seen in benchmark testing of the two groups!

Three significant challenges were noted. None had to do with the application of our collaborative model. Rather, they reflected the provisions allotted to ELLs during state MCAS testing, dif-

ferences in the language used to express numerals and time allocation for solving problems. The biggest challenge that our English language learners experienced was using the word to word dictionaries furnished to them during MCAS administration. The dictionaries were not helpful for discerning the ways in which some words were used in context. For example, a 7th grade Math question included the words translation, rotation and reflection. The word to word dictionary included one translation for each word and were inappropriate for the context in which the words were used.

The use of numerals posed a challenge for some of our Asian, Arabic, and Southeast Asian students whose native language did not use the same system. The time needed for students to think in a new language is significant. For many students, number calculations occur first in the native language and must be translated into the new language. Ample time for transference is important. The Ellis model reminds us that input > transference must occur before output occurs.

Vocabulary is the first thing many people think of when they focus on language difficulties that ELLs have in math class. For example, the phrase least common multiple has specific mathematic meaning. A student may define this as smallest frequent multiplication. As with any subject matter, math must be taught with concrete examples that relate to student’s lives so that it may be learned. Activating background knowledge is very important for teaching English language learners and all students. Some English language learners have gaps in their education including math. A co-teaching partnership allows each teacher to bring in his/her expertise and experience to his/her students. It also allows for much needed time to observe students as they learn the language of of the subject matter and social language. Math class is an important site for language acquisition and subject matter learning. Team teaching provides us with a very useful and beneficial model for all of our students. ■

**Renee Abramson, M.Ed/TESL is the seventh grade ESL teacher at the Stacy Middle School in Milford, MA. She has been an educator for over 20 years; lived in Israel for 10 years working for the Ministry of Education teaching English as a Foreign Language. In addition she has spent the last five years teaching ESL at for college and corporations.**

## RI-TELL Conference

Supporting Immigrant Students and Families in an Anti-Immigrant Political Climate

On Saturday, October 18th RI-TELL held its inaugural conference at Rhode Island College. The topic of the conference was Supporting Immigrant Students and Families in an Anti-Immigrant Political Climate. The event was a great success with about 85 attendees. Our keynote speakers were Bill Shuey, Executive Director of the International Institute of Rhode Island, Elaine Budish a Research Analyst at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and Veronika Kot a staff attorney at Rhode Island Legal Services. Together, these speakers painted a humanitarian, social and legal portrait of the immigrant experience in Rhode Island.

Elaine Budish gave a power point presentation explaining the information found in a booklet published by the state called KidsWork. According to this report, the immigrant population in Rhode Island mirrors the rest of the country in percentage of total population and composition. The report goes on to say that the percentage of Rhode Island children living in immigrant families in 2006 was 23% , compared to 22% for the rest of the US. 78% of children living in immigrant families were from Spanish language backgrounds. 50 % of the immigrant students in Rhode Island live and go to school in Providence

Veronika Kot pointed out that while it is important for schools to obtain proof of a student’s date of birth for appropriate placement, proof of family residency in the district and proof of proper immunization records, asking anything about immigration status is a violation of a student’s and his or her family’s civil rights. Furthermore, students cannot be excluded from any programs because of their immigrant status. Immigrant children have the right to ESL support if they need it in order to learn what other children are learning. Their parents also have the right to translation services sufficient to provide basic access to information and participation. Although E-verify, a national mechanism to identify the immigration status of any new employee, became law by executive order in 2008, it should not interfere with schools in any way.

Bill Shuey told the audience about the work of



## RI-TELL Conference... continued from page 9

the International Institute with refugees and other immigrants. He said that the International Institute provides high quality educational, legal, and social services to immigrants and refugees throughout Rhode Island and southeastern New England. Fundamental to all programs and services is the promotion of self-sufficiency -- giving clients tools to help themselves become active participants in the social, political & economic richness of American life. The Institute also provides a full range of interpreting and translating services and community education and training programs. The International Institute is the sponsor of the International Charter School, a multicultural, multilingual public elementary school of choice designated as High Performing by Rhode Island testing standards. ([www.IIRI.org](http://www.IIRI.org))

Three breakout sessions targeted elementary, secondary and adult educators. The adult session on Designing Responsive Programs for ESL Immigrant Adults was, although full of useful information, in a room too small for the large turn out. Presenters Dr. Andrés Ramirez and Brady Dunklee discussed at length many of the issues currently facing administrators and instructors within adult ESL settings, including how immigration policies have adversely impacted learners. Dr. Ramirez commented that negative media portrayals have fueled anti-immigrant sentiment, calling it a "blame game" for the current fiscal crisis. He remarked that extensive and overreaching immigration legislation has produced a "chilling effect" within the nation and within our communities, both among documented and undocumented immigrants. Mr. Dunklee affirmed Dr. Ramirez's sentiments, suggesting that workplace raids in Rhode Island were "calculated to produce fear." He pointed

out that part of the problem for undocumented immigrants is that there is "no path" or mechanism for them to become documented without fear of serious repercussions. He went on to say that documented immigrants were also feeling the effects of persecution in spite of the fact that they are in the United States legally, working and contributing to the economy. Mr. Dunklee



2009 MATSOL Conference Participants

reported a decline in his ESL class attendance immediately after Rhode Island's executive order authorizing the state to cooperate with federal immigration agents was issued. Dr. Andrés Ramirez is Assistant Professor in the Educational Studies Department and Coordinator of

the Intensive English as a Second Language Program, both at Rhode Island College. He also oversees the Bilingual Endorsement and Modern Language Teacher Education Coursework at RIC. A native of Colombia, Andres recently completed his doctoral studies in Language, Literacy, and Culture at UMass-Amherst. Brady Dunklee is an adult ESL educator and administrator in Rhode Island. He has worked with the Institute for Labor Studies and Research for several years and was Literacy Coordinator at the Central Falls Library. Brady also co-founded ATRAVES, a non-profit organization serving people in Nicaragua.

The secondary session was about Planning Curriculum and Instruction for Secondary Immigrant Students. There were many new ideas in the elementary session titled: Welcoming Immigrant Children to Your School: Strategies To Get Your Learners Off to a Great Start.

The inaugural conference for RITELL was a success for all involved. ■

## MELLC Happenings!

By Robyn Dowling-Grant, Lexington Public Schools

In this, the second year of meetings, MELLC (Massachusetts English Learners Leadership Council) has used the meetings as an opportunity to explore many areas of relevance to all of our member districts. The membership is made up of leaders of English learner programs from urban districts, low-incident districts, and everything in between.

The September meeting presented information from Jill Norton, Executive Director of the Rennie Center. The Rennie Report gave an overview of policy and some models that work after the passing of Question 2. Then Ms. Norton discussed the steps to successful advocacy. Among those:

- Develop goals to tie into the Theory of Action
- Strategy to implement goals
- Key Action Steps to meet goals and execute strategies

Sonya Merian facilitated the discussion of possible next steps.

Dan Wiener addressed the group regarding the field-testing of the new MEPA in October of 2008.

The December meeting provided information regarding the Wallace Foundation Initiative currently underway in Worcester Public Schools. Dr. Sergio Paez, the ELL Director of the school district, explained that the initiative, in partnership with Harvard University, addresses the achievement gap in urban education, and includes Boston, Chelsea, Springfield and Worcester. It is now in its second year, and the outcomes of this effort will be shared with the membership.

Dr. Maria de Lourdes Serpa provided an informative presentation on the use of RTI (Response to Intervention) with English learners. This discussion walked members through the IDEA, as it relates to English learners, cultural and linguistic implications of tiered intervention and RTI, and classroom implications of students in this model.

The February meeting saw models of effective assessment of English learners. Dr. Serpa introduced Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM), which seeks to provide essential background information, data collection procedures in reading, early reading and spelling for grades 1 – 3 AND how to validate these CBM procedures for ELL students. Participants learned about the Five Components of Reading:

- Phonemic Awareness (PA) (ability to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds in spoken words).
- Phonics (Includes teaching letter shapes and names, PA and all major letter-sound relationships).
- Fluency (clear, easy, spoken expression of written words/ideas)
- Vocabulary (scientific research reveals that most vocabulary is learned indirectly for native English speakers; not so for ELLs).
- Comprehension of Text (related to cultural background).

Dan Wiener, from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, addressed the group on changes to the state's assessments. He told the group that the DESE would dispense with history and social science MCAS in the future. New MEPA Tests for Grades 3 – 12 would be piloted. There would be a K – 2 MEPA, created because it ties into Federal regulations and funding. Results will be come out in September of 2009 because there needs to be standards set: defining cut scores at each grade span. These will be set by committee taking place during the month of July.

The May meeting will focus on ESL curriculum writing, presented by Jody Klein, Newton Public Schools, which will help districts interested in taking this next step get started. Kara Mitchell and Kellie Jones will apprise the group of advocacy efforts this year, including a successful drive for participation at the conference. David Valade, from Holyoke Public Schools, will talk about efforts in his district to increase parent participation, a necessary ingredient for student achievement. We will decide, as a group, topics for next year's series, which promises to be as informative and collaborative as this year's series. ■



## MATSOL's Low Incidence Special Interest Group

This special interest group [SIG] is geared toward ESL teachers and program directors who work in districts with 0 – 50 + English Language Learners. Facilitated by Ann Feldman, Milford Public Schools' ELL Program Director, and with help from Boni-esther Enquist, Rhoda Webb, and Joanne Fridley, ELE directors from larger districts, this SIG meets throughout the school year (see schedule posted on the MATSOL website). Approximately 25 participants regularly attend these meetings and 150 are included on its email list. The meetings are open to all MATSOL members and are held from 9 – 11 AM in Milford High School's Teacher Resource Center.

It is planning a free two-hour presentation for Low Incidence district superintendents, principals, curriculum directors, SPED/Title I directors, and other stake holders about English Learner Education in the state. Sonya Merian, from the Holliston Public Schools and Ann Feldman, from Milford, will present a slide show and panel discussion on federal and state guidelines and issues of concern to Low Incidence districts. It will take place on June 9, 2009. The 2008-2009 end of year meeting will occur on Thursday, June 11, 2009 from 9-11.

Contact Ann Feldman (afeldhome@aol.com) for further information about these two and any Low Incidence SIG meetings.

Some of the meeting topics of this SIG have included ways for:

- implementing an effective ELL program following state and federal guidelines.
- adapting guidelines in low incidence districts given budgetary restrictions.
- Eliciting administrative support.
- Sharing resources: forms, translations, and SEI training opportunities
- Providing an open-forum to voice concerns about ESL versus special education issues, ESL teacher/tutor qualifications, SEI training, initial language proficiency test-

ing and intake procedures, translations of unusual languages, and PTS syndrome of students from traumatic experiences

- Advocating for students
- Encouraging parent involvement.
- Sharing understandings about state and federal concerns including the high dropout-rate of ELLs, the Gaston Report, and updates about MCAS and MEPA, etc.).
- Sharing workshop and conference information
- During 2008-2009, we have collaboratively been developing an ESL report card that is aligned with the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes [ELBPO]. Our goal is to have a completed product by the beginning of the 2009 – 2010 school-year. It is anticipated that a core group of SIG volunteers will complete this task by August 2009.

This low incidence SIG has posted documents/forms, etc. on the Low Incidence Bulletin Board at [www.matsol.org](http://www.matsol.org).

### Testimonials:

***"This support group is for those who are the only ESL teachers in one or two (or more) districts. It was relevant because I was able to keep up with current issues, share frustrations, and meet other ESL teachers. Other members of the group seemed very knowledgeable and were able to make highly effective suggestions."***

***"I appreciate the opportunity to be part of an advocacy group for our low incidence yet high need population"***

***"The MATSOL Low Incidence support group has been a source of continuous support, information and resources for me. This in turn has helped me be a better teacher, and helped our district to provide more support to our ELL community....Our facilitator makes sure all group participants have every update from the DESE...saves us so much time.....The email communication between participants is an added benefit.... easily the best 2 hours a month that I spend outside of school!"***

***"Being the only one in my school who is responsible for English Language Learners' success, I need this connection and look for both the meetings and emails. This group has offered support, knowledge, creativity and is really a 'lifeline' to be able to do it all."***

## Secondary Special Interest Group - Update

By Boni-esther Enquist

We have a new addition to our Secondary SIG as of this fall... Suzanne Coffin, from the Haverhill Public Schools who will be the Secondary SIG Co-Representative along with Boni-esther Enquist. Welcome, Suzanne!

Efforts in the Secondary SIG this year, in addition to ensuring that our annual conference had a wide variety and number of topics that will appeal to both ESL and Sheltered teachers at the secondary level, have been the creation of a Guidance Counselor Course that was launched at the Pre-Conference Institute on May 6 (at the MATSOL Annual Conference, May 7 and 8) with a follow-up session on June 1st (in Milford). This course will be led by Boni-esther Enquist who has worked gotten feedback from ELL Directors and Guidance Counselors suggesting that MATSOL create something for this particular audience. This course covers the laws related to ELLs, program design, scheduling and the special needs of the older, and sometimes limited formal-schooling learner. We are in hopes that this first meeting will launch networking efforts for Guidance Counselors to connect with each other to share both challenges and successes. If successful, look for this course to be repeated.

Another goal of the Secondary SIG is to see if perhaps the membership would like to do an informal book study with members in different regions of the state opening up their homes to study and talk about something relevant to the field. Do you have any book ideas? A big house? A patio or pool? We are looking for some members to take the lead on this. You offer the place/book title and we'll help you connect with

colleagues to make it happen.

Finally, as all High School teachers know, Ells represent the highest levels of dropout in our schools and MATSOL continues to advocate in this area. These few months have featured an NPR series and then live taping of PROJECT DROPOUT( WHDH, 90.9 WBUR) where community members, educators, parents, students and researchers gathered to examine this alarming issue in general with many references made to English learners. The Gaston Institute's recent findings as well as the State's Commis-

sions and forums on the topic of drop-outs are bringing this issue to the foreground of the lawmakers' and public's eyes. Please join MATSOL and respond to the advocacy alerts that you come across and consider how you personally can help advocate for our ELLs

to help them stay in school and get the services they need. ■



2009 MATSOL Conference Presenters



2009 MATSOL Conference Presenter



## Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language, Third Edition.

Marianne Celce-Murcia, Ed. Heinle & Heinle, 2001. 584 pages. ISBN 0-8384-1992-5.

Review by Joshua F. Davis

Many changes in English language learning have occurred since the first edition of *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* in 1979, yet “The Apple Book” maintains its place as a great resource for teachers and students in our discipline. Celce-Murcia, also known for co-authoring *The Grammar Book* with Diane Larsen-Freeman, edits this compilation of works from forty contributors of English language learning in both theory and practice. The book is divided into five units: Teaching Methodology, Language Skills, Integrated Approaches, Focus on the Learner, and Skills for Teachers. As in earlier editions, there are discussion questions and activities with resources at the end of every chapter. These have been augmented in the latest edition with helpful Web references for further exploration.

Of particular note in this compilation was Sandra J. Savignon’s “Communicative Language Teaching for the Twentieth Century.” Savignon describes the history leading up to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), particularly the failings of other methodologies such as the audio-lingual method. Savignon presents CLT as an approach to learning that involves the learner actively communicating language from a personal perspective. She lists a number of components for the teaching of CLT, including one that addresses learner attitude. “My Language Is Me: Personal English Language Use” asks the student to question how she fits into a classroom discussion of a short story, for example. Beyond the search for meaning, the student should be encouraged to state her understanding of what believes to be true. The student must be viewed as a whole person who wishes to communicate in the target language as the first language. We only cheat our students when we compliment them on their pronuncia-

tion and other skills while they fail to assertively interact with the target language as in their L1.

Another insightful article was “Building Awareness and Practical Skills to Facilitate Cross-Cultural Communication” by Eli Hinkel. Hinkel notes the challenges to L2 learners with forms of greeting, for example, ones that involve more than communicative competence. “How’s it going?” may be asked *tête à tête*, or simply by one friend to another in passing as a simple greeting without expectation of an extended answer. Given the pragmatic nature of much of American culture in particular, English language learning often poses a particular challenge. Hinkel rightfully voices concern over teaching L2 culture and L2 linguistic skills in isolation.

Debate, dialogue and collaboration stimulated the publication of the first two editions of *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*. This third edition of “The Apple Book” will continue to play an important role in English language learning for some time, benefiting both teacher and student, thanks in particular to Marianne Celce-Murcia.

**Joshua F. Davis works as a correctional chaplain in Pollock, Louisiana, where the new medium security prison on the grounds, about to open, has an ESL lab. [joshuaflaggdavis@yahoo.com](mailto:joshuaflaggdavis@yahoo.com)**

## Teach Business English

Sylvie Donna. Cambridge University Press, 2000. 370 pages. ISBN 0-521-58557-0.

Reviewed by Eileen Kramer

This is one of the Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers in the series edited by Penny Ur, reason enough to give it space on my bookshelf. The title could be *How to Teach Business English* because the book presents a complete strategy for starting a Business English course, assessing needs, writing lesson plans, designing activities, and evaluating outcomes.

The author begins by answering a question asked even by ESL teachers: What exactly is Business English? Sylvie Donna says it is “teaching English to adults working in businesses of one kind or another, or preparing to work in the field of business.” Of course most adult ESL students are working, so what is special about Business English? The purpose of a Business English course is to fulfill students’ specific work-related language needs, with a curriculum that is often determined by the sponsoring employers and companies. Business English students may be at any level in the business world—from clerical workers to customer support specialists to managers and high-level executives. One of the best things about this book is the abundance of practical information, drawn from the author’s extensive experience in the field.

Chapters 2 and 3 are for teachers and program directors setting up a new course or starting to work with new clients. The client interview questionnaires in Chapter 2 are comprehensive needs-assessment tools. For example, “What does the company want the students to be able to do?” and “In what specific situations?” Chapter 3 discusses materials, context, venue, client agreements, classroom norms, and ongoing needs analysis. The level of detail is impressive. For example, there is a section on icebreakers that are appropriate for adults who are working in the business world. What I like best in this chapter is the focus on empowering students to take initiative for their own learning, which is useful preparation for the independent, competitive business world.

The author’s values and approach to teaching are evident in Chapter 4, *Day-to-Day Concerns*. For example, in Section 4.4, *Presenting Language*, the reader is advised to teach patterns of discourse and to use contexts that are useful to your particular students. And the author doesn’t just tell us; she shows us—with activities we can use with our students.

If you need ideas for specific units to teach in your Business English course, skip ahead to Chapter 5—150 pages of activities on topics such as meetings, email, telephone, presentations, and writing reports. I used the *Message Workshops* with my intermediate EFE (English for Employment) students, adding more scenarios to the author’s list. It was a jump-start

to have this activity already structured so all I had to do was embellish and tailor it a bit for my students.

Although the author’s focus is Business English, many of the topics and activities are relevant for any ESL course. For example, I adapted *Understanding the News* (Section 5.14) for a community-based class. The book’s applicability to any ESL course is certainly the case with Chapters 6–9, which deal with issues such as absenteeism, ongoing assessment, and course evaluation. I especially like the student-centered focus of one of the author’s suggestions (Section 6.1): “Ask other students to update the latecomer or absentee.” And if your program gives grades, there is a helpful marking scale (p. 300) that breaks performance into five levels. This could also be used for pre, during, and post student self-assessment of skills.

The end-of-book material includes a generous glossary, a recommended reading list, resources with contact information (unfortunately not web addresses), and an extensive index that includes all the activities under the topics where you would expect to find them.

My only disappointment was the exclusion of a section on job-seeking skills; for example, resume writing and interviewing. It would be interesting to see this topic covered in a future edition and it certainly is relevant for the growing EFE field.

Do I recommend this book? Absolutely, yes. If I were preparing to teach Business English overseas, for example, I would be sure to include this book in my luggage limit. It can be used as a Business English primer, an activities resource guide, or an ESL topic-based reference manual. The author has a firm grasp on the issues faced by non-native English speakers working in the business world. Furthermore, from a business management point of view, if all employees (native and non-native speakers) mastered even half the skills dealt with in this book, it would greatly improve business communications.

**After completing her master’s degree at the School for International Training, Eileen Kramer is teaching ESL in the Boston area. Her email address is [kramer@tiac.net](mailto:kramer@tiac.net).**



## Child-rearing in Ethnic Minorities

J.S. Dosanjh and Paul A. Ghuman. Multilingual Matters Ltd., 1996. 228 pages. ISBN 1-85359-365-6. Reviewed by Eileen Feldman

With its ten-page Bibliography, its ten-page Index by topic and experts, its thirteen-page Appendix of interview questions asked of Punjabi mothers and grandmothers in England, this exploration is eminently suitable for researchers in universities (Dosanjh is at University of Derby; Ghuman is at University of Wales) and practitioners in classrooms. Its findings are both particular and universal, as these Punjabi immigrants (Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh) endured the typical hardships of negotiating the systems and modifying some traditions in order to succeed while retaining the sacred values of religion, interdependence, and obedience.

In the 1970's and in the 1990's parents were asked 160 questions about their child-rearing practices and philosophies. Forty-two questions deal expressly with "School and Intellectual" matters. Concerns were large class size, school meals, pocket money, after-school activities, primacy of parental involvement in homework, mother tongue, TV, friendships, access to books, secularism, aspirations for the child. Yet the other interview categories -Identity, Gender Equality, Bilingualism, Discipline, Independence, Fantasy and Tension, Activities- are also relevant to the teaching situation. In addition to Tables with data, telling narratives are provided to convey the mothers' emotional component.

Findings show Punjabi success in school is lower in the early grades but catches up to Whites in high school by the fifth year (grade 13) and appears overrepresented in university. There is a disparity between the ethnic groups who do /do not consider British school as a threat to their culture; some want the competencies afforded by Western schools and pass on their traditions at home, while others would prefer separate schools. Many changes have been made by second generation parents over dress, food, language, job and economic levels; still, mothers continue to foster family and group interdependence, socialization, education in the mother tongue, higher educational aspirations, and desire for private or religious schools. Punjabi parents -like other ethnic groups alluded to in the research- are remapping their blueprint with a mix of Western and non-Western ideas.

The health and economic benefits of the former are complemented by the stability and security of the latter. As educators it is useful for us to reflect and respond to the non-pedagogical issues raised in this book. Understanding the social and psychological aspects of our students', and their families', experiences may enhance our newcomers' success and retention.

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## Contact USA 1 & 2

Paul Abraham and Daphne Mackey. Pearson Longman, 2005 & 2004. 116 & 154 pages. ISBN 0-13-049623-5, 0-13-049625-1.

Reviewed by Susan Bishop

How does an ESL teacher teach words? English language learners I've worked with want to amass as much vocabulary as possible. As an ESL teacher, I have struggled to find ways to make the words I present be meaningful and to then have these words become a working part of the student's vocabulary.

Contact USA 1 and Contact USA 2 are reading and vocabulary texts which focus on using American culture to present high usage vocabulary. (There is also a Contact USA 3, third edition, which is not included in this review.) Each book has an accompanying teacher's manual.

The topics covered in this series are most appropriate for adult learners. For example, the chapter "On Schedule" in Contact USA 1 deals with appointment books and planning your day. The chapter called "What's a Family" in Contact USA 2 goes beyond the basic names for family members to concepts such as living together before marriage, and how the U.S. census bureau determines what constitutes a family.

Contact USA 1 is intended for high-beginners. The topics start with basic introductions and move on to more challenging topics such as "Stressed Out." Each chapter presents a variety of exercises to be worked on alone and then either with a partner or in a group. The exercises start with pictures accompanied by simple

phrases and continue with exercises such as reading comprehension and matching. I counted 15-17 different exercises per topic in this series. This gives the student repeated and varied practice with the same vocabulary to help it become part of their own vocabulary. Also, words will show up again in later chapters. Contact USA 2, for low-intermediate students, uses similar exercises, but with more complex vocabulary and readings.

An exercise which appears in each chapter, called "A Point of View," gives the students the opportunity to express their opinion using recently learned vocabulary. With the intense practice in the readings and the abundant vocabulary exercises the student has received throughout the chapter, this exercise will invite lively discussions for even high-beginners.

The Contact USA series is a constructive supplementary text for an ESL teacher using a basic ESL text. Because the books have the typical topics found in an adult ESL classroom -family, friends, exercise, employment- the series complements work with other texts and most curricula. Teachers will find that including this series in their lesson plan will help their students retain use of new vocabulary.

**Susan Bishop's ESL experience includes teaching in colleges, community colleges, community-based organizations, and two years in Poland. She is currently an ESOL teacher at Central High School in Springfield. [suejackbishop@lycos.com](mailto:suejackbishop@lycos.com)**



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## Books Available To Be Reviewed For Matsol Currents

If interested, contact the reviews editor Sterling Giles (617) 421-9134 / [sterlig@aol.com](mailto:sterlig@aol.com)

\* = book for teachers (not a student text)

- \* Affect in Language Learning, Camb. UP 99
- \* Beyond Training (Cambridge Language Teaching Library), Camb. UP '98
- \* Bilingual and ESL Classrooms: Teaching in Multicultural Contexts, second edition, McG-H '98
- \* Civic Participation and Community Action Sourcebook (A. Nash), 2003
- \* Discourse and Context in Language Teaching: A Guide for Language Teachers, CMB '01
- \* Dual Language Instruction: A Handbook for Enriched Education, H&H 2000
- \* English Phonetics and Phonology: A practical course (3rd edition), Camb. 01
- \* Essentials of Teaching (see English for Academic Success series below.)
  - Academic Oral Communication
  - Academic Reading
  - Academic Writing
  - Academic Vocabulary, HMCO 2004/2005
- \* Exploring the Second Language Mental Lexicon, Camb. UP 99
- \* Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom, Camb / 1998
- \* Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom (Cambridge Language Education Series), Camb. UP '98
- \* Focus on Form in Classroom Second Language Acquisition, Camb. UP 98
- \* Focus on Form in Classroom Second Language Acquisition (Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series), Camb. UP '98
- \* Grammar Contexts...A Resource Guide for Interactive Practice, UMichPR 99
- \* Language Teaching Awareness: A Guide to Exploring Beliefs and Practices, Camb / 1999
- \* Learner Autonomy: A guide to developing learner responsibility, Camb. '00
- \* Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems, Camb '01
- \* Learning About Language Assessment: Dilemmas, Decisions, and Directions (Newbury House Teacher Development), Newbury/Heinle - '98
- \* Materials Development in Language Teaching (Cambridge Language Teaching Library), Cambridge UP '98
- \* Mentor Courses: A Resource Book for trainer-trainers (Cambridge Teacher Training and Development), Cambridge UP '99
- \* Mentor Courses: A resource book for trainer-trainers, Camb / 1999
- \* Network-based Language Teaching: Concepts and Practice, Camb / 2000
- \* New Ways in English for Specific Purposes, TESOL '98
- \* Rhymes 'n Rhythms for the ESL Classroom, Pro Lingua 2001
- \* Teach Business English, Camb 00
- \* Teaching Adult Second Language Learners, Camb / 2000
- \* Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language, H&H 2001
- \* Teaching English Spelling, Camb / 2000
- \* The Grammar Book, Heinle '99
- \* The Sky in My Hands: Accelerating Academic English Through the Writing Process, Language Learning...2005
- \* Write for You: Creative Activities for Building Writing Skills, Pro Lingua 2001
- \* Writing Simple Poems, Camb. 01

- American Ways – 3e, Longman 2005
- CD-ROM materials from Pearson, Pearson 2003
  - Longman English Interactive (4 levels)
  - business
  - prep for TOEIC
  - Side By Side (2 levels, with or without civics)
- Basic Grammar and Usage – 7th edition, Thomson 2006
- Beyond True Stories: A High-Intermediate Reader, Longman 2003
- Cause & Effect – 4th edition, Heinle 2005
- Clear Speech: Pronunciation and Listening Comprehension in North American English 3rd edition, CUP 2005
- Collins Cobuild Advanced Dictionary of American English (w/CD ROM), Thompson 2007
- Contemporary Topics 1: Intermediate Listening and Note-Taking Skills, Pearson 2002
- English for Academic Success (series)
  - College Oral Communication (4 levels)
  - College Reading (4 levels)
  - College Writing (4 levels)
  - College Vocabulary (4 levels)
  - Essentials of Teaching (4 skills), HMCO 2004/2005
- English for Health Sciences (VM has it), Thomson 2006
- English in Action – 4 levels, book, T book, Wbook, audio CD, Heinle 2003
- English Interactive (1, 2, 3) – CD ROM programs, Lman 2004
- English Pronunciation Made Simple, Lman 2005
- Essential Academic Vocabulary: Mastering the Complete Academic Word List, HMCO 2006
- Exploring Content 1 & 2: Reading for Academic Success, Longman 2004
- Eye on Editing 2, Longman 2003
- Focus on Vocabulary, Lman 2005
- For Your Information: Reading and Vocabulary Skills – second edition, Longman 2007
- Fundamentals of English Grammar – Interactive, Lman
- Gateways to Academic Writing, Lman 2005
- Get Ready to Read, Longman 2005
- Grammar Express Basic – CD Rom, Longman 2005
- Grammar Form and Function 3, McGH 2005
- Grammar In Context – 3D – 4th edition, Heinle 2005
- Grammar Sense Interactive – CD ROM (1, 2, 3), Oxford 2005
- Insights for Today– 3rd edition (See also Themes for Today), Heinle 2004
- Inspired to Write: Readings and tasks to develop writing skills, Camb. 2004
- Key Concepts (1 & 2): Listening, Note Taking, and Speaking across the Disciplines, HMCO 2006
- Longman Dictionary of American English, 3rd edition now with thesaurus and w/ or w/out interactive CD ROM, Longman (2004)
- Password: A Reading and Vocabulary Text (1, 2, 3),
- Quest – all skills 2nd edition, McG H 2007
- Reading Advantage – 2nd edition, Heinle 2004
- Reading Power (3e), Longman 2005
- Side by Side Interactive - CD ROM (2 levels), Lman 2004
- Sound Concepts: An Integrated Pronunciation Course, McG Hill 2005
- Text & Thought – 2nd edition, Pearson (Longman) 2003
- The Heinle Picture Dictionary, Heinle 2005
- Themes for Today – 2nd edition (See also Insights for Today), Heinle 2004
- Topics from A to Z (1 & 2), Lman 2005
- Tuning In: Listening and Speaking in the Real World, Pearson 2006
- Understanding and Using English Grammar – Interactive CD, Longman 2004
- Weaving it Together – 2nd edition (I have 1,2....could get 3, 4), Heinle 2004
- World View 1, Pearson 2005





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