

VATESOL Newsletter

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Fall Conference Update: Letter from the VATESOL President.....	1
VATESOL Officers: 2007-2008	3
VATESOL Fall Conference 2008.....	3
VATESOL Treasury Report: 03/06/2008	4
Call for Nominations	4
Student expands passion for Spanish on full Rotary scholarship to Ecuador	4
The Diversity Continuum: An Instructional Decision-Making Model	6
News in Higher Ed: English Language Institute of Virginia Tech	11
Academic Opportunities	11

Fall Conference Update: Letter from the VATESOL President

At our fall conference, we spoke of "Connections" – teacher to student, teacher to teacher, students to students. Presentations ranged from the larger picture with Shelley Wong addressing how we must connect with our legislators on political concerns to how students can connect to each other using a variety of

multimedia forms. I hope attendees found it to be useful and inspiring in many ways.

I have been working with the VATESOL Board on a couple of exciting projects which focus on making such connections on a larger scale. These are important for the future of the organization, and I want to share them with you. **First, the Board has decided to join the Southeast TESOL Association. This organization is comprised of the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama-Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Kentucky, Florida and Arkansas.** Its mission is to collect and disseminate information about developments in the teaching of English as a second language and to stimulate professional development by arranging for regional annual conferences. These conferences are very well attended with internationally known key speakers. Our purpose in joining is to benefit from the shared expertise, and by hosting a conference, gain new membership and funds (the Carolinas conference brought in \$88,000). Of course, this is a way to connect regionally, but more importantly, with additional funds we can offer more services to our members. VATESOL has been selected to host the 2011 SETESOL conference in Williamsburg, Virginia. I am excited about the venue and all the possibilities that can help us to grow. But, it is also a major undertaking. So, I am connecting with each of you to ask

for your help when we begin planning. If many lend a hand, we can do it!

Our second project is connecting to TESOL in a pilot project which will make joining TESOL + VATESOL a one step process that gives a significant discount on both memberships. This is still in the development phase, and it will be a couple more months before the TESOL organization has it up and running. We are excited that it gives our members discounts and makes it easier to join. We are also moving to an online payment system so that joining and renewing your VATESOL membership alone will be easier for members (and for us!). We will update you on these projects in the next newsletter.

And finally, although not as 'exciting', but more satisfying for me, was the input I had from our vice-president. Her comment really struck a chord and reminded me of the most important 'connection'. As she discussed our recent meeting and her plans for the upcoming fall conference, she said how enjoyable it was to get together with everyone, that it was always fun to work with such special people....

That is what all of our members are – we go beyond being teachers, social workers, counselors... We are very caring people and we are fun to be with! That said, **give us input for a mini-conference you want to see in your region and definitely plan on being together October 4th for our Fall Conference - for our most important connection is to each other.**

Kieran Hilu
VATESOL President, 2007 - 2008

VATESOL joins South Eastern TESOL

By Bill Isler

2008 marks a major change for SETESOL. If anyone looked at a map of the Southeast Region of TESOL before last year, you would have noticed a big gap in the upper right-hand corner.



Geographically, the Region had an empty spot unfilled by Virginia TESOL. On February 8, 2008, the Virginia TESOL Executive Board decided to

join the organization SETESOL as the first new member since Carolina TESOL joined in 1988.

The idea of a TESOL affiliate in Tidewater Virginia--in spite of the not too distant presence of Washington Area TESOL--began to take form on August 16, 1983, when the first meeting to form a TESOL organization in Tidewater Virginia was held at Old Dominion University in Norfolk. Boo Thiele and Janet Bing were among the founding members. It took little over nine months for the fledgling affiliate, Southern Virginia TESOL, to be accepted on May 31, 1984. The first conference was held in September with more than 30 attending.

The young affiliate grew rapidly. In 1985-1986 its membership increased to 113, but for some time thereafter conference attendance hovered around 50. In the spring of 1990 Regional Council Chair Bill Isler visited the affiliate spring conference to invite SoVaTESOL to join the SETESOL organization, but the small affiliate was not willing to risk

taking on the heavy tasks of a regional conference as the previous SE Regional TESOL Conference had had 570 attendees.

Meanwhile, TESOL denied ESL teachers in Southwest Virginia the authority to use the TESOL name to organize a Blue Ridge TESOL affiliate for professionals and volunteers in the Roanoke and New River Valleys. Eventually this group and SoVaTESOL joined forces in a common effort, and, in April 1996, TESOL gave permission to extend membership from the Tidewater area to all of Virginia. In April 1997 the affiliate became a statewide organization, with its name officially changed to Virginia TESOL or VATESOL.

Since then the affiliate has continued to grow in membership and strength, to the point that, at the VATESOL Board meeting this February 8, 2008, the revised SETESOL Constitution was approved, and VATESOL became the ninth member affiliate, joining Sunshine State TESOL, Georgia TESOL, Alabama-Mississippi TESOL, Louisiana TESOL, Arkansas TESOL, Tennessee TESOL, Carolina TESOL, and Kentucky TESOL. The affiliate has now set up a conference committee to prepare to host the SE Regional Conference in 2011. Virginia has several attractive potential locations with convention facilities to host a major regional meeting. Preplanning is underway, and we will soon hear what VATESOL is offering. Stay tuned.

VATESOL Officers: 2007-2008

President & TESOL Liaison: Kieran Hilu
Vice President: Tanya Gray
Treasurer: Kathleen Cahoon

Secretary: Laurie Weinberg
Past President: Judy Marlow
Newsletter Editors: Judy Snoke & OPEN
Membership Chair: Jen Kuchno
Website Manager: Ross Retterer
Adult Ed SIG: Lily Mir-Jahangiri
Higher Ed SIG: Liz Bowles
Secondary Ed SIG: Margaret Overton
Elementary Ed SIG: Margaret Whitt
Teacher Ed/Program Admin: Jo Tyler
Central Contacts: Seonhee Cho & Lily Mir-Jahangiri
Eastern Contact: OPEN
Western Contact: Susan Neu
VESA Liaison: Jo Tyler
SETESOL Liaison: Lily Mir-Jahangiri

VATESOL Fall Conference 2008

For those advance planners out there, mark Saturday, October 4 as VATESOL Fall conference date. Conference will be held at J. Sergeant Reynolds Community College in Richmond, Virginia. This site



offers plenty of parking! Preparations are already underway for the conference with some new and exciting events in the works. This year's theme will center on finding

balance. The demands placed on teachers today have you stretched in numerous directions which, at times, can be overwhelming. Fall conference will focus on ways to combat such times and to bring back balance in your life so you can be your best at all you do. This will be a conference that you don't want to miss!

Tanya Gray
VATESOL Vice President

VATESOL Treasury Report: 03/06/2008

Balance 10/4/07 10,006.46

Membership/Conference Dues and
Vendor fees paid since 10/4/07

2833.00

Conference Expenditures:

Breakfast 691.25

Lunch 1640.00

Speakers 529.74

Supplies (posters/flyers, etc.)
236.62

Tech support

200.00

Security 288.00

Vendor/Conference refunds

265.00

Total conference expenses

3850.61

Mini-grant 500.00

Cash withdrawal for change

200.00

Balance as of 03-06-2008 \$8288.85

Call for Nominations

The VATESOL Board nominating committee is seeking nominations for the board for next year. We need people to be nominated for the following open positions: Treasurer, Newsletter editor (to help Judy Snoke), SE Regional Contact, and Membership Committee Chair. If you would like to join the Board in one of these positions, or know someone else who would, please Share your name(s) with Judy Marlow (jmarlow2@verizonl.net) or Seonhee Cho (scho@vcu.edu). The nominating committee presents the names of nominees to the VATESOL Board and

general membership for election at the October VATESOL Conference.

Judy Marlow

Student expands passion for Spanish on full Rotary scholarship to Ecuador

By: BETHANY EMERSON, News Co-Editor
Commonwealth Times

Posted: 11/26/07

In a photograph, Jennifer Kuchno sits on a thin, wooden plank in the Amazon rainforest surrounded by children from an east Ecuadorian village. Each child



looks ecstatic about the donated school supplies she's brought from the Rotary Club. As the children pose with her, Kuchno's

arms extend around them; they grin cavity-filled smiles and have protruding bellies - side effects of their impure water supplies.

"The village kids ... all had visible cavities (and) protruding bellies, which ... is characteristic of severe diarrhea caused by drinking unclean water," Kuchno states in her blog. "As I have traveled around (Ecuador) as a rotary scholar, I have seen this problem everywhere. They are in dire need of clean, safe drinking water."

"Water is a basic human need, and my trip to Ecuador made me keenly aware that sadly, clean, safe drinking water is a luxury that not everyone in

the world can afford,"

Experiences with the children during her three-month-stay in Ecuador reinforced Kuchno's passion to leave VCU to expand her fluency in Spanish and her passion for the culture and the people. "It truly touches my heart to give, to help make a difference," Kuchno stated in an email. "I wish I could do more." Since her first trip, during which she invested much of her time at non-profit organizations, Kuchno has received a full scholarship from the Central and Eastern Virginia Rotary Club.

Kuchno, a Spanish major at VCU, currently lives in Quito, Ecuador, and studies seven hours a day at the Academia de Espanol Quito, as well as volunteers at ABEI, a foundation for handicapped children, and at the Refugio de los Sueños, which means "the shelter of dreams." At both of these non-profit organizations, Kuchno serves as a translator, disperses donated materials and plans children's activities, among other responsibilities.

Kuchno is a VCU alumna who received her master's degree in teaching and a bachelor's degree in both sociology and anthropology in 1993. Kuchno said that after she taught elementary school for seven years, she discovered her passion for Spanish as she began to volunteer as a teacher for English as a Second Language classes. Kuchno said this love for Spanish led her to complete Old Dominion University's applied linguistics, or Teachers of English as a Second Language, program, as well as to pursue her undergraduate degree in Spanish at VCU. "Now, my plan is to teach ESL to Latinos in my community and to finish my Spanish degree at VCU

before applying to a doctorate program in education," Kuchno stated. "My professional goal is to be a university professor."

Kuchno's passion for Spanish led her to look beyond the classroom and apply for the Rotary Ambassadorial Cultural Scholarship. Kuchno went through a rigorous application process and was selected by District 7600 of the Rotary Club, which includes the Richmond Rotary clubs, for her scholarship. The scholarship covered her travel, tuition, and room



and board. "The purpose of the Rotary Cultural Scholarship is to support world understanding and peace," Kuchno said. "I have two objectives: to study Spanish and to serve as an ambassador of goodwill to support the Rotary ideal of 'service above self.' "

In addition to her volunteer work at the nonprofits and her academic focus, Kuchno said, she has fought to improve the living conditions in Ecuador. Kuchno said her main focus of improvement has been to act as a liaison between the Club Rotario de Quito Norte - the Quito Rotary club - and Bon Air Rotary, her sponsor club.

"I am hoping to help the Quito Club receive a ... grant for a potable water project that will enable rural Ecuadorian schools to offer clean, safe drinking water to their communities," Kuchno said. "Many children die each year as a result of drinking contaminated water." Kuchno said her personal desire to see Ecuadorians have clean water was fueled by her realization that she personally took for granted the cleanliness of water in the United States.

"Water is a basic human need, and my trip to Ecuador made me keenly aware that sadly, clean, safe drinking water is a luxury that not everyone in the world can afford," Kuchno said. "As an American, I have taken potable, safe water for granted. But now, I know that it's not like that everywhere." Kuchno encourages all students to apply for the Rotary scholarships. **"I cannot say enough about the Rotary scholarship program - it is amazing. I highly recommend the Rotary program to the VCU community," Kuchno said. "It is not difficult to apply, and if you are a qualified candidate, your odds are quite good of being selected for a scholarship."** Kuchno said she would be happy to talk with and assist anyone interested in applying. "I am proud to be a VCU alumna, and I want people to know what a truly great school VCU is," Kuchno said. "There are excellent students at VCU who can not only compete in major scholarship competitions but can win. I think they just need to be shown the way."

For more information on scholarships and how to apply, go to www.rotary.org and select "Students and Youth" and "Ambassadorial Scholarships." Or, for the local Rotary club, visit rotary7600.org.

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The Diversity Continuum: An Instructional Decision-Making Model

By: Jo Tyler

Associate Professor of linguistics and education at the University of Mary Washington and chair of the VATESOL Teacher Education/Program Administration SIG.

"A traditional 4-year liberal arts college" is often the wording used to describe the University of Mary Washington, a state-supported school located in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Founded in 1908 as a training school for teachers, Mary Washington is now co-educational and maintains rigorous standards for students to, according to its mission statement, "pursue broad studies in the arts, the humanities, and the sciences as a necessary supplement to a concentration in a particular field."



This commitment to liberal arts, the historical name and location, the red brick and white pillars of the campus architecture—all combine to give Mary Washington its "steeped in tradition" reputation.

In part because of this reputation, Mary Washington has had a good deal of difficulty recruiting a diverse student population that reflects the diversity of the state. Today, with a freshman class of nearly 1000, according to the school's office of admissions, "fifteen percent of the entering students identified themselves as African-American, Asian,

American-Indian, Hispanic/Latino or Multiracial.” However, in Virginia as a whole, the population of the public schools is considerably more diverse, with over 40 percent of the students in these ethnic categories (VDOE, 2007). In recognition of this gap, the University of Mary Washington has recently put a priority on diversity in student admissions.

In the fall of 2007, partly in an effort to increase diversity in the student body, 14 young women from Korea were invited to study at Mary Washington. These 14 students represented about ten percent of all the ethnic minority students in the entering class. Nevertheless, the experience of these Korean students and of the faculty whose classes they attended revealed that diversity does not simply mean altering the demographic profile of the student body.

Challenge and Frustration

As a linguist and an expert in language teaching and learning, I was briefly but deeply involved in helping faculty adjust to the changes brought about by this attempt to diversify the UMW student body. It started when I received a frantic call from the chair of the English Department asking for help because the students’ limited English skills prevented them from participating and completing assignments in their classes.

Nearly all of the Korean students were enrolled in a freshman composition class, and it was here that their limited English proficiency had the most obvious and onerous consequences. The only service available was through student tutors in the university’s Writing Center

who had no training for or experience in working with ELLs. Furthermore, as a policy of UMW’s Honor Constitution, the peer tutors were not permitted to proofread other students’ papers, but merely to suggest places where clarification or reorganization were needed.

At a meeting of the composition instructors, I heard the following expressions of frustration:

- The students have rudimentary skills even after hours in the Writing Center
- I’ve never worked with anyone who had this level of language issues
- Other nonnative English speakers besides the Korean students are having problems, too
- The students rarely speak in class; when they do, they have difficulty with the language
- They are constantly using bilingual dictionaries so they can’t possibly keep up with the level of comprehension needed
- They are working so hard to strive for excellence that we worry they could suffer breakdowns
- Faculty in other departments are complaining to the Writing Center and the composition faculty about the poor writing skills of the international students
- The students don’t advocate for themselves or let us know when they have a problem
- The students will fail the course if graded on the same criteria as native speakers; some students have dropped their courses to avoid failing
- Our diversity initiative will suffer if students do poorly or fail

Most of these views are completely familiar to ESOL specialists, whether they are working in K-12 or in higher education.

Nevertheless, after attending this meeting and hearing these concerns, I further realized that a major part of the problem at UMW was the strong commitment to the image of the school as a “traditional 4-year liberal arts college.” The faculty did not talk about standardized tests, but instead about “the canon”—the body of literature and the core knowledge associated with highly literate and articulate college students. The Korean students were guaranteed an authentic liberal arts college experience when they came to UMW. In order to have that experience, they expected to be treated like everyone else, and the faculty was encouraged to do so.

However, the faculty repeatedly expressed concern that “we are setting them up for failure” by insisting that these international students conform to the traditions and standards of the academic program before they have English language proficiency. After spending hours working individually with the students on understanding the assignments, making sentence level corrections, and choosing appropriate vocabulary, the faculty were in despair, feeling that they could do nothing that would have the desired results. How, the faculty wondered, should they help these students achieve the level of excellence that both the school and the students themselves demanded?

A Fundamentally American Conflict

The faculty’s desire to support diversity and help the Korean students

seemed to be in conflict with maintaining high academic standards and expectations for students’ writing. They believed, in short, that they would either have to lower expectations or let the students fail. This either-or perspective, I felt, was what caused the faculty’s frustration and despair.

And it is a fundamentally American conflict that characterizes many discussions of education. No Child Left Behind, for example, is an attempt to legislate the balance between including widely diverse students in the classroom and ensuring that they all meet the same standards of achievement. In the literature about diversity in education, the terms *equality* and *equity* are often used to distinguish these two competing yet desirable goals. Economist David Macarov explains the difference in a historical context:

The momentous legislation and court rulings of the 1960s barring racial discrimination in education, in transportation, in accommodation, and elsewhere were based upon the principle of equality—that all people are equal under the law. Later affirmative action laws and regulations were based on the premise that present and future equality are not enough to compensate for past injustices: Equity demanded more help to enable disempowered groups to reach equality. (Macarov, 1995, p. 146)

If the goal of diversity in higher education is to create more access to the opportunities that have traditionally been unavailable to minority groups, then those very traditions must be examined.

Reflection of this kind enables the members of the university to make principled choices about how to balance equality with equity. But the process of reflection and change is never easy.

While reflecting on these contrasts between standards and diversity, equality and equity, I remembered a slogan I'd heard in graduate school that could ease the challenge for faculty: "It's not a dichotomy—it's a continuum!" I realized that the faculty could make better choices for how to improve instruction for ELLs and other diverse groups by understanding this simple slogan. Instead of the feelings of helplessness the faculty expressed, I thought they could feel more in control by reflecting on their personal philosophy of education and finding their own place along what I came to call the "Diversity Continuum" (see table below).

A Decision-Making Model

At both ends of the continuum, there are strongly held values about American education, and most people would agree (more or less) with both contrasting views. For example, on line 1 at the Diversity end, we might find the motto "Equal opportunity for all," while at the Standards end, we might find the motto "Equal treatment for all." Similarly, at both ends of the continuum, there are dangers that come from taking an extreme position. For example on line 8 at the Standards end, difference may come to be seen as a deficit, whereas at the Diversity end, differences may be exploited for public relations purposes or meeting so-called quotas.

The Diversity Continuum is a decision-making model that can give a sense of self-determination to faculty

who may feel helpless and frustrated about working with English language learners and other students who don't conform to mainstream cultural, linguistic or academic norms. I urged the faculty to consider carefully where they would place themselves on each line of the continuum, and not to simply place themselves in the middle on each line.

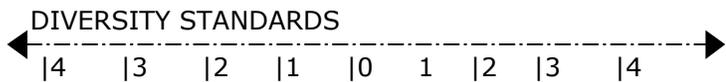
To illustrate how the decision-making process would work, I'll use myself as an example. When I think about the continuum on line 4, for example, I feel that philosophically I prefer a more transformative than transmission view of teaching, which means that I view knowledge as a way to change people and the world. However, in practice I often give lectures in the transmission style of teaching. Upon recognizing this contrast between my philosophy and my practice, I realize that I can modify my practice to be more in line with my philosophy, perhaps through more task-oriented learning experiences, conferencing, and giving students more choices of assignments, as opposed to my usual teacher-controlled lecture style.

After I presented the Diversity Continuum to some of the UMW faculty, the director of the Writing Center told me it was the most helpful part of my presentation. It is intended as a first step in making one's own decisions about how to adapt instruction for diverse student needs in accordance with one's own philosophy. It demonstrates how faculty can meet the challenge of diversity while at the same time respecting both institutional traditions and individual student needs.

Teachers do not have to feel powerless in the face of change, and

they should not give up their autonomy when change occurs by waiting for someone to tell them how to teach. Instead, they can use the Diversity Continuum to make their own reflective, principled instructional decisions.

The Diversity Continuum



	DIVERSITY	STANDARDS
1	Equal opportunity for all (equity)	Equal treatment for all (equality)
2	Adaptations for some create fairness by "leveling the playing field"	Adaptations for some give them an advantage that is unfair to others
3	Provide separate classes specially designed to meet needs of different groups	Include all groups in classes together to achieve full integration of diverse groups
4	Transformative view of education (teaching responds to students)	Transmission view of education (students respond to teaching)
5	Learning and language skills are seen as processes	Learning and language skills are seen in products
6	The curriculum changes constantly to meet needs of student and society (constructivist, creative)	The curriculum focuses on core knowledge and the "canon" (standardized, traditional)
7	School is a place to learn about different cultures	School is a place to become acculturated to the mainstream
8	Differences can be exploited	Differences can be viewed as deficits
9	Formative assessment	Summative assessment
10	Multimodal assessment	Single assessment method

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Call for Proposals from the Higher Education Special Interest Group

by Liz Bowles, Chair

At the 2007 meeting of the Higher Education SIG at the VATESOL fall conference in October, our members discussed the topics of presentations we would like to see at future conferences. I am sharing the results of that discussion below.

Topics of particular interest to the Higher Education SIG include:

- Transitioning advanced students into academics
- Strategies for true beginners
- Supporting International TAs
- Preventing and treating instructor "burn-out"
- Identifying distressed and disturbed students and addressing the issue
- Basic technology workshops (hands-on with a product)
- Adapting to major changes
- Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATS)

- Generational Differences in the Workplace –traditionalists, baby boomers, gen Xers, and millennials

If you are an expert on one or more of these topics, or if you can refer us to someone who is, please contact me, Liz Bowles, <elbowles@vt.edu> or the conference chair, Tanya Gray, <tgray@artmuseumroanoke.org>.

News in Higher Ed: English Language Institute of Virginia Tech

In 2007 the English Language Institute welcomed a new director, Donald Back, to replace Judy Snoke, who retired in May. Back is the Past President of the American Association of Intensive English Programs (AAIEP).

The ELI has begun offering the iBT (Internet-based TOEFL) on site in our new computer lab for the convenience of our students and others in the region. The ELI has also been chosen to host Hubert H. Humphrey Fellows from around the world for a Long-Term Intensive English Training Program beginning in 2008. Humphrey Fellows are mid-career professionals from either developing countries or those in political transition. The program is a Fulbright exchange activity.

Academic Opportunities

The College of William and Mary will offer a course for English or Spanish teachers to take place in Nicaragua. The course title is **Summer Institute for Foreign Language Teachers and English**

Teachers: Service-Learning in Nicaragua: Modern Languages 490/510. Dates are August 3-23, 2008. Participants provide English



language instruction to children or their teachers, but also conduct needs analysis in a school and

design a project to help the school meet that need. Participants must speak Spanish. The course may be taken for graduate or undergraduate credit. Contact Professor Jonathan Arries (jfarri@wm.edu) for more information." 757-221-1393 phone

The University of Mary Washington will have a class for the summer semester



May 19– July 20 called ESL Strategies for Second Language Learners. We will be

looking at how teachers can embed in their lesson design strategies that will make learning meaningful for L2s. It will also be useful for ESL teachers who work in collaborative environments as well as those who have to assist general education teachers with strategies.

Patricia E. Reynolds, MATL
The University of Mary Washington
College of Graduate and Professional Studies
Fredericksburg, VA 22406
preynold@umw.edu 540-286-8093