



VATESOL conference October 16!!

REACHING OUT TO THE WHOLE LEARNER

VATESOL Annual Conference
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA

Dr. Nikitah Okembe-Ra Imani of James Madison University will offer the keynote Address: **Many Languages: An Opportunity to Build A Bridge that Spans the Worlds**. Dr. Imani will talk about cultural differences & similarities and their effect on teachers in the classroom.

VESA supervisors will meet in Charlottesville on Friday, October 15, before the conference.

Registration for the conference is \$20.00 at the door. Please go to the VATESOL web site for directions registration information, and schedule.

<http://www.vatesol.org>

Report from the Membership Chair:

VATESOL currently has an active, paid-up membership of 143 members. Dues for the 2004-2005 year were due by September 30, 2004.

Those folks who paid this past January, February and March had those dues applied to the past 2003-2004 year, so they need to renew as well.

VATESOL Officers Needed!!

We sure do need your help. We have four vacancies on the VATESOL Board. Nominating yourself or someone else for one of these positions would be very good for building your character. These are the four vacancies for which we really need some shiny new faces. They are:

Vice-President: serves one year. "The Vice-President shall assume all the duties and responsibilities of the President in the President's absence. The Vice President shall succeed to the presidency." (The President presides at all business meetings and at all meetings of the executive board. S/he also appoints the liaison officer and chairpersons for conferences). Works with regional workshop coordinator, among others, to prepare for fall conference.

Regional Workshop Coordinator: serves one year. Works directly with Vice-President to prepare for fall conference.

Nominating Committee Chair: serves one year. Works with nominating committee to suggest replacements for those officers whose terms of one or two years are expiring. Prepares a digital and hard copy of the slate.

Elementary Ed SIG: serves two years. Submit articles to VATESOL Newsletter. Be aware of current educational and political trends to include in articles. Act as liaison between VA educators and the VATESOL Board.

P L E A S E seriously consider nominating yourself or someone else for one of these very important jobs that really need to be filled in order to keep VATESOL running smoothly. Consider how good it will look on your cv and what a really great service you will be doing for your colleagues. And please return email kmedina@odu.edu before the impulse to do good leaves you

Current Officers

President	Solange A. Lopes-Murphy lopesmsa@jmu.edu	1 year
Vice-President	OPEN	
Secretary		1 year
Treasurer	Kathleen Cahoon kathleen_cahoon@yahoo.com	2 years
Past-President	Dudley Doane djd4j@cms.mail.virginia.edu	1 year
Membership	Karen Medina kmedina@odu.edu	2 years
Regional Workshop Coordinator	OPEN	2 years
Nominating Committee Chair	OPEN	2 years
Newsletter Editors	Judy Richardson jsrichar@vcu.edu & Judy Snoke eslsnoke@vt.edu	1 year
Website manager	Ross Retterer rossr44@hotmail.com	1 year
Listserves	Ron Corio rcorio@vcu.edu	
Central Contact	OPEN	1 year
Eastern Contact	OPEN	1 year
Western Contact	Margaret Whitt Margaret_Whitt@vt.edu	1 year
Teacher Ed program SIG	Jo Tyler jtyler@mwc.edu	
Elementary Ed SIG	OPEN	
Secondary Ed SIG	Heather Louise Leggett heytherelouise@hotmail.com	1 year
Adult Ed SIG	Lisa Freeden lsfrdn@adelphia.net	1 year
Higher Ed SIG	Kieran Hilu kieranh@vt.edu	1 year
Legislative Liaison	Dudley Doane djd4j@cms.mail.virginia.edu	1 year
Advertising	OPEN	1 year
Liaison to VESA	OPEN	

Someday I'll Write a Book

By Jo Tyler
(Chair of the Teacher Education/Program Administration SIG)
Assistant Professor of Linguistics and Education,
University of Mary Washington

The book I have in mind is not a memoir of my life, the usual tome one contemplates with the words “someday I’ll write a book.” Instead, I want to write a linguistics book for educators. As a linguist and a teacher educator, I’ve taught scores of linguistics courses to pre-service and in-service teachers over the past 10 years, yet I have never found a textbook that is adequate for such courses.

Hot off the presses, though, is a new book on linguistics designed for teachers: *Essential Linguistics: What You Need to Know to Teach Reading, ESL, Spelling, Phonics, Grammar*, by David E. Freeman and Yvonne S. Freeman (Heinemann, 2004). The title alone suggests that the Freemans have beaten me to the punch. How might I improve on such a book, were I to attempt the same thing?

The Freemans begin their book with the observation that students in their first linguistics class arrive “feeling both apprehensive and resentful. They are nervous about having to take the class, and, at the same time, they suspect it will be of no use” (p. ix). In my experience, the Freemans are correct, and I believe they have done an admirable job of alleviating students’ apprehensions about the subject matter throughout their text.

The Freemans have organized their book in a way that clearly draws connections between linguistic concepts and teaching. Chapters on the major subdisciplines of linguistics (phonology, morphology and syntax) are interspersed with chapters that discuss the pedagogical implications of these subjects. The first two chapters, entitled “First Language Acquisition” and “Written and Second Language Acquisition” respectively, deal directly with the issues of most concern and interest

to teachers. Therefore, the book immediately begins by eliminating students' suspicions that linguistics "will be of no use."

Unfortunately, the authors' discussion of language acquisition is not as accurate or up-to-date as would be in my (at this point imaginary forthcoming) textbook. For example, the Freemans take the position "that people acquire a second language or written language in the same way that they acquire a first language" (p. xv). Regarding written language, this is patently false. Children acquire their first language instinctively in a communicative environment, without instruction (Pinker, 1994); no one can acquire written language that way. Turning speech into arbitrary written symbols is a skill that must be taught; simply putting a child in a writing environment is insufficient. There are an estimated 100 million people in the world who acquired their native language naturally in childhood but who remain unable to write because they have not had schooling. So, obviously, writing is NOT acquired the way one's native language is.

As for second language acquisition, the jury is still out, as researchers are still debating how much of a second language one can acquire without instruction. The Freemans base much of their discussion of language acquisition on the early work of Stephen Krashen and his "Input Hypothesis" (1980), which has now been repudiated by numerous linguists (e.g., Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 40). One major difference between first and second language acquisition is that, by definition, a second language learner already has acquired a first language. This means that the process of second language acquisition cannot be like the process of first language acquisition.

Furthermore, if one did actually acquire a second language like a first language, without instruction, what would we need second language instructors for? As Diane Larsen-Freeman (no relation) has pointed out in her excellent book on language teaching, "The point of education is to accelerate the language acquisition process, not be satisfied with or try to emulate what learners can do on their own" (2003, p. 78). To discover within the first few pages of the Freemans' book that they equate second language acquisition with first language acquisition is indeed a disappointment to a linguist,

but also should be a red flag to any second language instructor who wants to better understand how her decisions in the classroom will impact her students' success.

When it comes to the structural aspects of language and discussion of how they relate to teaching, the Freemans do a better job. For example, their explanation of phonology, the study of the sounds of language, is technically quite accurate and written with the beginning student in mind. Their treatment of the subject is straightforward and they keep arcane jargon to a minimum. They also offer intriguing exercises at the end of the chapter such as "Try analyzing your favorite tongue twisters to see why they are difficult to say. Use the procedure explained in this chapter for your analysis" (p. 72). Such applications are excellent ways to ease students' apprehensions about linguistic study and demonstrate its relevance to teaching.

Perhaps the best chapter in the Freemans' book is entitled "A Linguistic Perspective on Phonics." In fact, I would almost say that it is worth the price of the whole book (\$ 27.00). I was especially impressed by the authors' discussion of systematic explicit phonics and how it is distinguished from grapho-phonics. They summarize convincing, scientifically based research that supports a grapho-phonics approach to reading instruction rather than the simplistic state-mandated systematic explicit phonics approach. But more important to me, as a linguist, is that they also base their preference for grapho-phonics on solid linguistic principles. In doing so they demonstrate how teachers can use linguistic analysis to evaluate teaching methods, even those that the so-called experts disagree on.

I congratulate the Freemans for bringing their textbook to market. If readers can overlook the mistaken view, which pervades the text, that second language acquisition is the same as first language acquisition, they will find excellent ways to apply concepts of linguistic analysis to practical issues of classroom teaching. I would therefore cautiously recommend the Freemans' book as a supplementary text for an introductory linguistics course aimed at pre-service and in-service teachers. At least until I've written my own textbook on the subject.

References

Krashen, S. 1980. The input hypothesis. In Alatis, J. (Ed.), *Current Issues in Bilingual Education*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, pp. 168-180.

Larsen-Freeman, D. 2003. *Teaching Language: From Grammar to Gramming*. Boston, MA: Heinle.

Lightbown, P. M. & Spada, N. 1999. *How Languages are Learned*, Revised Edition. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Pinker, S. 1994. *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.



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Treasurer's Report

Balance 12/2/03	\$6255.04
Income	
2003-2004 Membership Dues	\$232.50
2004-2005 Membership Dues	\$310.00
Total Income	\$542.50
Expenditures	
TESOL Affiliate Dues	\$197.00
Virginia.com	\$132.41
Total Expenditures	\$329.41
Balance 8/26/04	\$6468.13

Kathleen Cahoon
Treasurer

Thank You

My name is Abdirahman Ali Abdi. I'm from Somalia. I'm 12 years old. I would like to tell you here how I'm proud to be in this great and wonderful country. First of all as we know, it's really hard to adjust to new culture, a new weather, a new country. When I come to this great country- September 25 (2003)- nobody I knew. I couldn't speak English. It was obviously hard time for me, but after three weeks I went (to) elementary school Westside. My teachers couldn't explain me what they were trying to teach me. Because they couldn't speak my language and I couldn't speak English. All the students try to talk to me like friends or to play with me. But I didn't know what to say or what to do. But today I can say everything is changed for me. And I would like to be a doctor in the future. That is how I am proud to be in this great and wonderful country. And I would like to say I can't thank you enough to my teacher and I never forget her teaching me my second language.

Abdirahman Ali Abdi,
fifth grader at Westside Elementary School
from Margaret Whitt's Classroom
Roanoke, VA