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Next newsletter deadline is
Feb. 15, 2014

Message from the President



Dear Colleagues,

This time of year is when many of us reflect on our recent successes and challenges so we can look ahead with new goals and aspirations for the year to come.

In mid-November, the VATESOL board convened and did exactly that. In the meeting, we focused on important topics such as

- review and revision of organizational documents such as the Constitution and Articles of Incorporation
- improvements to the VATESOL document management system
- expanding on ways the organization can serve the membership through professional development opportunities such as regional conferences and workshops and the official launch of the "VATESOL Professional Exchange Program"
- laying the groundwork for the 2014 fall conference
- updates to the VATESOL website layout and design.

We formed several sub-committees who have been tasked with managing these projects, and we are grateful to the board members who have volunteered to offer their valuable time to lead and serve on those committees.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize and welcome new board members as well as point out some changes in leadership positions for 2014. First, Paul Phillips of Longwood University is returning to the board as 1st Vice President. Second, Kay Gude of York County Public Schools will be serving as Central Regional Contact in addition to continuing as Membership Chair. Stephanie Sebolt of Roanoke County Public Schools will be serving as the Elementary Ed Special Interest Group Chair.

Finally, I'd like to extend a special thank you to Audrey Short, for her hard work and dedication over the last couple of years as Newsletter Editor. Jiuhan Huang of Regent University has now officially stepped into her shoes by bringing you the publication of this newsletter.

On behalf of VATESOL I'd like to wish you and your families a safe and joyful holiday season and a happy new year!

Best regards,
Laura Ray
VATESOL President

2013-2014 Board

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Send information
and concerns to
your SIG Chairs!
Use emails below.

Special Interest Group (SIG) News

Teacher Ed/Program Admin SIG Chair, Jo Tyler
jtyler@umw.edu



Teacher Education/Program
Administration SIG

Dr. Tyler's column will resume in the next issue.

Secondary Education SIG Chair, Angelique Clarke
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Secondary Ed Chair

Using 'Collapsible Circles' to
Promote Higher Order Thinking
Skills

By Angelique Clarke

Greetings to all of my Secondary VATESOL
members,

Critical Thinking and Higher Order Thinking Skills are two of the biggest education jargon words in use today. But, if you want successful students, these words must go beyond jargon and into everyday classroom practice. Our instructional focus will be on getting students to use higher order thinking skills in the classroom based on a math lesson I saw.

First, I must thank elementary teachers for this idea. As I was observing a class, I saw students sorting colored shapes into three equal sized circles. Being a curriculum nerd that I am, I was infatuated with these three different colored circles and how I might use them in my Secondary Classroom. I asked the students what they were doing, and I was told that they were grouping all like items together. The students were engaged and having fun, and I knew I wanted to try this out on my high school students.

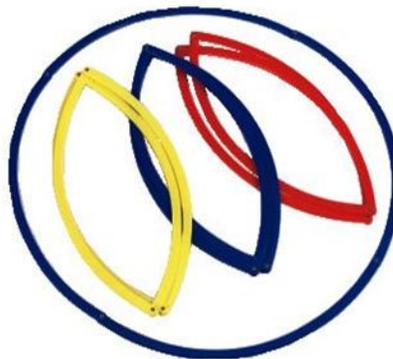
When class was over, the teacher told the students to fold the circles up so they could be put away. It was then that I knew I was in love with these circles, and I wanted some of my very own. When asked where the items were purchased, I was told that they were given to her by some math coaches and she didn't know where I could buy them. Big help that was!

After returning home, I researched on the internet (the Google Machine is awesome that way) where I could find these “collapsible circles.” I found out that these little gems are actually called Attribute Sorting Circles, and they come in two sizes (small ones, 10” diameter, to be used on individual student desks and large ones, 20” diameter). I bought the large ones as I planned on having students work in groups of four. After much searching, I found Amazon to be the most reasonably priced place to make the purchase. Two sets of circles sell for about \$10. So, if you have a class of twenty students, you will need two sets.

Now to the instructive piece, how and why would you use these in the classroom? Numerous research studies, most notably Marzano’s research, indicate that students who can compare/contrast score better on standardized assessments. Secondly, the use of graphic organizers aid in student comprehension of material. In addition to that knowledge, many students today need hands-on, kinesthetic type assignments. You can quickly see why these sorting circles are of interest to me. My students, and perhaps yours too, struggle with Venn diagram type questions. In addition, many of the new SOL tests require students to sort answers in graphic questions and not just answer a multiple choice question. Using these circles, I can create reviews that get students engaged in high level thinking skills like evaluation and analysis while keeping them engaged.

Now that you know the why I decided to use them, you are probably wondering how?

The first time I used the sorting circles I was teaching a World I class about the Mayans, Aztecs, and Incas. In order to check for comprehension at the end of the lesson, I had the class divide into teams, and I handed each team a set of circles and a set of cards with review information learned in class that day. They had to separate each card into a different circle (one for each group). The next day, I gave them additional cards and had students to form a Triple-Venn Diagram that required them not only to identify unique characteristics of each group but similarities between two of or all three of the groups. Most recently, I used this activity with an honor’s U.S. History course and students had to sort the characteristics of the colonies (on cards again). Then, they were given blank cards and had to generate characteristics that all of the colonial regions shared. When my U.S. students were asked what their favorite activities were from the unit, the Colonial Sort was a unanimous pick.



Angelique Clarke is Social Studies and ESL teacher at Meadowbrook High School in Chesterfield. She is also a NCBT.

Elementary Education SIG Chair, Stephanie Sebolt
ssebolt@gmail.com



Elementary Ed SIG Chair

Understanding Parental Involvement

By Stephanie Sebolt, Chair

Greetings! My name is Stephanie Sebolt and I will be your new SIG leader for Elementary membership of VATESOL. I am very excited to be connecting with my fellow ELL colleagues. I teach K-5 ELL in Roanoke County and am an adjunct for the University of Mary Washington and Virginia Tech. My vision of our SIG is to provide a forum through which we can share ideas, pose questions, and

discuss current research in our field. Please email me at stephsebolt@gmail.com with any topics you would like to bring to light through our newsletter.

One of my interests involves parental involvement, as it represents an important part of a child's education. As a result, I researched how Spanish-speaking mothers make sense of the construct of parental involvement for my dissertation. The results of my data opened my eyes to a new way of viewing parental involvement. I believe part of my role as an ELL teacher is to advocate for my students and their families. The findings from my research allow me to better explain to colleagues how some of our Latina mothers view their role in their children's education. Below, I summarize my research and findings.

Introduction

As educators, we know without a doubt that parental involvement is a key component to a child's academic success. Parental involvement often includes assisting with homework, reading with children, meeting the teacher for parent-teacher conferences, and parents and teachers working together as partners in learning.

Studies often examine parental involvement from the perspective of school personnel with little regard for the parents' perspective, particularly parents of lower socioeconomic status (Orozco, 2008). Despite findings suggesting the benefits of parental involvement, research reveals a lack of parental involvement among Latino parents (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990). Prior to dismissing the lack of involvement to a lack of caring on the part of Latino parents, it is prudent to examine how they perceive their role in their children's education.

For my study, I interviewed two mothers, one from Guatemala and one from Honduras. Both mothers lived in small, rural villages and grew up in poverty. Their families earned a living by farming and selling food. At a young age, they were expected to help with farm work, cook, clean, and care for siblings. One mother did not attend school and the other mother attended until 6th grade. Both

mothers moved to the United States so that their children could receive an education.

Making Sense of Parental Involvement

Data demonstrated that both mothers believe their role in their children's education takes place in the home not in the school and stressed the importance of raising well-mannered children (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). They do not perceive their role to include assisting with homework, reading with their children, or volunteering in the school. The mothers indicated that they do not feel comfortable helping with homework since they do not have the academic background or English proficiency to explain many of the concepts taught in U. S. schools. Their role focuses on "una buena educación" [a good education] (Villenas, 2002), the moral upbringing of their children, which is not a primary focus of a school's definition of parental involvement. Educators expect parents to teach and reinforce academic knowledge based on the school's curriculum and expectations.

The mothers' perception of their role differs from that of most teachers, which leads to a disconnect between the home and the school. This, in turn, may lead to teachers viewing the parents as deficient (Villenas, 2002). Ultimately, Latina mothers rely on their cultural knowledge of a mother's role shaped by their experiences in their native countries as discussed below.

How Culture Shapes the Meaning Given to Parental Involvement

Data demonstrated that early experiences in the native country greatly influenced how the mothers envision their role in their own children's education. They share knowledge with their own culture and people, which does not necessarily reflect the dominant culture of the U. S. (Gergen, 2003). The mothers in this study revealed that with regard to parental involvement in the school, neither Guatemalan nor Honduran schools expected parents to have a visible presence in the school, which represents shared knowledge in the community (Gergen, 2003). It was not part of the school culture or the social construction of a parent's role in their

children's education (Gergen, 2003). Teachers had the responsibility to teach academics and parents had the responsibility to raise well-behaved children. The mothers indicated that school personnel understood that parents needed to work and did not have time to assist with homework; therefore, parents were not expected to help the children with their school work or to come into the school. One mother expressed that in her native country parents were only contacted by the school if their child was misbehaving.

Implications for Educators

It is crucial that teachers look beyond the aforementioned definition of parental involvement and reflect upon how Latina mothers define their role in their children's education (Nieto & Bode, 2008). The meaning Latina mothers derive from parental involvement is shaped by their history and culture. If teachers work to gain an understanding of how they perceive their role in their children's education, they can draw on and incorporate the mothers' view into their interactions with them. This action can bridge differences in expectations and perceptions, which transforms different perspectives and shared knowledge into just that, a difference as opposed to a deficiency.

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Adult Ed SIG Chair, Daniela C. Wagner-Loera
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Adult Ed SIG

Welcoming Mirror Neurons to the ESL Classroom

By Daniela C. Wagner-Loera, Chair

Neuroscience has made its way into education and has started to spread its wings into the field of TESOL. With the discovery of mirror neurons in the 1980s and 1990s, brain research has entered a new era (Goldstein, 2011). With language being the most distinct human

feature, it was not long until linguists started to work with neuroscientists to explore the function of mirror neurons. So, what have we learned so far and what could this mean for TESOL?

When mirror neurons were first discovered, it was found that they fire when active goal-directed behaviors are performed but also when they are observed (Goldstein, 2011). Also, it was revealed that mirror neurons function on a visual and spatial connection, which is not given in language acquisition. However, Fogassi and Ferrari (2007) found that cognitive mapping and imagery – also known as mental maps –

help link language acquisition to mirror neurons. This suggests that mirror neurons may be connected to the Broca area in the brain, linking human language aspects – such as phonology and syntax – to organizational properties of the motor system. This may explain the temporary success of the Total Physical Response (TPR) approach for lower levels.

When learners acquire languages, they create images to remember the newly gained knowledge. They may tie new vocabulary and sentences to experiences or imaginary pictures. This is where it gets interesting for TESOL. Not every speaker of every language uses the same spatial or visual organization in the brain. Therefore, when asking students, who are native speakers of Arabic, how certain concepts link to experiences, they often have trouble in expressing answers. Yet, European learners may not experience difficulty. Mental images and cognitive mapping have not been confirmed to be consistent across cultures, which challenges us teachers (Sela et al., 2011). How can we teach a second language without knowing what our students see and understand?

While research has not been conclusive yet, about how language exactly is mirrored in the brain, it has been confirmed that mirror neurons mirror motor-visual activities. This means, that students' brains do observe instructors as well as other classmates carefully and learn from their behavior. So, the more engaging, active, and enthusiastic the teacher and the atmosphere in the classroom, the more active will be the mirror neurons – and chances are that students will learn better (Goldstein, 2011).

With the merger of Neuroscience and TESOL, more and more exciting insights will be given to the unique ability of language acquisition. It is us TESOL teachers, who are closely affected by what brain researchers discover. Understanding how the brain works, will make our job easier and easier. Yet, until more information is discovered, let's remember the following:

- each student uses different images to remember information
- students imitate and copy instructors and classmates
- many different approaches should be integrated to cater to all learning types.

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Xmas - Teaching Tip!

Christmas is around the corner and with it comes story time. Depending on the class size, build groups of 2 – 4 students. Select one classic or modern Christmas story for each group and have them read the story. Students will discuss the story and create questions about it. The group will then split and combine with one or two students from another group with a different story. The students will retell their stories to one another. They will then exchange their questions and work on answering them based on what information they were given. You can rotate students several times. You can also give out the stories the day before and have them read at home – it saves time. Of course, this works with any season and any short story. Ho- ho – ho and Merry Christmas.

Submit your teaching tips or questions to daniela.loera@gmail.com to be included in the next newsletter.

Daniela C. Wagner-Loera, Adult ED SIG Leader

Higher Ed SIG Chair, Linda Sanford
Linda1@vt.edu



Higher Education SIG

New Year's Resolution

By Linda Sanford

Greetings, higher ed people! I hope that you have finished your fall term obligations and are ready to enjoy a break before we return for the new calendar year. The New Year always brings new (and renewed) resolutions, often of a personal nature, but this year, I was reminded that resolutions can also be professional in nature. The Speech, Pronunciation, and Listening TESOL Interest Section (SPLIS@community.tesol.org) has requested members post and discuss resolutions for ways to improve their teaching practice in the New Year. This sounds like an excellent idea to me.

Making a professional resolution requires us to critically reflect on our practice, to consciously review our strengths and weaknesses in the classroom, and think about what did and didn't work. In going through this process, we also have an opportunity to implement some of those ideas and activities that we have learned about from colleagues, presentations, or professional reading, changes that will make our classes more effective and interesting if we adopt them. And, making our professional resolutions known to others increases the probability that we will actually make that change. Therefore, I encourage you to join me and you're your resolution on the VATESOL listserv (VATESOL@lists.vcu.edu). Mine is already there, and I look forward to reading, and being inspired by, your ideas.

Linda Sanford is the Assistant Director for Academics in Virginia Tech Language and Culture Institute.



Treasurer's Report, William Ziegler

Treasurer's report:

BB&T bank account balance as of Nov. 6: \$40,427.29

PayPal balance as of Nov. 14: \$9,358.99

I'm looking for new homes for some long-ago issues of TESOL Quarterly to anyone who can use them. I have:

1984, vol 18, no. 1-4

1985, vol 19, no 1, 2, 4

1991, vol 25, no 1, 2

I can provide lists of contents, or you can look them up in the JSTOR Arts & Sciences IV Archive Collection index, which many academic libraries subscribe to.

First come, first served. Just send your request and a mailing address to wziegler@reynolds.edu.

Thanks.

Articles by our members

FLAVA Workshop: “Making Technology Have Relevance in the Language Classroom: Moving Towards Proficiency”

By Christine Hoppe

The Foreign Language Association of Virginia (FLAVA) presents webinar workshops during the school year and I was able to attend the one whose title is above, presented by Dr. Kathryn Murphy-Judy, founder of BOLDD (Basic Online Language Design and Delivery) and a professor of French at VCU. Professor Betty Rose Facer of Old Dominion University invited her to speak to foreign language educators on November 7, 2013.

First Dr. Murphy-Judy talked mainly about VAFLPO (the Virginia Foreign Language Professional Framework) which was created by Lisa Harris who strives to increase digital proficiencies for language learners. Strand A in VAFLPO focuses on preparing students by creating a safe environment. The following link is helpful:

<http://bit.ly/19AFL1f>. As foreign language teachers, we discussed and shared our ideas to make a classroom policy on using digital technology. Some of the rules might be: no bullying, no put downs, stay on task, refrain from using online translations, list the sources you take from the Internet, never share personal information, and update security settings.

The professor also shared with us some astounding statistics from a 2012 report on Teens and Technology: 78% of teens have cell phones, 23% have tablets, 95% use the Internet. The Pew Report examines how teens share information. 84% of teens share their interests, 91% post a photo of themselves, 53% share their email addresses on their posts. Twitter, Instagram and Google Plus are also growing quickly.

Strand B helps students achieve their daily performance and helps them with learning. A teacher can learn ways of teaching to advance student learning as described in www.p21.org and the ACTFL Foreign Language Annals. An Introduction to LinguaFolio was also mentioned.

Strand C focuses on how to develop collaborative practices that help students learn to build proficiency. We were encouraged to study ‘Edutopia’ online.

Finally, the Technology Strand stresses how students and the teacher can use Learning Tools to help with student learning. For beginners they might use Digital Voice recordings, Student Response Systems and International Keyboards. For intermediate students we can use Wikis and Skype. In addition, an educator can encourage her students to take a survey to share with her what their own favorite types of technology are! (To take the survey students can go to:

<http://tinyurl.com/FLAVAwedinar>) For example, the teachers who took the survey during the webinar said that they enjoy Flickr, blogs and Web 2.0, podcasting, CLEAR, EDMODO, ANIMODO, Google Voice, Glogster, Pinterest, and Facebook. Teens enjoy texting, Facebook, iphones, laptops, playing games, and snapchatting.

We also talked about words that describe the successful digital language learner. They describe students as engaged, innovative, connecting, curious, experimental, undaunted, inquisitive, loving to explore, and eager to play with new tools. Some of the digital techniques that were discussed were: a digital storytelling App to present and share a story, a Photostory, creating a video of a skit (use slideshare.com), education chatrooms, collaborative reading (see the MIT PDF), ‘diigo’ (where you can share readings with other people abroad), ‘Vine’ (6 minute videos on mobile Apps via Twitter), and Instagram (with 15 second videos that students can share). For presentations we learned about Jing, Prezis, Explain Everything for iPads, and Slideshares. We were also told about ‘eComma’ (where students learn to read together because reading can be a wonderful social experience).

All in all, the workshop was quite interesting and I encourage ESOL teachers to consider taking a FLAVA workshop or going to the annual FLAVA conference in early October. After all, foreign language teachers and ESOL teachers share similar teaching techniques particularly as they explore

technology to enhance their students' learning experiences.

Christine Hoppe teaches ESOL at Granby High Evening School for Adults in Norfolk and she has taught French, Italian and ESL to students of all ages for over 25 years in the states and abroad.

