



TEAL NEWS

Teaching in Quito, Ecuador

By Rhonda Breitbart



My favourite salsa song comes on and I'm not the only person on the bus singing along and tapping my feet. It's early in the morning so the bus is full of people in uniforms: school kids, office women, and military men. I count three women putting their eye makeup on. The bus screeches to a sudden stop to let passengers off before lurching back into the honking, belching jumble of rush hour traffic. The eye painters don't miss a beat. Even more incredibly, they don't poke any eyes out. I'm amazed by this feat every single morning on my way to work.

Work is at the Experiment in International Living in Quito, where I've been teaching ESL for over a year. The English department here offers classes in all shapes and forms to all manner of Quiteños who can afford them, from kids as young as 4 years old, to businessmen and executives. We have a few group classes, though the majority are one-to-one. We teach groups of teenagers getting ready to do their final year of

high school overseas, groups of kids in our August summer camp, groups of Ecuadorians who teach high school English. We teach on-site classes at companies, embassies, and other NGO's. We're flexible. Flexibility is a virtue here. Don't expect your students to respect schedules. They are often late, often don't make it to class at all, often go out of town, often ask you to reschedule for another day or another time. If you think that might drive you crazy, remember that they will be equally flexible for you. They are unlikely to get upset if you cancel class at the last minute on Monday morning because you woke up with a stomach ailment, or if you reschedule an evening class because your favourite Latin Pop band is playing at the coliseum that night, or if you want to cancel classes for a week because your mom's visiting and you want to go to the beach. Some foreigners find Ecuadorians slow, frustrating, maddeningly inefficient. Others find them warm, friendly, easy-going, laid back, polite. Most

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Letter from the President



Dear TEALers,

The wind is blowing and despite the warm temperature outside, I can feel that fall is just around the corner. It is hard to know what to write when the summer tends to be a little quieter in the world of TEAL. Usually the board doesn't meet in the summer and TEAL business is put on hold while people enjoy their vacations or are overwhelmed with summer programs. In addition, this summer has been mixed for those involved with English language teaching in Vancouver. Worries about SARS and other world issues have caused a significant drop in student numbers for some schools causing loss of employment for teachers and staff. Other schools seemed to be busier than ever with an increased number of students choosing Canada as a study destination.

Planning for the TESL Canada/BC TEAL conference, "Connecting Communities: Inspirations and Aspirations," November 13th - 15th 2003, at the Metrotown Hilton has been ongoing and it is gearing up to be a fantastic conference with a wide variety of workshops, panels, speakers and presentations. Registration is now open and online registration is available at www.bcteal.org. Go to Conferences (on the left) and click on Registration. Remember that the early-bird rate is only until October 15th.

As you know, TEAL has been working towards developing a set of goals. Work on these goals continues and they will be published in the next newsletter. One of the goals is to expand on the concept of Special Interest Groups (SIGS). SIGS are groups of people who share common professional interests. Currently two SIGS that have evolved at TEAL are "Vision through Stories and Reflection" and "CALL". These groups meet periodically to discuss issues relevant to the group. Other possible SIGS are "Teacher Training," "Business English," and "ESP". Please contact me if you are interested in facilitating a SIG.

Another goal is to encourage TEAL members to use the forums that have been created on the TEAL website. These forums are an excellent place for ideas to meet, but they need your participation. Login and spark a discussion with TEAL members across the province. If everyone makes a point of logging in once a week, we are sure to get some good discussions going!

Finally, just to let you know, the next newsletter you receive will have a different name in the President's slot....I will still be here of course, but my last name will be changing in October to from King to ter Keurs.

Warm regards,
Sarah

TEAL NEWS INFORMATION



B.C. TEAL

Association of BC Teachers of
English as an Additional Language

Teal News is available through membership in BC TEAL and by special arrangement. It is published three times a year: in February, June, and October.

Deadlines

December 31 for February
April 30 for June
August 31 for October

Contributors

We welcome copy of general interest to associated members. All material is submitted to the editorial board before being approved for publication. Copy may be edited for length, style and/or clarity without prior notification to authors. Please be aware that submissions may be reprinted.

Copy should be submitted directly to the editor as an email attachment. Advertising material and inserts must be submitted as a .jpg or .pdf. For information on advertising rates, contact the Advertising Manager or the BC TEAL office.

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Vancouver Community College

TESOL

P R O G R A M S

Vancouver Community College has an international reputation for excellence in English language instruction and is the largest English language teacher training institution in Canada. Our goal is to build on our commitment to excellence in the provision of teacher education in the field of English language instruction.

TESOL Diploma Program

An internationally recognized program for teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). There are two formats - the Fast Track Program and the Self Paced Program. This comprehensive program prepares graduates to teach from literacy to university level English language. A university degree is required for admission. Graduates are awarded the TESOL Diploma and qualify for national professional certification from TESL Canada.

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A ten-month program for international students for teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). A university degree and a TOEFL score of 550 (or 213/300) is required for admission to this program. Graduates are awarded the International TESOL Diploma and qualify for national professional certification from TESL Canada.

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A distance education teacher training program for experienced ESOL instructors who do not have a recognized TESOL teaching credential. This excellent program offers courses in teaching Grammar, Pronunciation, Reading and Writing, Speaking and Listening and Practicum. A university degree and ESOL teaching experience are required for admission. Graduates are awarded the TESOL Inservice Diploma and qualify for national professional certification from TESL Canada.

Intensive TEFL Certificate Programs

These 100-hour TEFL Certificates for prospective EFL instructors who wish to teach English internationally. A minimum of Grade 12 academic English completion (B grade) or equivalent is required for admission. The three Intensive TEFL Certificates are: Intensive TEFL Certificate for Canadians, Intensive TEFL for International Students, Intensive TEFL for Teaching Young Learners. The TEFL Certificate is also offered in a part-time format.

Tutoring ESOL Certificate Program

A tutor training program for tutoring English to speakers of other languages in Canada and internationally. A university degree or completion of a Grade 12 academic English (B grade) is required for admission. Graduates are awarded the Tutoring ESOL Certificate from Vancouver Community College.



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BC TEAL Teacher Profile:

Cristina Peralejo

By Catherine Evashuk



Cristina Peralejo grew up in Canada, having lived as a child in the Philippines, Hong Kong, London and San Francisco. When she turned 16, her family moved back to the Philippines. She describes the move as 'scary, exciting, terrible and shocking' all rolled into one. She had to adjust to thinking that this would be her new home and now considers the move to be one of the best things that happened to her; now she identifies with Filipino culture more and both Canada and the Philippines feel like home.

Cristina graduated from high school and decided to study Literature and Creative Writing in Ateneo de Manila University. Her theses consisted of a collection of short stories she wrote. After graduation she decided to continue her studies of the Japanese language and went to Tokyo for a year. She was a part-time Japanese student at Jochi Daigakku, also known as Sophia University, but also found herself teaching English to Japanese children. She had three groups; 12 to 13 year-olds, 7 to 8 year-olds and 3 to 4 year-olds. She explains that everything was given to her, such as what books to use and what words to teach, which was good for an inexperienced teacher with no training. However, after a while, she felt that she wanted some room for innovation and creativity.

One day, the owner and director of the school where she worked asked her for one-on-one English lessons, focusing on idioms. They usually started in English but would sometimes end up speaking Japanese; Cristina, an intermediate Japanese student, can read and write Japanese characters, and wanted to practice her Japanese. She described her experience of teaching her boss as rewarding because the lessons taught her a lot about Japanese culture.

The language classes Cristina took in Japan involved many activities, such as rote memory and memorizing entire dialogues. Cristina was very interested in learning Japanese, and she enjoyed this method of learning. She believes that when a student wants to learn a new language, all activities, including drills, can be fun if the student is very motivated to learn.

After leaving Japan, she decided to get her Diploma in Teaching ESL from the University of British Columbia. There were many demanding courses but one of them, 'Introduction to Teaching ESL' was especially hard, not so much in the course content, but in the amount of work that was thrust on the students. She is now glad she took that course because through it, she realized that that being a teacher, (planning lessons, correcting homework and making material) is hard work.

She has been working at Shane Global Village in Vancouver for about a year and her favourite aspect of teaching is preparing materials for her lessons. She enjoys the creativity, and finds it boring to simply make photocopies of activities from books preferring to create her own materials. She has prepared interesting lessons which her intermediate students enjoy based on topics such as homosexuality and the role of women in society.

Cristina enjoys creating material so much that she presented a poster session at the TEAL conference in February 2002 on graphic organizers, which showed how to use flowcharts and organize information for students to understand better. Together with her colleague, Noreen Cross, she presented a very successful workshop which was well attended at the last TEAL conference in February 2003 on 'Warm Ups'. She feels many teachers were interested in the ideas presented, and everyone had a good time. She was especially happy because there was a lot of information being exchanged at the workshop.

Cristina's future plans include attending the November TESL conference, keeping up with her Japanese, Tagalog, and French as well as continuing to travel to Europe and Asia. Cristina works at Shane Global Village, Vancouver.



TESL Canada/ BC TEAL 2003

November 13 - 15, 2003

The Hilton Vancouver Metrotown

6083 McKay Ave.

Burnaby, B.C.

(Just 15 minutes from downtown Vancouver)

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES: INSPIRATIONS AND ASPIRATIONS

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TESL CANADA'S 17TH CONFERENCE



Update on the National Network for LINC/ELSA/MIIP-ESL Providers

A project funded through Citizenship and Immigration Canada in conjunction with TESL Canada

By Brenda Lohrenz

This initiative first got underway with a TEAL Charitable Foundation bursary to the TESL Canada Regina 2002 spring conference, and a brainstorming session. At that time, we raised the idea of introducing a national network for providers offering basic ESL to adult newcomers to Canada. This consultation then led to an opportunity for partnership between TESL Canada and a National Settlement Conference Working Group – with funding provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Voluntary Sector Initiative. Participant organizations in this national network now include providers of LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada), ELSA (English Language Services for Adults in BC), and MIIP-ESL (Manitoba Immigrant Integration Program – ESL).

The project has led to a series of opportunities, and the one that has special significance for us here in BC is the upcoming TESL Canada conference to be held Nov. 13-15, 2003 at the Hilton Vancouver Metrotown. The theme for the conference is ‘Connecting Communities: Inspirations and Aspirations’ – which definitely lends itself to the bringing together of LINC/ELSA/MIIP-ESL instructors from around the country to discuss settlement language issues.

Two 3-hour symposia sessions and a strand of workshops are being offered for settlement language provider participants, and they promise to be well worth the price of admission. On Thursday Nov. 13, there will be a morning symposium session entitled ‘Best Practices on Settlement Language Delivery.’ With funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, participants from across Canada will present on a number of best practices in this field. Some of the topics to be included are: Linking Learners & Programs with the Community / High Needs Literacy Students / Use of Authentic Materials in the Settlement Language Classroom / Program Monitoring & Evaluation – with opportunities for smaller group discussions.

The afternoon symposium will focus on the National Network for LINC/ELSA/MIIP-ESL Providers. Participants will share information regarding settlement language programming across Canada. We will be reviewing common issues as well as considering some priorities for our sector. In the two days that follow, a strand of workshops will continue, culminating in a final review session to be held Saturday afternoon. These will certainly be lively discussions for all involved, so consider this a ‘not to be missed’ event!

Another outcome of project funding has been the construction of a website <http://www.eslnewcomer.net>, now housed at www.tesl.ca. The links section focusing on research projects, pilot projects, discussion papers, resources, and best practices related to settlement language programs in Canada is still being expanded. Please contact the project manager Brenda Lohrenz at eslnewcomernet@telus.net if you have any suggestions and/or submissions for our site, and do consider joining us at the TESL Canada conference for a rewarding face-to-face!

(Continued from page 1)

find them some of all of those things at different moments on different days. Personally, I like the fact that most of my students give me a kiss on the cheek when they do finally make it to class, and another one when they leave. Without exception, I can say that my students here have been chatty, friendly, fun to teach, and they almost always offer me a ride home after class.

There are many other language academies in Quito. Not all hire only native speakers. Some may pay wages as low as \$3 or \$4 USD an hour. The wages, where I work, range from about \$6 to \$8.50 an hour. Getting paid for prep time or meetings is unheard of. Many teachers work for private high schools or elementary schools, where the salaries are higher, the holidays longer, the types of students more homogeneous, and the teaching schedules less flexible. English teachers may complain that their wages never

I like the fact that most of my students give me a kiss on the cheek when they do finally make it to class, and another one when they leave.

cover their needs, but they are usually earning four to ten times the average minimum wage here (\$35 a week). So where can you expect to be living with your larger-than-average pay cheque?

Finding a good place to live can be challenging at first. A lot of people live in hostels or

rented rooms for a while when they first get here, but most seem to find better digs after a while. There are a lot of rooms and apartments advertised in the central part of town known as Gringolandia, many of them written in poor English by psychotic landladies seeking out gringos they can overcharge and extort deposits from. Alternatively they may be renting to "respectable señoritas" only, which translates as don't expect to receive phone calls, have any privacy or go out at night. Most rented rooms will be with families or señoras, as young Ecuadorians tend to live at home until they get married (\$35 a week doesn't lead to much financial freedom). Your best bet is to tell everyone you know that you're looking for a place and something is bound to come up. If you know you're coming to live here for a while, it's not a bad idea to have some cash saved up for your first month's rent, plus deposit, and possibly for furniture. There are less furnished places, and furnished places are quite a bit more expensive. "Unfurnished" in Ecuador means no fridge, no stove, no curtains, nothing. The plus side is you can buy lots of nice rugs and table cloths at the market in Otavalo for about the same price as you paid for the cheap plastic patio furniture in your kitchen. Most showers in South America are electric. Yes, that means that when you look up through a dribble of luke-warm water and suds, you will see a rainbow of electrical wires wrapped around the water pipes. I've never heard of anyone getting electrocuted in the

shower, but if you put your hands too close to the showerhead, you might get a shock.

Most teachers who stay long-term (at least a year) are hired from overseas. I got my job over the Internet. I've heard that the salaries paid to teachers hired locally are usually lower. I've never met anyone who actually had a work visa. From

I like to give classes on the terrace on sunny afternoons. From here we can see church spires in the colonial center as well as many of the snow-capped volcanoes that surround Quito.

what I know, it costs about \$280 USD for a six-month work visa which is very hard to get and hard to renew. Most teachers get a Cultural Exchange visa, which claims you are doing a teaching internship, learning Spanish and doing volunteer work in the community. Although the organization I work for enforces the volunteer and language requirements, it seems that most do not. It's difficult to get a Cultural Exchange visa once you're here (though not impossible - nothing is impossible here if you have enough cash to hand over to the right connections), so it's also common for people who enter on a tourist visa to work illegally for up to six months.

The school I work for has good resources. The building is bright and modern, with a kitchen and a rooftop terrace. I

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like to give classes on the terrace on sunny afternoons. From here we can see church spires in the colonial center as well as many of the snow-capped volcanoes that surround Quito. Working in a school with a kitchen is literally a dream come true! Cooking classes are a required part of the curriculum and over the last year I've made pancake breakfasts with teenagers, early-morning blackberry muffins with businessmen, ice-cream-in-a-bag and psychedelic animal cookies with kids. Experiential learning is strongly encouraged and most of my students love it. It seems to be a welcome break from the grammar-book classes they've had at school. Our library is pretty well stocked. The Interchange series is the most commonly followed text here, but we supplement that a lot. There are a lot of supplementary books I know and love that we don't have, but there's certainly more than enough to make do. There is an English bookstore (very imaginatively called The

English Book Store) that stocks many ESL books, but they are pricey here. Anything that is imported into Ecuador has a 30% duty slapped onto it. Add shipping charges and corruption charges on top of that and you will find the prices of imports prohibitive. That doesn't just apply to books. Packed into my suitcase with my clothes and ESL books on my last trip back from Canada were cookie cutters, climbing gear, muffin tins, a VCR and lots and lots of blue tack. Admittedly, I find it very hard to get stuff done sometimes in Ecuador. Life is busy. If you are teaching ESL here, there is a very good chance you will be starting your first class at 7 in the morning and finishing your last one sometime after 8 in the evening. Which is to say that, aside from inheriting a bit of the mañana syndrome, there have been a lot of obstacles between the completion of this article and me. The computer system, for one, was down at work and that took three days to fix. Or was it three weeks? I kinda lose track because all the days are so

similar here on the Ecuador: the sun comes up and goes down at around six o'clock every day, and there are no seasons outside of wet and dry. When there are thunderstorms in the afternoon, we have to turn all the computers off. When I finally sit down to work there is a good song on the radio, and then everyone keeps coming in to talk to me, not that I ever mind, and there's a good party tonight. Don't you want to come out for a drink, and then dancing at your favourite *salsateca*? Which reminds me, tomorrow is Friday already, so I'd better go pack my bags because it's time to get out of town, as we do most weekends, to the mountains or the jungle or perhaps it's time to head to the beach again...

For additional information about the Experiment in International Living, check out www.eilecuador.org. For additional information about teaching in Quito, feel free to contact the author at rhondabreitbach@yahoo.ca

Register early for the TESL Canada Conference

Early registration prices until October 15th!

Please see the TESL Canada website at:
www.tesl.ca

Teaching French in Cuba

By Celine Y. Puech



Cuba must be one of the few countries in the world where you get into a peso cab (for Cubans) - most likely, an old Chevy from the 50s' or a Moskovitch - you start up a conversation with the driver, and find out he is a surgeon, a lawyer, or an engineer. Then you find out he makes more money driving a taxi. That's how most Cubans "resuelven en la luchita" (survive in the daily battle that is their life). It is also the only country in the Americas where you will take a "camello" (camel) to go to work: a massive truck-looking bus that was invented to meet the needs of the Habaneros when the government ran out of spare parts for its buses. Cuba's current economic and political situation forced its people to make do with what they have and what they made of the "island of the green lizard" (Eduardo Manet). It's a country like no other in Latin America.

Look at the bright side of life!

In spite of all the restrictions Cubans are subjected to, and their relative "isolation" from the rest of the world, they are incredibly cheerful, friendly, welcoming, and very open-minded people. Cubans love to dance, play music, drink, get together with their friends and have fun! They are very resourceful, and stand up for each other, and for anyone who needs help. They always try to make not only their lives but also the lives of others around them as enjoyable as possible. They have accepted the

current political and economic situation of their country and can adapt to any circumstances. They are used to severe restrictions during "periodos especiales" (special restriction periods) and to a rather rigid system in which they are watched, and where they have to "luchar" (fight), as they themselves say. In spite of all the obstacles and difficulties the regime imposes on them, they move on with their personal lives as normally as possible - ("seguir adelante" is part of the revolution's motto). It was mainly this characteristic that made me decide to teach in Cuba for a year. Miguel Barnet (a Cuban writer) describes his people as: "un pueblo alegre, que vive en un paraíso y se olvida de la otra parte, el infierno" (a happy people, who live in Paradise and forget about the other side, Hell).

My experience as a teacher

Teaching in Cuba was an extremely rewarding experience, both personally and professionally. I taught French at the Alliance Française de la Havane on a local contract from September 2001 to June 2002. My students were either professionals or college students, each one with their own different motivations for learning French. Some wanted to meet new people, enrich their general knowledge and expand their horizons. Others worked in tourism and needed French for their jobs. Others had plans to travel to a French-speaking country; and some just wanted to do something

different. For some, it was an opportunity to meet and communicate with French speaking tourists in Cuba and discover new cultures through these encounters. Whatever their reasons for learning French, they were highly motivated, very hard-working and deeply interested in the French language and culture. They were also very curious about me as a person, and felt privileged to have a Native French speaker; forty six out of fifty teachers were Cuban. It was very easy to establish a friendly rapport with the students, given their open-mindedness, cheerfulness and desire to learn and have fun!

As we all know, unlike most Latin-American countries, Cuba has an excellent public school system with extremely high academic standards for both students and teachers. Overall, people in Cuba are usually well prepared for their field of studies and are highly educated. A good friend of mine used to say "Cuba is not a developing country. We are prepared, educated people, but the system does not give us the freedom to do what we want and grow as human beings".

Working with Cuban teachers was also a very interesting experience. The Cubans' spirit of cooperation, solidarity and support, along with their resourcefulness, never failed to surprise and deeply impress me. I was also surprised at their diligence and the commitment to their work, in spite of their ridiculously low monthly salary of 6 pesos cubanos per contact hour

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(25 pesos cubanos = US\$ 1) . They were born into a system that demands the best of them academically and professionally, with very little financial compensation. Instead, they get a Diploma as a recognition of excellence in their field and for their respect for the principles of the revolution.

Challenges

It goes without saying that living “a lo cubano” - the Cuban way- when you are a foreigner, no es fácil (it's not easy). My monthly salary was the equivalent of US\$10 for 12 contact hours a week, paid in Cuban currency. Renting a bedroom in an apartment cost me US\$250 por month. I had to do like most of my Cuban colleagues - find private classes paid in dollars on the side to pay for some of my expenses, and dip into my savings.

For me, living in Cuba implied adapting to the precarious conditions of everyday life and redefining the values and concepts that I had taken for granted in the capitalist world in which I had grown up. Living “a lo cubano” means, among many other things:

bad public transportation, stores out of stock, shortage of basic products, frequent power cuts, no running water for weeks because of cistern problems, and long lines to go shopping, take the bus, or buy theater tickets. In short, lack of what WE would call basic material comfort and facilities.

Living in Cuba also means having Big Brother constantly watching you through the CDRs (Comité para la Defensa de la Revolución), and having to deal with everybody’s “doble moral” (double standards). A lot of Cubans have to hide their disillusionment with the revolution and the regime and have to pretend they believe in something in which they have no conviction. Whether they support or disagree with the regime, most Cubans will avoid this topic when it is brought up in conversation.


Finally, more than in any other foreign country where I have worked, Cuba is where I have felt most my “foreign-ness” - that feeling of NOT belonging in a culture. While I could relate to people on many levels, blend in and feel like a fish in water most of the time, nevertheless I still felt the wide gap between Cubans and

“non-Cubans”. In Cuba, being a foreigner means having \$\$, being free to move around as you wish, and having the power and the freedom to live your life as you wish!

Conclusion

My experience in Cuba was a wonderful lesson in simplicity and humility. No matter who you are, what you do for a living, who your father is, regardless of your sexual preferences, your origins, your religious beliefs, Cubans respect each other for who they are. They also value life at a deeper level than we do in our capitalist world: they are genuine and don’t hide behind the façade that characterizes many capitalist societies. They seem to have a better understanding of basic human relationships, human dignity and values.

Celine has her Master of Arts in Teaching ESOL from the University of Washington and her Maîtrise de Français Langue Étrangère from the Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier, France. She has taught French in Ecuador, Cuba and Mexico, and English in Everett and Seattle, USA. She is fluent in English, French and Spanish.



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The Value of Talk In The ESL Academic Writing Class

By Tanya Haye

Last semester, I was assigned an ESL Composition (Academic Preparation) class, which met in the afternoons at 3:00 p.m. This scheduling proved to be a challenge as many of these students were usually tired when they reached my class. Their day started at 8 a.m., so they had little energy left when they met with me, in their final class of the day. My solution was to spend the first fifteen minutes of each class in lively conversation and to encourage guided talk during the class. At the end of the semester, I reflected on this exercise and I felt it had been successful. However, I wondered about its pedagogical value, and this concern led me to enquire about the value of incorporating speaking in the writing class.

Very often, as ESL composition teachers, we emphasize, encourage and experiment with ways to make our students write more in composition classes. However, in tandem with recognising the need to have students write more frequently, we need to also recognize the value of oral work in helping us to get students to become better writers. This paper attempts to highlight some of the advantages of encouraging speaking and writing in an academic writing class.

Talk as an “ice breaker”

Talk in the writing class can be an ice-breaker. From the opening moments of the first session of every new writing class, it is important that students begin to get to know,

and feel comfortable, with each other, since they will be working closely together during the semester. I have found that it makes sense to start with what all students bring with them to class - their personal histories. For international students, this topic can provide a springboard that allows them to practice their oral fluency and build confidence, whilst sharing something about themselves with their classmates.

To start my classes last semester, I used a popular warm up activity where I asked students to interview a partner, and then introduce that person to the class. I gave them a list of subjects which they could enquire about, such as nationality, languages studied, interests, reasons for choosing the school they are studying at, etc. To reinforce the focus on writing in this class, the students' first task was to write some questions to guide them as they interviewed their classmate. I was the first to “break the ice” by introducing myself, telling them my name, country of origin, how long I had been teaching and living in Vancouver, my hobbies, etc. The students then conducted their interviews, which could last for as long as one hour.

After the interviewing process, each person introduced his/her classmate, and the students listened to each other and became aware of their differences and similarities. This introductory stage created a relaxed classroom environment, often so vital a factor in stimulating communication. So, as a result of talk, a warm, easygoing classroom

climate was created; this helped students to get to know one another at the beginning of the course, and later made writing easier.

Talk as a pre-writing activity

The students were also encouraged to do daily journal writing, which was done after they talked at the beginning of each task. The standard home assignment was for each class member to contribute to the ‘What’s In the News’ section by reading or listening to the news before coming to class. They were expected to choose a world issue, on a subject which they found significant and of personal interest. Finding an article of personal interest seemed a good idea because this allows them, as readers, to “enter the literature in their own voice, placing themselves in relation to the text and discovering what they think about it.”(Perham, 1992)

When the students came to class, they would give an informal oral presentation - the rationale being that, through speech, they would learn to organize their thinking and focus their ideas (Lyle, 1993). The tendency was to interpret the news according to their perspective and, inevitably, a classmate would disagree or add a comment. If no one disagreed, I posed a question and asked the class to respond. As they did so, they recognized that amongst the responses were potential topics about which they could later write; this process normally encouraged

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

comments, discussion and sometimes, heated debates. This was one way of gathering seeds for topics of special interest, which they could later harvest. At the end of this exercise, they did a journal entry about any of the topics discussed in class.

Current research literature on critical thinking and cognitive development indicates that the development of language has a close relationship to the development of thinking abilities (Berry, 1985). Before achieving proficiency in reading and writing, oral language is one of the important means of learning and of acquiring knowledge (Lemke, 1989). Throughout life, oral language skills remain essential for engagement in intellectual dialogue, and for the communication of ideas. This implies that when talk is a pre-cursor to writing, writing is better facilitated and supported.

Talk Among Peers as a means of Revision/ Conferencing

Talk can also support revision and conferencing, so writing instruction in our classrooms can reflect a growing appreciation for the value of talk. By encouraging talk, my classrooms turned into a community of learners where the focus of writing pedagogy shifted from writing as product to writing as process, causing knowledge-including writing- to be viewed from a collaborative or social perspective.

(Bruffee, 1983; Faigley, 1985). By encouraging peer writing groups, I encouraged students to give, seek, and react to oral feedback among themselves as they wrote, in addition to reacting to my comments on finished papers.

Hence, writing groups, whose purpose is sometimes referred to as "peer conferencing" or "peer collaboration," have become a pedagogical tool in a wide-range of teaching/learning contexts. This kind of collaboration provides writers with an opportunity to read their drafts aloud and to discuss them face-to-face with a peer audience while the written product is taking shape. Small groups can help apprehensive or blocked writers become more fluent and can provide an audience that assists the writer in revising (Legge, 1980). Once again, classroom talk can be seen as a positive aspect in supporting another phase of the writing process.

Since experimenting with this approach in the classroom, I have learnt that it supports the social interactionist view of emergent literacy, which holds that a learner's early attempts at writing are grounded in speech and, therefore, that the development of written language is best fostered within a supportive conversational environment (Weissberg, 1994). As we encourage talk in our writing classes we will see the transformation of these classes into communities of learners who work together, read and write for and with each other, evaluate written products

together, and grow together as writers.

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Answering the Why and the How of English Language Teaching

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Conference Calendar

November 2003

TESL Canada/BC TEAL
Connecting Communities: Inspirations and Aspirations
Burnaby, BC
November 13-15, www.tesl.ca

TESL Ontario
31st Annual Conference
November 20-22, www.teslontario.org

TESL Nova Scotia
Paths to Plurality: Multiculturalism in ESL
Halifax, Nova Scotia
November 21-22
www.tesl.ns.ca/conference.html

SPEAQ
Delta Hotel Centre-Ville, Montreal, Quebec
November 20-22, www.speaq.qc.ca

March 2004

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Searching Far and Catching Dreams
Long Beach, California
March 31-April 3
www.tesol.org/conv/index-conv.html

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Portals to Empowerment

Saturday and Sunday
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2003 Conference Preview
Seattle, Washington

Featured Plenary Speakers

Dr. Peter Lowenberg is Associate Professor in the Department of Linguistics and Language Development at San Jose State University in California, where he teaches courses in sociolinguistics, TESOL methodology and testing, and English as a world language. He has conducted teacher training seminars in Mexico, Brazil, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, Belgium and Uzbekistan, and for two years directed a United States Binational Center language program in Indonesia. He has published in the areas of second language acquisition, language policy and planning, and the testing English as a world language.

Dr. Paul Schneider has a Ph.D. in Philosophy and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. He is a well known scholar in philosophy of language, and teaching methods. He has taught philosophy courses in a variety of community colleges and universities, and directed ESL Language Center at Seattle University – his primary interests are philosophy of mind and philosophy of language. Paul Schneider is the Founder (1979) and President of Washington Academy of Languages in Seattle, WA.

At various times he has been selected by NAFSA to do presentations in Washington, DC.

Preliminary Conference Schedule

Saturday, November 1, 2003
8:00 - 5:00 Registration (located in Pigott Building)
8:00 - 6:00 Publisher Exhibits
9:00 - 11:00 concurrent sessions
11:00 - 12:00 Plenary Speaker
12:00 - 12:15 Lunch Distribution
12:15 - 1:00 WAESOL Annual Membership Meeting
1:00 - 5:00 Concurrent Sessions
6:00 - 8:00 Reception

Sunday, November 2, 2003

8:00 - 10:00 Registration (located in Pigott Building)

8:00 - 12:00 Publishers Exhibit

9:00 - 10:00 Plenary Speaker

10:00 - 12:00 Concurrent Sessions

12:15 Publisher's Raffle

Saturday Box Lunch

Box lunches, including a vegetarian option, will be available to all conference attendees as part of registration fees. During this lunch hour you will have the opportunity to attend the WAESOL General Membership Meeting.

Saturday Reception

The Saturday night reception from 6:00 - 8:00 will be a time to relax, meet new friends, and hook up with lost acquaintances. Guest speakers and publishers are invited to join us.

This conference is co-sponsored by Seattle University School of Education

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- TEAL community volunteer experience

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- ESL students graduating for BC secondary schools to attend BC post-secondary institutions
- promotion of AIDS and/or health education through ESOL instruction
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AIDS/Health Education Fund	April 15th and October 15, 2004
Pat Wakefield/British Council	March 15, 2004
Nan Poliakoff Memorial Fund Award	December 15, 2003 and April 15, 2004

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