

TESOL '91: Celebrating the Silver, Going for the Gold

by Charlotte Groff Aldridge,
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As IALL's first conference representative to TESOL, I have decided to divide my report into three parts. First, I will briefly explain what TESOL is. Then I will provide a brief overview of the convention and highlight a few sessions which IALL members might find of interest. Finally, I will describe the progress which was made toward strengthening ties between our two organizations.

TESOL

TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), explains Susan Bayley, TESOL's Interim Executive Director, is an international organization whose mission is to strengthen the effective teaching and learning of English around the world while respecting individual's language rights. TESOL's 74 Affiliates, both U.S. and non-U.S. based, now represent more than 40,000 members. According to Terry O'Donnell, Interim Director of Field Services for TESOL, two-thirds of the affiliate membership in non-U.S. based, whereas TESOL membership (of approximately 18,000) includes roughly 75% U.S. and 25% non-U.S. members. 16 Interest Sections currently represent the special interests and concerns of TESOL's diverse membership. Two in particular, Computer-Assisted Language Learning, and Video, represent TESOLers who are perhaps most intrigued by the use of media in language teaching and learning.

Convention Overview and Highlights

While attendance at the first TESOL convention in Miami Beach in 1967 was 300, an estimated 6500 gathered in New York City March 24-28 to celebrate the association's Silver Anniversary. The theme of the conference, "TESOL, 25 Years as an International Family," was highlighted by TESOL day at the United Nations. "Family" members, for example, came from as far away as South Africa, Australia, Norway, Thailand and Brazil. Keynote speakers included Senator Paul Simon, one of the few recipients of the TESOL President's Award, Deborah Tannen, Georgetown University Professor of Linguistics and author of the best-seller *You Just Don't Understand*, and John Higgins, "universally acknowledged prophet of CALL." Social events included a tour of Ellis Island, educational visits to NYC teacher training or language instruction programs, and a 5K fun run as well a numerous parties, receptions, and informal get-togethers.

Though I have attended a number of TESOL conventions, I am still overwhelmed each year by the number and quality of the sessions offered. 16 sessions were scheduled at TESOL's first meeting. This year convention goers had to select from over 1000 sessions (not including workshops, research colloquia, and plenary speakers!) on a wide range of topics for each time slot. Sessions began early (7 a.m.!) and ran officially until 9 p.m. Many of the sessions at

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Conference Reviews

TESOL '91 included a focus on techniques and issues in the use of instructional technology in language learning today. Since it's impossible to include them all, I have selected a few highlights to give readers a sense of the scope of the offerings.

Vance Stevens (Sultan Qaboos University, Oman) "Student Interactions with Computer-based Cloze: Is It Reading?" To determine what students do when solving computer-based cloze, all keypresses made by students during several computer lab sessions were recorded and analyzed. An attempt to establish whether paragraph length, number of gaps, or average gapped word length had any correlation with other variables revealed no significant correlations. Stevens concluded "computer-based cloze undoubtedly has great potential, but developers need to establish patterns of actual use in order to build into their programs realistic encouragements to pedagogically viable outcomes."

Zsuzsanna Ardo and John Simpson (King's College, University of London) "Interactive EFL by Satellite Television" These teachers and their students are joined in the University of London studio by students from France, Belgium, Germany and Hungary. Throughout the broadcast, students in these countries receive sound and vision from the studio and participate via a live telephone link. The European Space Agency underwrites costs. The project is connected to EUROSTEP and accesses the Olympus satellite.

Patricia DeVincent (Drexel University) "The Use of Computer Databases to Facilitate Conversational Skills" DeVincent demonstrated commercial, public domain, and teacher-authored software used as task-based activities which provided a springboard for discussion. After students interviewed classmates, teachers, and friends to collect a sampling of favorite recipes, they used Recipe Box (public domain) to list the ingredients and explain how to the make

the food.

John Higgins (University of Bristol) "Fuel for Learning: The Neglected Component of Textbooks and C.A.L.L." Higgins reviewed his well-known model of "magister vs. pedagogue," in which he places the focus on the learner rather than on the machine and argues that computers should be the slaves of teachers. "We need 'authentic fuel' which computers, in the form of concordances, can provide."

Susan Stempleski (Hunter College/CUNY) and Barry Tomalin (BBS English, London) "Video in Language Teaching: The Recipe Approach" The presenters demonstrated ways video can be used not only to teach language, but also to "release" it. The video segment provides the stimulus which encourages students to produce language in discussion. Presenters recommend using short (30 second to 5 minute) segments which contain a complete unit of meaning and which can be used to generate an information gap. Stempleski and Tomalin argue for the use of authentic video (made by native speakers for native speakers) suggesting teachers "grade the task, not the video." They demonstrated how a family dinner scene in *Annie Hall* could be used to illustrate for ESL students differences in turn-taking, tolerance in noise levels, topic appropriateness, etc.

TESOL-IALL

While TESOL welcomes the opportunity for increased professional exchange among organizations with compatible goals, TESOL is currently unable to meet its own memberships' desires for program slots. TESOL's Executive Board members, therefore, are currently reluctant to turn over program slots for IALL-sponsored sessions. TESOL CALL Interest Session (IS) representatives Claire Bradin, Deborah Healey, and Norman Johnson and TESOL VIDEO IS representatives Paul Arcario and Marshall Burgamy met with IALL members Pamela

Griffin (Southern Illinois University at Carbondale) and the author to discuss ways in which members of IALL and TESOL could strengthen existing ties. (A cursory glance at the existing IALL membership list would suggest that many TESOL members are also members of IALL.) Leaders agreed to work together to sponsor and evening discussion session (the details of which are still to be worked out), possibly on the use of technology in language learning, at TESOL '92 (March 2-8) in Vancouver, British Columbia.

I hope I have provided IALL members

with some insight into the theme and scope of the 1991 TESOL conference. I left the conference with an increased appreciation for the special qualities of TESOL members and a better understanding of the international mission of the organization. I am already looking forward to TESOL '92 in Vancouver, British Columbia. See you in Canada, eh?

For more information about TESOL, please contact me in care of the Maryland English Institute, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. FAX: 301-314-9462.

Play Your VCR

by Samuel Fuhrer

A French teacher has just returned to the U.S. from France with 15 videotapes full of culture and language reinforcing material that he would like to show his classes. A professor of art is regularly receiving videotapes of art exhibitions from Florence and Milano. A music teacher has a collection of videotapes of concerts of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. A gymnastics coach in midwestern college wants to use Romanian tapes in his training program. An English teacher in Sweden wants to share his American tapes with Swedish students.

What do these educators have in common? They all share a major problem. When they summoned their audio visual center to show these tapes, they found that they could not be played on their equipment. These scenarios are repeated daily throughout the world, not only in educational situations, but in private and industrial settings as well.

The underlying reason for this problem is that television signals around the world are broadcast in different standards that are totally incompatible with one another. There are 3 major standards (PAL, SECAM, NTSC) of which there are additional sub-standards. The incompatibilities



Samuel Fuhrer

lie in the different line and cycle scans (525 lines-60 cycles vs. 625 lines-50 cycles). Thus, an American system will not work in France, Germany or Greece and vice versa, and tapes recorded on one system will not play back on another.

What are the options? There are basically 3 options.

1. Buy a digital standards converter. Such a machine which can convert a tape from one standard to another, costs from \$50,000 to \$300,000.
2. Send the tapes out for conversion. A good conversion (which loses some resolution) can cost from \$200-\$300 per hour.
3. Purchase a multi-standard system TV and VCR. Such a system which is fully functional in your home country also allows for play back of tapes in their original high resolution from virtually all other countries.

The above mentioned educators with the standards problem all chose option #3. They, along with hundreds of other schools have bought at least one multi-standard system from Cartridge King Co. (825 West End Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10025. U.S.A. tel: 212-749-0961).

Samuel Fuhrer, B.A., M.S., Phd is owner and president of Cartridge King Co. importer of multi-standard equipment.

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