

MIDTESOL MATTERS

Winter/Spring
2011/2012

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2013—Open

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PRESIDENT'S WELCOME MESSAGE

BY NICK DAVID, MIDTESOL PRESIDENT

Hello fellow MIDTESOLers. This past year has been one of change and opportunity, and I look forward to an upcoming year. The new year is also a time to express thanks.

First, I would like to express my appreciation for Valerie Heming and Suzanne van der Valk. Valerie worked tirelessly as the president of MIDTESOL, and I look forward to my continued association with her as Past President. Many of the exciting changes that have and will take place are a result of her leadership and vision.

A special thanks also needs to go out to Suzanne van der Valk, who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in her service to MIDTESOL. During this time of transition, she has agreed to stay on as part of the board, moving from Past President to both Secretary and Conference Chair of the 2012 MIDTESOL Conference. I believe that this will allow for a smoother transition during this important time. I truly appreciate her willingness to fulfill this responsibility.

An additional thanks also needs to go out to Diana Pascoe-Chavez and the 2011 MIDTESOL Conference planning committee. The conference was well attended, well planned, and had lovely venues and entertainment. For those who missed it, it was a wonderful event! Thank you to all of them for putting on such a successful conference!

I also want to mention a few things related to changes that will be upcoming in the next few months as well as opportunities for MIDTESOL to continue to be strengthened as an organization. I'll try to discuss each of these briefly.

One of the changes that has occurred is a slight raise in the cost of membership. We recognize that this is a difficult time financially for many, but the change in the cost of a MIDTESOL membership is still quite reason-

able, and we feel that the change in membership costs reflects inflation. We will continue to seek to make it affordable, and to keep MIDTESOL Conference costs down.

Another change that is exciting is the readdition of Kansas to our MIDTESOL family. Originally, Mid-America TESOL consisted of four states: Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, and Iowa. This configuration was changed in the early 2000s based on membership from Kansas and Nebraska being so low. After consulting with the Presidency of Kansas TESOL, we as a board feel that it would be beneficial to once again extend our membership to include Kansas. I feel that this can be beneficial in a number of ways. First and foremost, it provides a way for those of us in Missouri and Iowa to extend our professional circle and to include at conferences the expertise of those in Kansas. Additionally, I feel that it will strengthen our organization.

I also understand where concerns may arise in terms of spreading out our membership too much, and making conference attendance a burden financially or time-wise due to travel. We believe that this can be remedied by ensuring that future conferences are as centrally located as possible be they in Kansas, Missouri, or Iowa. For those who might be interested in hosting or helping to prepare future conferences, we humbly submit our solicitation for your assistance.

As we add Kansas into the MIDTESOL organization, we also hope to include a Kansas representative to the Executive Board. By doing this, we hope to include the perspective of our added Kansas membership. You will be receiving a ballot for this purpose soon through your email. We request your consideration in this vote.

Another exciting change is that members of MIDTESOL will soon be able to read *The Conference Proceedings* of



MID-

TESOL, which will be a web-based journal in addition to our newsletter, *MIDTESOL Matters*. The first issue, and subsequent issues in the near future, will be conference proceedings from our annual conference, submitted by presenters. I feel that the benefits of this new journal are numerous. First, it allows those who are unable to participate in the annual conference due to economic concerns or time constraints an opportunity to sample some of the presentations offered. Second, it allows those who would like to begin or continue writing for publication a venue in which to share their work. Third, it encourages those who might not submit proposals to future MIDTESOL Conferences an additional incentive to do so. And fourth, I hope that it will better unite our MIDTESOL organization professionally. My deep thanks go out to Jennifer Morrison for spearheading this project and overseeing it. Additionally, if any of you are interested in becoming more involved with MIDTESOL, we encourage you to contact us and let us know.

And finally, to those associated with MIDTESOL in any capacity, I wish you a continuing happy New Year! As E.E. Cummings once so artfully put, each new morning, "is the sun's birthday." That this upcoming year will provide new opportunities and greater happiness is my wish for you.

Sincerely,

Nick David, MIDTESOL President.

MIDTESOL 2011—A Success in St. Louis!

By 2011 Conference Chair, Diana Pascoe-Chavez

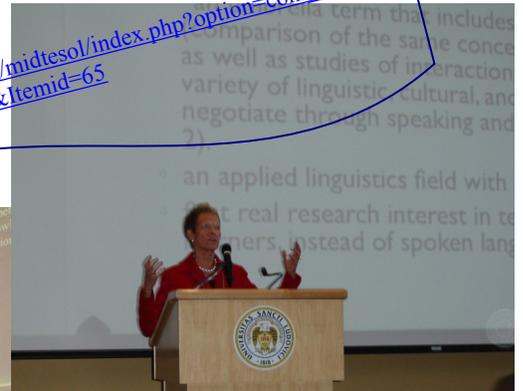
The MIDTESOL conference “Gateway to Global Citizenship” opened with a plenary on “Adaptive Cultural Transformation: Quest for Global Citizenship,” given by Dr. Jun Liu, past president of TESOL. The Friday evening reception that followed was a chance to meet old acquaintances and make new friends while enjoying food and music. The midday plenary on Saturday, “Intercultural Rhetoric in Second Language Writing Instruction,” was given by Dr. Ulla Connor. The plenary was sponsored by KATESOL.

Both days were packed with 60 workshops and presentations dealing with topics from intercultural communication, new perspectives in teaching vocabulary, mixed expectations of students, research on incorporating content into skill classes, and the relationship between language teaching and global citizenship. Evening events on Saturday included receptions at local museums and a visit to Soulard as part of the St. Louis Blues Night Out.

Two attendees, Lei Guo and Emine Demiroz, were awarded the MIDTESOL Travel Grant (see pages 3-4). Congratulations to them. As far as the Overall Best of MIDTESOL 2011, there were too many presenters mentioned to single out, and the best comment was, “All were good.” Congratulations to all the presenters.

By the end of the conference, more than 300 people had registered for the conference, with participants from eight states and nine countries. We also had the participation of many publishing companies, who donated books and prizes for the mid-day drawings on Saturday. Despite small technical glitches with the Internet on Saturday morning and the need to move quickly in the 5 minutes between presentations, the conference evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. Thank you to all who worked on the organization, helped run the conference and especially all who participated.

Find more pics at:
http://www.midtesol.org/midtesol/index.php?option=com_phocagallery&view=categories&Itemid=65



Top left: Ulla Connor and Jun Liu, Plenary Speakers; **Center:** Jun Liu opens attendees' eyes to Global Citizenship; **Top Right:** Ulla Connor updates the audience on Contrastive Rhetoric; **Bottom Left:** Val Heming passes the presidential gavel to new MIDTESOL President, Nick David; **Bottom right:** Newly inducted MIDTESOL President, Nick David, addresses the audience at the annual business meeting.



MIDTESOL 2011 Travel Awards

Each year at our annual conference, participants are encouraged to apply for travel awards, which help pay for the winners' conference attendance. People whose proposals are accepted for presentation may apply for one of three travel awards. After the conference, winners must submit a written version of their presentations to the General Editor, and once an article is accepted for publication, the travel award money is remitted to the winner. Below are two of the award-winning articles from this year's conference in St. Louis. The MIDTESOL board encourages anyone who needs travel funding support to apply for the award this fall! Keep your eyes open for information in the summer and fall editions of *MIDTESOL Matters*.

The Out of School Literacy Experience of an English Language Learner

By Lei Guo, University of Kansas

As Jiménez (2003) mentioned, formal statements of the term *literacy* fail to anticipate, or fully describe the roles played by literacy in the lives of students, their families, and teachers. In defining literacy, what we usually mean is school literacy. Book reading is privileged in school classrooms, which merits the value of academic reading but does not give educators enough information about students' everyday uses of language and literacy. When it comes to English language learners' (ELL) experience, the issue becomes even more complex. The difficulties they experience range from social, cultural, motivational and linguistic factors (Bernhardt, 2000; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1996). In order to better address ELL struggling readers' needs, we need to have greater access to their lives and their experiences.

Taking a case study approach, the purpose of the present study is to develop an in-depth description of a young boy, who for purposes of this paper will be called "Jack," that will address his experiences as an elementary school student, as an ELL, and as a struggling reader. Further, it aims to address the multiple layers of problems both from within the individual reader and from outside contexts that might influence the reading experiences and behaviors of the reader.

Data was gathered from four sources. First, I administered Qualitative Reading Inventory-4 (QRI-4) (Leslie & Caldwell, 2006) to identify Jack's reading performance. His reading performance at various levels served as evidence to show his reading ability in the standard of school literacy. Second, I observed and reflected on Jack's reading behavior and attitude during the time I tutored him. The reflection was retrieved from my teaching journals during three months of tutoring. Third, I conducted an interview with Jack and asked him questions about his reading attitude, out-of-school reading practice, and other environmental influences. Fourth, I held an interview with his aunt, who mainly served as the third

party to confirm the information I got from the interview with Jack.

Jack's reading experience, attitude, and other out-of-school literacy activities are explained with three findings that capture the main features of him as a reader. (a) Jack struggles with school literacy, and has a negative self-concept as a reader. (b) Jack has a positive perception and attitude toward reading, and is willing to engage in readings that interest him. He is also a self-conscious reader in that he was good at doing self-analysis. He clearly showed that he knew what he read incorrectly, how to identify the problem, and how to improve. (c) Jack actively engages in out-of-school literacy practices in various forms. He enjoys playing video games, and in order to play them well, he reads instruction books and online comments on most current video games. Also, when helping in his family restaurant, he is skillful in taking the orders and organizing the information. Jack also writes emails and chats online by instant messages to stay in touch with his friends in China.

Although Jack can be labeled as a struggling reader in terms of the standard of school literacy, and he has a negative self-concept toward himself as a reader, Jack engages in other forms of literacy outside of school. Jack has many merits as a reader, and his reading performance varies from situation to situation. It is clear that a large part of Jack's positive attitude toward reading and his merits in literacy activities is left unseen.

After conducting this study of Jack, it seems that a clear conclusion can be made. As educators, we should not limit our scope to school literacy and understand it merely as code-breaking. More attention should be given to students' individual experience with literacy. It is important to listen to students' voices in our understanding of their experience with reading in order to construct a full story. Literacy should be taught in more meaningful ways that incorporate social and cultural perspec-

tives.

References

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- Lei Guo is a Doctoral student in Curriculum and Teaching at the University of Kansas.*

Online Learning Environment

By Emine Demiroz, University of Missouri, Kansas City

How does the integration of an educational social networking website into language learning affect the improvement of ELLs' writing skills? How does giving feedback to students' postings impact the writing proficiency of ELLs? How can we benefit from an online learning environment which is secure and free for our students? These are the questions that need to be addressed to provide an effective learning environment for ELLs. The key answer to all these questions is Edmodo, an online learning and teaching atmosphere. It is a secure and easy way to connect, exchange ideas, share content, and provide collaboration and participation in classroom discussions.

It is a widely-known fact that non-native students are challenged with writing tasks. Even though they work hard on writing papers, they cannot improve their writing. The problem might be the inadequacy of the feedback for English language learners. How can we as teachers overcome this problem to the students we cannot reach physically? It is possible through the help of online sources like Edmodo. Young (2005) suggests that supportive feedback will increase intrinsic motivation and the use of self-regulated learning strategies. Therefore, investigat-

ing the effectiveness of integrating an educational social networking website into enhancing the English writing skills of foreign language students through feedback is essential. Through the help of such social networking websites, we can both provide an effective learning atmosphere for our students as well as increasing their proficiency in writing.

On that point, I would like to expand upon the use of Edmodo for the English language learner sophomores at a university in western Turkey. Those students log in to the website voluntarily to foster their writing skills through feedback scaffolding. They are given a password to log in to the website securely through e-mail once they have sent their approval to participate in this tutoring opportunity. Students regularly send their essays on specific topics each week through Edmodo. As the aim is not peer correction; they are not allowed to see each other's postings. This way, they do not have peer pressure. For the evaluation process, three different raters assess the writings of the students, and the instructor gives regular feedback each week. So far, a majority of the students have considered the feedback seriously and have started to write better and better. Instead of climbing the stairs by jumping

over many stairs, it is better to climb them one by one. The purpose of giving feedback is not to discourage the students, but to give them the self-confidence that they can produce something in English. Thus, the first feedback seems to be more optimistic than it should be. This appears to be the best way for the beginning. It does really discourage the students to read any negative things over the postings on which they have spent a lot of time, so feedback should be mild and short at the beginning. Increasing the content and length of the feedback will provide a more interactive and effective way for the development of the students.

In conclusion, using a site such as Edmodo offers many advantages to both the instructor and the students, especially the advantages of self-confidence and authentic language use.

References

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Lei Guo (left) and Emine Demiroz (right) receive their travel awards at the annual MIDTESOL business meeting from MIDTESOL President, Val Hemming.



MIDTESOL 2012

October 19th-20th 2012

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

With Plenary Speaker,

David Nunan

Check our
website for
continued
updates:
www.midtesol.org

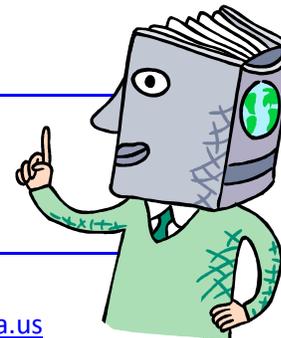


Cultivating Best Practices in ESL

What's your interest?

MIDTESOL has four Interest Sections (IS) to facilitate communication among members working in various corners of the ESL profession. If you are a new member and would like to participate in an IS, please contact the chair of your interest section indicating your interest. There is no registration, no dues, just a shout out that you want to be part of the interest section. Include contact info and tell the chair where you work and what you do.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| IEP IS | Jamie Schindewolf jschind4@slu.edu |
| K-12 IS | Shaeley Santiago Shaeley.santiago@ames.k12.ia.us |
| Community College/Adult Education IS | Gisella Aitken-Shadle Aitken-shadleg@nicc.edu |
| Higher Education IS | Rachel Herman herman@ucmo.edu |



MIDTESOL's Professional Journal Is Here!

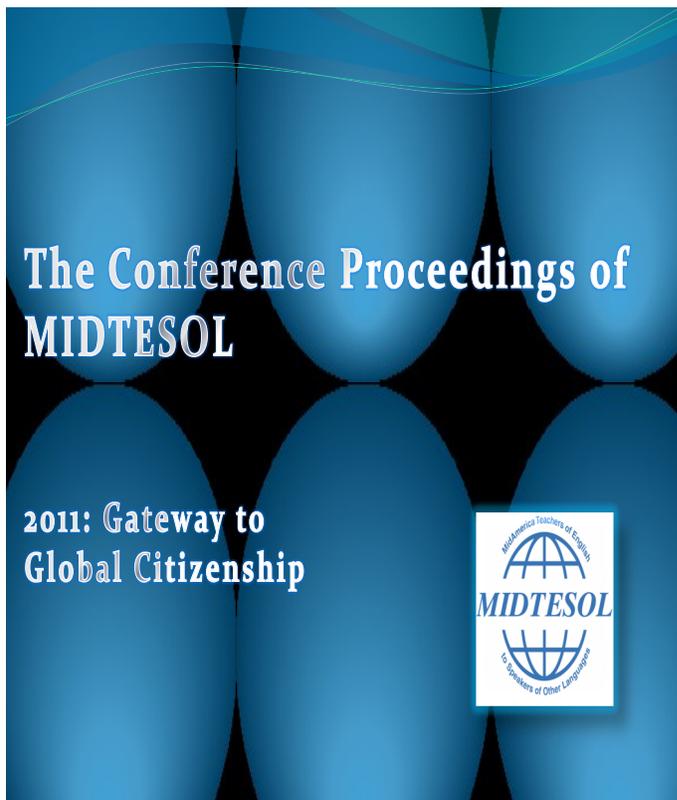
By Jennifer Morrison, *MIDTESOL General Editor*

If you attended the annual business meeting at the Fall Conference in St. Louis, then you already have heard details about our new peer-reviewed journal, *The Conference Proceedings of MIDTESOL*. I am happy to inform you that we received over thirty (yes, 30!) submissions for the journal, a great number for our first time around. Thank you to all who sent in their submissions for consideration. As I write this update, the review teams are reading the submissions and making recommendations for revision and/or publication. I want to thank those teams (you know who you are!) since we all have plenty of student papers to read, and this just adds a bit more to the load.

Our original intended publication date was for April of this year, but we might need to push that back a bit to May in order for authors to revise and resubmit. As I have been saying to the editorial team, we are learning as we go and will adjust as needed! That is one of the joys in taking on a new adventure: the process of learning.

In case you didn't remember, all MIDTESOL members will receive a dedicated link to *The Proceedings* once it is published, much as you do for *MIDTESOL Matters*. We will not be printing a hard-copy version at this time due to an attempt to keep overall affiliate costs in check.

We are excited to see the final product and will welcome your comments once you see the final version. Until then, keep the positive thoughts coming our way!





It is time to gather ourselves and head to “big” TESOL! This year, as usual, there is a great slate of sessions, plenary speakers, and workshops, not to mention a great city to visit! MIDTESOL members are invited to a social time, explained below, and to share their TESOL stories after the convention. If you attend this year, please send a brief overview of any great sessions you attended, as well as information on your general travels while there. We’d love to share your information with MIDTESOL members.

You can still register at: <https://s3.goeshow.com/tesol/annual/2012/registrationlogin>

Hope to see you in Philly!

MIDTESOL at TESOL

Please join other members of MIDTESOL at the following date and time for some networking and socializing. NOTE: Due to budgetary constraints, this year’s MIDTESOL at TESOL event will not be paid for by MIDTESOL; those attending will need to pay for their own drinks/meals. We hope to reinstate the paid TESOL event next year. Thank you for your understanding.



Friday, March 30th, 7-8 p.m.
Marriot Hotel Lobby Circ Restaurant
Light International Fare and drinks

Editor's Corner

By Jennifer Morrison, *MIDTESOL General Editor*



The beginning of this academic year brought a big change in my life as I moved from teaching ESL in an elementary school to instructing future ESL/EFL teachers in a university setting. It wasn't the first time I had taught in a university, but there was one huge difference in my daily routine: I was no longer teaching ESL! Now, I am **passionate** about teaching ESL, which I think will be a great asset for my pre-service university students; however, about halfway through September, I quickly realized that this new situation wasn't going to work if I couldn't continue teaching what I love so much: ESL. My challenge, I have realized, is going to be making ways to continue to teach ESL while I meet all of the other new duties connected to my position.

I realize that many professors face these same challenges; mine are nothing "new." How many times have we heard pre-service teachers say that their best professors were the ones who are still teaching "out there?" How true! For me, it isn't just about staying current so that I can prepare my students for what is to come (although that is a good motivation), but it is also about feeding that inner craving to explain how to conjugate the verb "to be" or to explain a uniquely unusual descriptor, such as "buffalo sauce." Perhaps I love teaching English to non-native speakers because it is like a puzzle each day: who knows what intriguing question I will be asked or what special sentence construction I will see that I have *never* seen before? Who knows what cultural information I will be able to express so that my students will better adjust to their new environment? Who knows what fascinating piece of information I

will learn about my students' countries and cultures?

I hope that, for me, there will be no heading into my office on the 3rd floor and emerging 20 years later asking why I went into this field. I am already exploring ways to stay involved in the public schools, help with community ESL programs, or any other means by which I can feed that inner ESL-teaching hunger, a hunger that I hope to pass on to my new students who are heading out into this wonderful career we call ESL Teaching.

Jennifer Morrison is Assistant Professor of English/TESOL at Evangel University in Springfield, MO.

About our Organization

MIDTESOL is a professional organization, an affiliate of International TESOL, whose goal is to support teachers and enhance the teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

MIDTESOL Matters is a quarterly publication and is distributed to subscribers and dues-paying members of MIDTESOL. Articles, Teaching Tips, and Reviews are welcome from all members. The editor reserves the right to edit for space, clarity, or editorial balance. Materials published in MIDTESOL Matters become the property of MIDTESOL and could be shared with other TESOL affiliate organizations.

Expressed opinions do not necessarily reflect the views of MIDTESOL, TESOL, or the MIDTESOL Executive Board.

Our Mission

The mission of Mid-America Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages is to strengthen the effective teaching of English in Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri to people whose native language is a language other than English while respecting their individual language rights. As a regional affiliate of TESOL and a professional organization, MIDTESOL:

- **Supports those involved with English language teaching, teacher education, administration and management, curriculum and materials design, and research;**
- **Provides leadership and direction through the dissemination and exchange of information and resources;**
- **Encourages access to the standards for English language instruction, professional preparation, and employment**