

ESL GO! Newsletter, December 2010

*Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.*



"Nothing Gold Can Stay" by Robert Frost (1874-1963)

As December comes, our readers might be able to identify well with the poem. Days seem to be "an hour"; nights stay longer as you need to work on your papers. Well...let's take a break and read our last newsletter of the semester. This issue features a survey of satisfaction among graduate students enrolled in our SLS/ ESL program contributed by Beril Tezeller Arik. Before we take a look at the results, we would like to start with one of the reader's favorite sections: bios of ESLers.

Go! ESLers: For this issue, we will know more about 3 people in our program. Let's check them out.

Mei-Hung Lin



Mei-Hung Lin is from Taichung, Taiwan, and currently a third-year PhD student in the SLS/ESL PhD program at Purdue. Before coming to Purdue, she earned her MA in TESOL at National Chiao-Tung University and BA in Language Education at National Hsinchu University of Education. Her research interests include Second Language Writing, English for Specific Purposes, English for Academic Purposes and Corpus-based

studies. She enjoys taking a walk along different trails around West Lafayette.

Matthew Allen



*If I were to write a short blurb about myself, I'd probably skip any mention of school and start by talking about my family, something like, *My wife, Claire, is a nursing student at St. Elizabeth. I have two boys. Theodore is 5 and Lucius is 2. They like to jump on me.* You might wonder where I'm from and where I live, so I'd throw in, *I've led a peripatetic existence, so I don't really know where to call home, but right now I live in Battle Ground, right in front of a great big blue water tower. *Just to jazz things up, I'd start talking about my animals: *We have a dog, a cat, three fish, and frog. We've also had lots fish, gerbils, a parrot, and a hedgehog, among others. My dream pet is a sugar glider. *You'd probably wonder what that is, but I wouldn't bother to explain, hoping that you'll look it up and see just how cute those little things are. And to wrap things up, I'm sure I'd add something about my bikes, like *I let off steam through cycling.* Then, knowing me, I would sit back and think, *Hmm. That's a pretty great bio.**

Wutthiphong Laoriandee



With the first name meaning “a person seeking knowledge all the time” and the last name meaning “good at studying,” Wutthiphong Laoriandee (Hai) was born on the Teacher’s Day of Thailand. He had taught English at Chulalongkorn University Language Institute for just over 3 years before taking a study leave to pursue a PhD in SLS/ESL at Purdue. He received an MA in English (Linguistics) from Chulalongkorn University. When not studying, he likes to listen to music especially Jason Mraz’s; he is a (super) big fan of the singer. He also loves watching movies, reading both Thai and English novels, and playing batminton. You can find him on Facebook at almost any time--add him if you have not (^_^). He thinks he is an advanced English writer as his comments on 4 of Jason Mraz’s videos on YouTube received the highest thumb-ups

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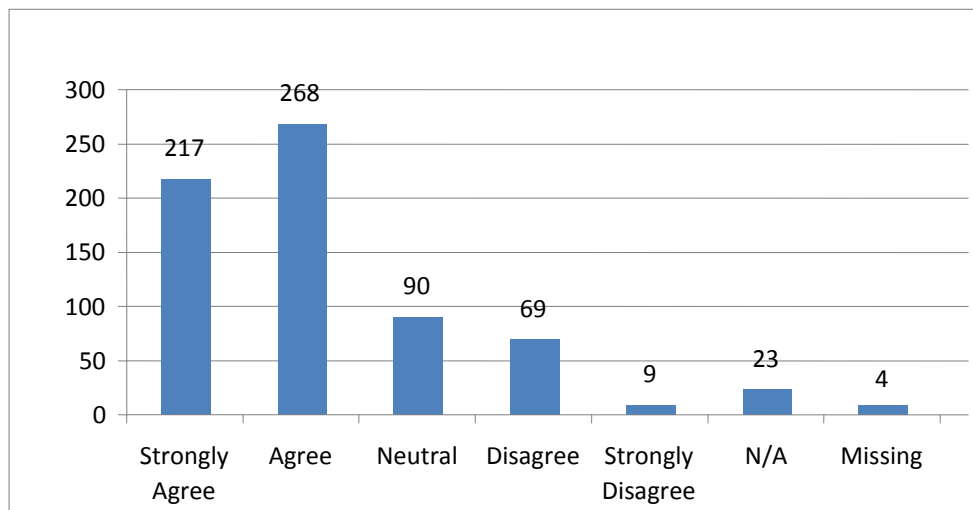
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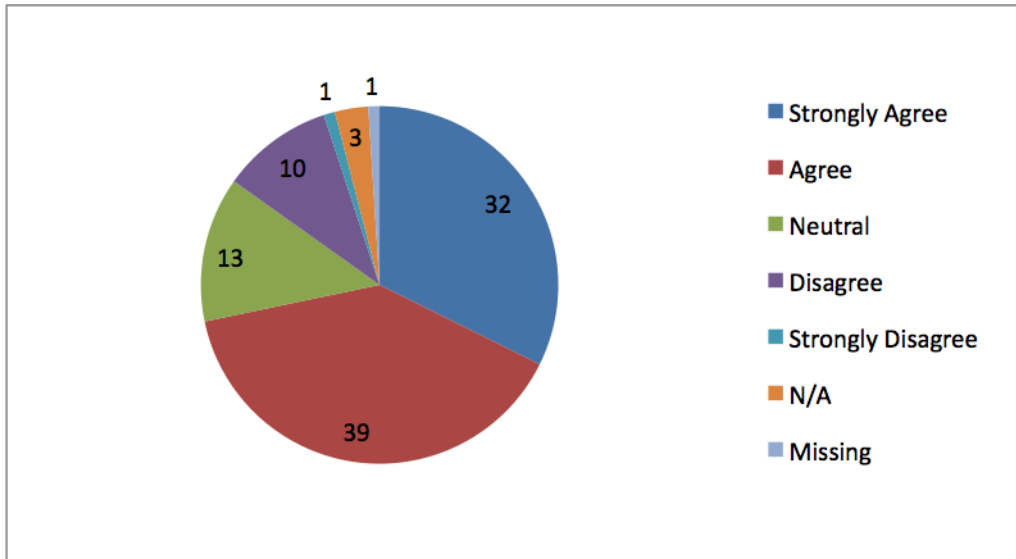
We did not save the best for last or whatsoever. What you see in Hai’s picture is a candle wax procession that occurs every year in many provinces in Thailand to celebrate the beginning of the Buddhist Lent, the three-month annual retreat of monks.

Go! Survey Results: As some of you will remember, last year a survey was conducted in order to determine the level of satisfaction among graduate students enrolled in our program and to provide a tool for decision makers to consider and better meet the needs and expectations of graduate students. We are happy to finally share the results of the survey with you.

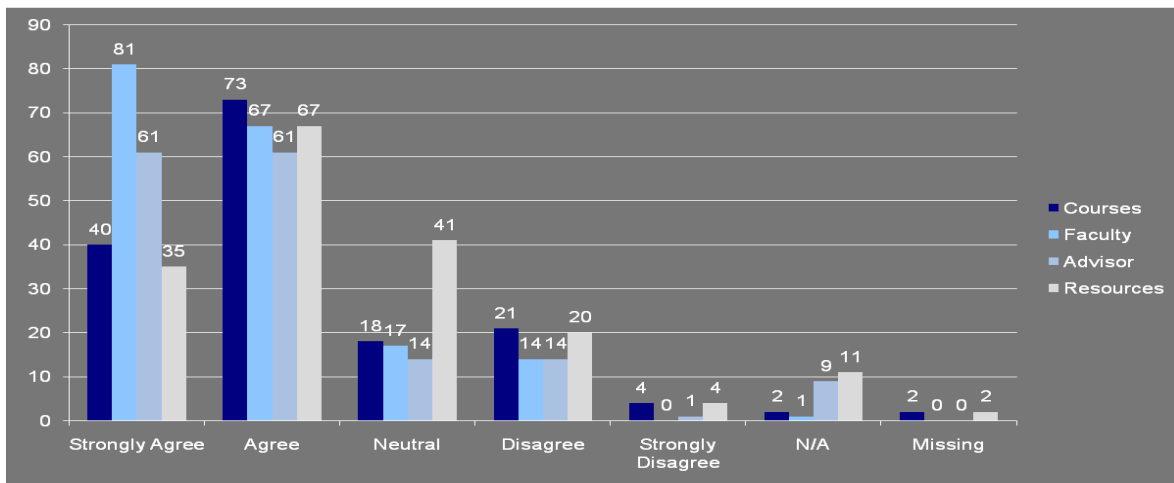
The survey explored the level of satisfaction among graduate students using a 5-point Likert scale and two open-ended questions. The survey had 34 questions in four sections regarding the coursework, faculty, advisor, and resources (The resources section had questions about the writing lab, libraries, administrative services, etc.). All questions were worded positively; thus the higher the score the more satisfied the students were about a specific topic. Of 50 students enrolled in the graduate program at the time, Fall 2009 semester, 20 graduate students participated in the survey—the response rate was 39%. We are happy to inform you that the results showed that graduate students’ level of satisfaction was very high and there did not seem to be a difference between different student groups (different age groups, males and females, or domestic and international students).

Seventy one percent of responses were either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’, showing graduate students’ high level of satisfaction. Thirteen percent of responses were ‘neutral,’ 10% were ‘disagree,’ and 1% were ‘strongly disagree’. The results indicate that only 11% of respondents reflected dissatisfaction. The overall satisfaction levels are displayed below in terms of scores and percentages respectively.

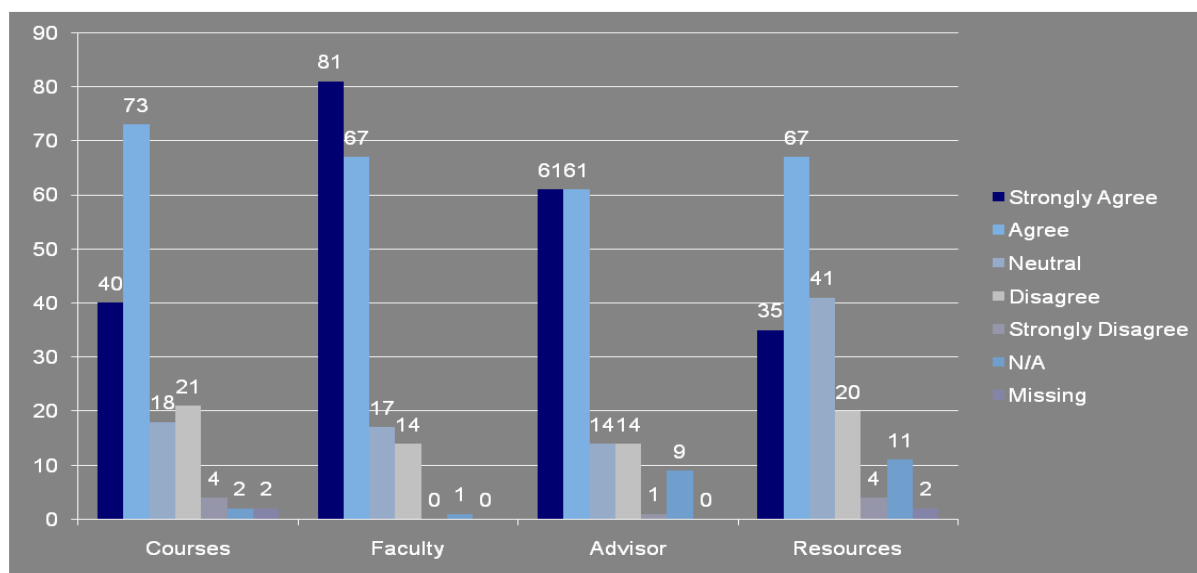




The figure below shows the scores for the four sections of the survey: courses, faculty, advisor, and resources. Considering that the professors and advisors are the same people, the similarity between the courses, faculty and advisors sections is not surprising. Resources received comparatively lower scores than the other sections. 217 of the positive responses were 'strongly agree' and 268 of them were 'agree' as mentioned above you see the distribution of these responses according to the sections. The answers to the faculty (81) section contributed the most to the number 217, followed by advisors (61), courses (40), and finally resources (35) for 'strongly agree'. The contribution of each section to the number for 'agree' was even. Graduate students were more neutral to the resources section. 69 of the responses were 'disagree' and only 8 of them were 'strongly disagree'. Below you see the distribution of each response according to different sections.



Switching the axes allows noticing that the graduate students are more satisfied with the faculty members compared to their satisfaction with advisors, courses, and resources. The total number of positive responses for faculty is 148, for advisors 122, for courses 113, and for resources 102. The distribution of negative responses according to sections was as follows: faculty - 14, advisors - 15, resources -24, and courses -25. The distribution of the neutral responses was as follows: courses - 21, resources - 20, faculty - 14, and advisors - 14.



Since the majority of the graduate students were satisfied with the program, a closer look at the responses to specific questions might be more informative to see specific areas that graduate students were particularly satisfied or not satisfied. The following questions received the highest scores, the highest possible score a question could receive was 100 (20 students* 5 the highest score):

- ESL program faculty members are knowledgeable in their field. (97/100, mean 4.85)
- ESL program faculty members respect my opinions. (89/100, mean 4.68)
- My academic advisor is willing to answer my questions. (87/100, mean 4.58)

The following questions received the lowest scores. It seems like ESL graduate students were relatively less satisfied with the variety of courses offered, the feedback they get and the computer labs. The distribution of scores for these questions are given in parenthesis.

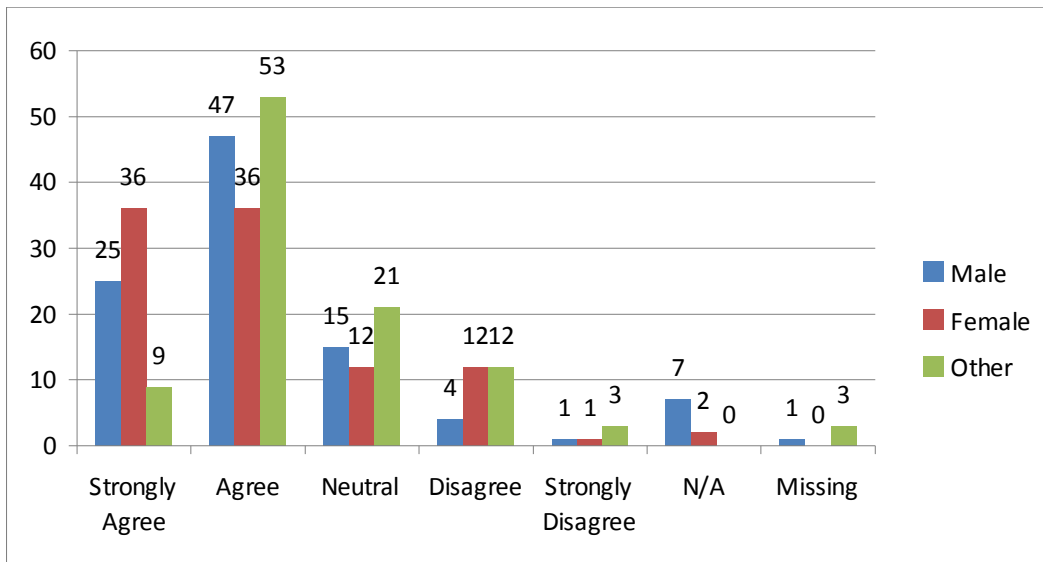
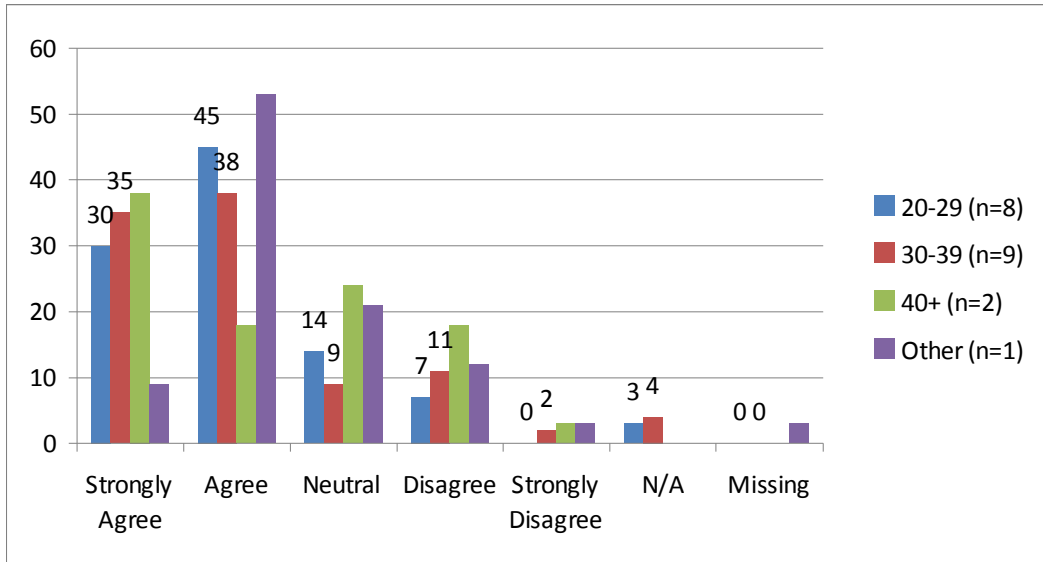
- There is an adequate variety of ESL program courses.
(2 strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 neutral, 9 disagree, 2 strongly disagree)
- ESL program faculty members provide adequate feedback.

(2 strongly agree, 8 agree, 3 neutral, 7 disagree, 0 strongly disagree)

- Computer labs adequately meet the needs of the students.

(4 strongly agree, 4 agree, 6 neutral, 4 disagree, 2 strongly disagree)

The survey also investigated if there were differences between the satisfaction levels of different groups of students. The results show that different age, sex, or residency groups do not show considerably different satisfaction levels.



Finally, we would like to report the responses of the graduate students to the open ended questions. The positive comments are in line with the survey results showing that graduate students are particularly satisfied with the faculty members. The comments regarding faculty showed that graduate

students thought the faculty members were great-- 'knowledgeable,' 'well-known in their fields,' 'nice,' 'flexible,' 'caring,' 'friendly,' 'supportive,' 'pleasant,' and 'outstanding,' to share a couple of words graduate students used to refer to the faculty members. Other positive statements were about the intellect, diversity, and friendliness of other graduate students, different funding options, friendly atmosphere, and the good reputation of the program.

The survey also asked graduate students their suggestions. Again in line with the survey results graduate students brought up more feedback and course options as possible ways to improve the program. These two suggestions were the most frequently mentioned ones. Other suggestions included, smaller class size, especially for seminar courses, more professional development guidance, for example, building professional portfolios throughout their graduate study and some workshops designed for the students in our program, more ESL teaching opportunities, more research courses, a Purdue SLS/ESL journal, encouraging more collaboration among junior and senior students, and more faculty-graduate student publications.

Even though there are many venues, such as the ESL graduate student organization, and the English graduate student organization, for the SLS/ESL graduate students to express their concerns there is not a tool available to graduate students to inform the decision makers regularly about their concerns. The purpose of this survey was to fill this gap and to provide a venue for the ESL graduate students to be heard and for the decision makers to have access to feedback from graduate students to inform their decisions. We want to thank the graduate students for their invaluable input and to the faculty members for their feedback in the design of this survey. We hope that you find this survey helpful and continue the tradition and we also hope that our SLS/ESL program we are so proud of will continue to improve the quality of education in this graduate program. The survey results do not only show where there is room for improvement but also reminds us all what makes our program a great one.

Go! Past Events:



On November 19, John Hitz, a PhD candidate in our program, gave a talk entitled "The Importance of Correctly Identifying the Features of the L1 Grammar in Studies of Cross-Linguistic Influence." This talk was part of his dissertation. After the presentation, there was an ESL Happy Hour at Nine Irish Brothers to celebrate a

happy Friday evening. As it is a nice place, we went there for the second time for the Happy Hour.

Go! Upcoming Events/ Updates: The 4th International Conference on Writing Research will be held at George Mason University, Washington D.C. during February 17-20, 2011. The title of the conference is "Writing Research Across Border II." This conference features talks in different topics beyond L2 writing. For more information, you can follow the link <http://www.writing.ucsb.edu/wrconf11/>

Professor Dwight Atkinson will travel to India over the Christmas break. He will spend the first half of the break meeting research participants he has been working with for the past 10 years, and the second half staying with friends and traveling. Some readers might expect another video from India that he can show in his research class.

We hope you have not become tired when you read up to this point. We wanted to retain important details of the survey results so the section was rather long. Well...I hope you enjoyed our newsletter and the poem.

The sun also rises. The dark goes up to dawn. Nothing black can stay either! See you next year in February.

Wutthiphong Laoriandee (Editor)