

A P R I L 2 0 1 4

# ESL GO! Newsletter

SLS/ESL Program, Department of English, Purdue University



## Upcoming Conferences

**April 5: SLS/ESL Graduate Student Symposium**, RAWLS Halls, Purdue University, <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~eslgo/symposium.html>

**June 6-7: Intercultural Rhetoric and Discourse Conference**, IUPUI, Indianapolis, IN, <http://liberalarts.iupui.edu/icic/conference/>

## Other Department Events:

**April 16, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm**, Purdue Writing Showcase, <http://icap.rhetorike.org/showcase>

**April 17, 5:30 pm: Purdue's 83rd Annual Literary Awards Contest**, Purdue Memorial Union North Ballroom, Guest speaker: fiction writer Edwidge Danticat, <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/english/literaryawards/>

## ESL Speaker Series

*Professor Shaun F. D. Hughes,  
Purdue University*

**"The History and Importance of  
Sranan, one of the creole  
Englishes of Surinam"**

April 11, 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm,  
KRAM G002

Happy Hour: 7:00 pm, TBA



## Conferences Presentations

### AAAL 2014, Portland, OR

**Dwight Atkinson:** "Sociocognitive Variation in Second Language Acquisition"

**Matthew Allen:** "An Interactional Analysis of Reader-Based Response in Writing Tutorials Between Graduate Student Tutors and Writers"

**Kamal Belmihoub:** "The Interface of Language Attitudes and Second Language Acquisition in Algeria"

**Xun Yan and Lixia Cheng:** "Examining the factor structure of a local oral English proficiency test across first language backgrounds"

**Yu-Shan Fan and Veronika Maliborska:** "Socialization of International Students in an American University: Language, Learner Identities, and Imagined Communities"

**April Ginther, Thirakunkovit Suthathip and Xun Yan** "Test-taker Feedback as Quality Control for Post-entry Language Proficiency Testing"

**Rio Huang:** "I want to speak like an American: Taiwanese Undergraduates' Preferences for Native/Local Teachers and Perceptions of Who Owns English"

**Dennis Koyama:** "The Relationship Between TOEFL iBT Speaking Scores and Oral Communication Ability in an Academic EFL Environment"

**Elena Shvidko:** "Examining Impoliteness Through a Critical Lens"

### TESOL 2014, Portland, OR

**Heejung Kwon and Scott Partridge:** "Collaborative Database for Language Programs: Cloud-Based Strategies to Enhance your ESL Writing Program"

**Ghada Gherwash and Joshua Paiz:** "Online tools for effective L2 writing instruction: The Purdue OWL and L2 writers"

**Elena Shvidko:** "Evaluation Criteria for Choosing Online Language Resources"; "Using Video Public Service Announcements to Teach Rhetoric"

**Tony Silva, Suneeta Thomas, Cong Zhang, and Hyojung Park:** "Scholarship on L2 Writing in 2013: The Year in Review"

**Thank you everyone who represented Purdue and our SLS Program at these conferences!**



## My Conference Experience

**TESOL Convention 2014: “Go forth and help transform the world into a better place for our children and our future!”**

**By Lena Shvidko**

In a February issue of *ESL GO! Newsletter*, Aya Matsuda shared her most valuable experience as a graduate student at Purdue: *“The most valuable experience as a graduate student at Purdue was...that I attended as many conferences as I could. Even though it meant a huge financial sacrifice, it was so worth it. I strongly believe in the importance of contextualizing our work and ourselves in our field—our work does not exist in a vacuum, and its meaningfulness depends on what it contributes to the context it is part of. The easiest way to visualize this abstract idea of “context” or “home for my work” was to attend a conference and see a group of scholars gathering, having a conversation that I wanted to be part of.”*

I cannot agree more with Aya. I have been attending TESOL conventions on a regular basis since 2008—my second year in a TESOL graduate certificate program. They became a sort of annual hallmark of my academic life. I truly enjoy learning from scholars and practitioners in the field and socialize with them in a variety of events generously offered at each convention.

Just like in the previous years, I was looking forward to the TESOL convention in Portland, Oregon. In fact, preparing for it made me excited as I found myself participating in a large online community with other TESOL members all over the world. Being on an email list of a few TESOL interest sections, it was impossible to miss the overall excitement, which kept growing, as the conference was getting closer. Interest section leaders sent out invitations to special events and meetings and recruited volunteers for various tasks at the convention; interest section members exchanged various kinds of information related to the convention and tried to find last-minute hotel roommates. And soon we all met in Portland, where we had a privilege to enrich each other with

our knowledge, professional experience, and pedagogical skills.

What I particularly like about the TESOL conventions is the diversity that they offer to the professionals in the field. It’s great to notice that with the ever-evolving trends in the field of English teaching and the increase of the TESOL membership each year, the TESOL conventions are growing and becoming more diversified with regard to presentation types and topics. And because of this range of interests, the conventions entice professionals engaged in divergent areas of work, such as teacher education, K-12, policymaking, and applied linguistics.

Accordingly, the program of the 2014 convention was very rich in events and a variety of educational sessions. And as it became my usual “preconference” routine, I had drafted a schedule of the sessions I wanted to attend as well as organizational and business meetings I needed and wanted to be part of.

On the first day of the convention, I came to the Oregon Convention Center and spent some time walking around. It was great to see familiar faces: attendees of previous conventions, members of the interest section groups, and colleagues and friends from my MA program. The atmosphere was very lively and I sensed the overall excitement. The opening meeting started with the greeting from the TESOL President Deena Boraie. She asked the attendees from different parts of the world to get up to indicate their presence. It was great to see how diverse the TESOL membership really is! We were told that this year, the TESOLers came from more than 75 different countries.

The first keynote speaker was Surin Pitsuwan, whose talk was entitled “English as A Powerful Instrument of Community Building in East Asia.” I thoroughly enjoyed Pitsuwan’s talk. It made me realize that our job as English teachers should not only be limited to teaching the language, but we should also aim at teaching people how to think critically to solve problems. Pitsuwan said that the English language is a transformative tool for global development and TESOL members should help transform the global landscape for a better future. “Teachers must unleash power of the common language to encourage the students to gather more information, to communicate among themselves and to work together in the multiple settings,” Pitsuwan suggested. I am sure these words resonated with the beliefs of many attendees, including myself. Surin Pitsuwan finished his talk with the following proclamation: *“Your service is uniquely different from other services given all around the world. You are teaching more than just the language. You are creating the sense of coming together, you are creating the community. We need the sense of the common belonging. This is your mission and your calling to go out to the rest of the world and try to raise the proficiency in the language that could be a tool to construct a better future for ourselves, our children and our posterity.”*

Throughout the entire convention, the energy did not seem to fade away! There were so many interesting sessions going on, and I wish I had time for all of them! At the same time, it was great to stay busy and feel a part of this lively and stimulating event.

This year, I had a chance—for the first time—to attend the TESOL town meeting, and I was impressed by the dedication of the TESOL leaders—the convention organizing committee and the board of directors. I could feel their great care about the TESOL members and the organization in general. They are certainly putting much effort into making the TESOL International Association a welcoming, growing, and successful organization.

Together with some other SLS students, I also attended the open meeting of the Second Language Writing Interest Section where we discussed the overall well-being and development of the SLW community, as well as set some goals for further growth. Once again, I was impressed by the desire of the steering committee to engage the members of the community into the activities of the interest section.

It’s good to know that we have such thoughtful and motivated leaders who aim at developing and strengthening our organization and helping us contribute to it with our knowledge, skills, and experiences.

The exhibitor hall was once again amazing! Various publishers, English teaching companies, and language testing organizations provided a plethora of products, services, and professional development opportunities. These organizations seemed to largely attract the TESOL audience with their products and information. Each time I went to the exhibit hall, I could observe lively interactions between the representatives of the publishing companies and the convention attendees. Our SLS students Ploy and Hai shared with me: *“We love exhibitors! There are such a variety of publishers and English teaching companies at the convention. It’s also great that we can buy the books right here and with a nice discount!”*

I had a chance to ask a few convention attendees about their impressions and experiences, and I came to realize that the convention was a great success! Veronika Maliborska shared: *“I really like the sessions about publishing. For me, as a graduate student, it’s helpful to learn about different journals in the field and explore various possibilities of publishing my work. I think TESOL is doing a great job at helping graduate students who are at the beginning of their career like myself.”*

A graduate student from another university commented: “I met several scholars whose work I admire. This convention provided me with an excellent opportunity to expand my network.” I cannot agree more! This is certainly the best thing that I personally like about these conventions—learning from the prominent scholars by not only attending their presentations and workshops, but also by interacting with them in informal conversations.

I certainly found something resonating with my academic interests and professional goals. I hope that those who were at the convention enjoyed the experience as much as I did.

# Improving Our Teaching

## Dealing with Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom

Unfortunately, students do not always behave in class as instructors wish they would. Generally, the offenders are few in number, but even though a minority, they can change the whole environment in class. Teachers sometimes do not respond to student disruptions because they really and truly are unsure how to respond. What should be done? Definite answers do not exist, but the list of common student disruptions below contains some possible responses

*(The Teaching Professor, September, 1988, vol. 2, # 1. p. 3-4).*

### Handling dominant students:

- Talk to them outside of class. Tell them that you appreciate their willingness to contribute and that you are interested in getting others to offer their opinions and ideas in the same way. Enlist their assistance in getting other to speak up.
- Ask reticent students to comment on the observations of the dominant students.
- Try sitting next to the dominant person. Your nonverbal behaviors will be the least reinforcing to them if you are adjacent to them. Sitting opposite dominant students provides them with the greatest amount of nonverbal reinforcement.
- Break eye contact with them and don't return eye contact when they are done speaking.
- Ask them directly to comment on an issue. If you decide to use this approach, be sure to call on them first and then ask for a comment, rather than the other way round. This insures that they will be attending to the question and thus better able to respond.
- Reward reticent speakers with lots of verbal and nonverbal cues (eye contact, smiles). This makes it more likely they will respond in the future.

### Reducing defensiveness

- Avoid labeling ideas or points of view. Once they become attached to an individual there is a greater risk of defensiveness if the idea is questioned.
- Ask one student to paraphrase the arguments of the other, and vice versa. Try to move both participants to a place where they understand the other's point of view.
- Treat both participants with respect; however, firmly but politely refuse to allow the discussion to digress into name-calling, etc. Stop them in their tracks.

### Handling irrelevant commentary

- Set up clear expectations early. Explain to the class that you don't want to have people talk in order to "hear the sounds of their voices".
- Don't reinforce irrelevant monologues. Break eye contact with the student, stop attending to what he/she is saying, and attempt (when you get the chance) to change the course of the discussion. (Be sure to treat the person with respect, however. It sets up an unhealthy atmosphere to be openly critical of participation.)
- Remember that your responsibility is to hold up an idea for critical examination. It is not entirely your responsibility to cut off unproductive conversation. Allow the other students to do this occasionally.

### Encouraging reticent students

- Try to sit opposite reticent students. As suggested above, your nonverbal behaviors are most reinforcing to students opposite you.
- Look at them expectantly and without comment after raising an issue. Count silently to 15 to make sure the silence indicates that you expect them to say something.

### Students challenge your authority, often by asking loaded questions (i.e. "Why do you make the tests so hard?")

- Honestly answer the question, explaining (not defending) your instructional objective. If the student continues to press, table the discussion until later and then continue it with the student privately.

*(The Teaching Professor, September, 1988, vol. 2, # 1. p. 3-4)*

## SLS Journals

By *Lena Shvidko*

The focus of the journals today—Language Assessment

### Language Testing

*Language Testing* is a fully peer-reviewed, international, quarterly journal that publishes original research and review articles on language testing and assessment. It provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and information between people working in the fields of first and second language testing and assessment. This includes researchers and practitioners in EFL and ESL testing, and assessment in child language acquisition and language pathology. In addition, special attention is focused on issues of testing theory, experimental investigations, and the following up of practical implications.

<http://ltj.sagepub.com/>

### Assessing Writing

*Assessing Writing* is a refereed international journal providing a forum for ideas, research and practice on the assessment of written language. *Assessing Writing* publishes articles, book reviews, conference reports, and academic exchanges concerning writing assessments of all kinds, including traditional ('direct' and standardized forms of) testing of writing, alternative performance assessments (such as portfolios), workplace sampling and classroom assessment. The journal focuses on all stages of the writing assessment process, including needs evaluation, assessment creation, implementation, and validation, and test development; it aims to value all perspectives on writing assessment as process, product and politics (test takers and raters; test developers and agencies; educational administrations; and political motivations). The journal is interested in review essays of key issues in the theory and practice of writing assessment.

<http://www.journals.elsevier.com/assessing-writing/#description>



### Language Assessment Quarterly: An International Journal (LAQ)

*Language Assessment Quarterly: An International Journal (LAQ)* is dedicated to the advancement of theory, research, and practice in first, second, and foreign language assessment for school, college, and university students; for employment; and for immigration and citizenship. LAQ publishes original articles addressing theoretical issues, empirical research, and professional standards and ethics related to language assessment, as well as interdisciplinary articles on related topics, and reports of language test development and testing practice. All articles are peer-reviewed. The journal is directed to an international audience. Examples of topic areas appropriate for LAQ include:

- assessment from around the world at all instructional levels including specific purposes;
- assessment for immigration and citizenship and other 'gate-keeping' contexts;
- issues of validity, reliability, fairness, access, accommodations, administration, and legal remedies;
- assessment in culturally and/or linguistically diverse populations;
- interdisciplinary interfaces between language assessment and learning;
- issues related to technology and computer-based assessment;
- innovative and practical methods and techniques in developing assessment instruments; \* recent trends in analysis of performance.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/hlaq20/current#.UxrI8RdWbJ>

## Places We Come From

*Our cultural guide today is Suneeta Thomas, who originally comes from India, from the state of Kerala. She will tell us about some of her favorite traditions from back home.*



**Lena:** To start, could you tell us a little bit about your home country?

**Suneeta:** India is very diverse! Each part of the country—each state—is very different from each other. For example, my state Kerala is very different from its neighbors. And each state has its own culture too.

**Lena:** What kind of culture is in your state?

**Suneeta:** I come from Kerala. There are lots of Hindus in my state. But there is also a good a number of Christians, and in southern part of India in general. So religion determines the culture, on one level, I'd say. But what really brings the state together is the common traditions, which are Hindu-based. For example, we have something that we call Onam and it's a festival of harvest. I don't remember the exact story, but it's believed that there was a King Mahabali and he comes in September in his spirit to see how his state is doing. For Indian people, it's a time of harvest and celebration.

They eat lunch on a banana leaf, and they usually sit on the ground and there is lots of food—rice, different types of curry, lots of vegetables, and pickles. It's a real feast! This is the first thing I can think of when I think about Kerala. But there are also some dances. For example, we have a dance called Kathakali. For this dance people dance with their eyes! They move their hands a little bit, but it's mostly with their eyes and facial expressions. And they do this dance for lots of different festivals.

**Lena:** And what is your favorite tradition from back home?

**Suneeta:** My favorite tradition is Onam actually! Because there are lots of food! You get to eat real homemade food.

**Lena:** Sounds good! Sunny, how would you describe people in your country?

**Suneeta:** I always had this impression that Indians are hardworking, they are very talkative, they have a lot to say, and they are very expressive people!



**Lena:** Do you think that this description is different from what other people think about Indians?

**Suneeta:** I think the common positive stereotype is that Indian people are hardworking. A negative stereotype that I heard—only after coming here though—is that Indian people smell like curry! Because they are always cooking, so they smell like spicy food.

And I also heard that in some American Indian families, kids are trying to stay away from the kitchen when their mother is cooking because there are lots of spices, and the smell gets into your clothes and your hair!

**Lena: Interesting! What do you wish other people knew about your country and Indian people in general?**

**Suneeta:** Hm... That's a tough one. The reason why I didn't think about it is because we are everywhere, we are so spread out, so people get to know what we are. I think we are just so overrepresented everywhere, so people just know us, and they know that we are hardworking and talkative. I also heard that people think we are very conservative. And by the way people told me that I don't come across as conservative as other Indian people.



**Lena: Are arranged marriages still widely practiced?**

**Suneeta:** Oh yeah! But it's becoming more open-minded I think, in a sense that nowadays the parents want to make sure that their children actually like each other, that they talk to each other and do some kind of dating. Then both families have to approve the marriage. And if the guy and the girl don't like each other, the parents will understand and they will look for another person.



**Lena: Is Indian society changing, becoming more Western-oriented?**

**Suneeta:** We have this tradition of arranged marriages, for example. And people think, "Wow, how can you marry someone you know for let's say a month?" But I think that in some sense these arranged marriages actually work. Because it's literally two families that marry each other. In India, the idea of societies and communities is very strong, it's all about what the society will say, what they will say. So even if the marriage has problems, they will stick with each other and make it work. They will not just get out of it. And in a sense it's impossible to get out of it because there are families and relatives, so there is huge network.



And I think that generally, the young generation of Indians is more independent nowadays, and if they say they are not happy with the situation, the parents will listen. So it's definitely a huge change. It's not just arranged marriage, but it's also love.

**Lena: Arranged love!**

**Suneeta (laughs):** Yes! Arranged love.

**Lena: Thank you, Sunny!**



# Voices From the Classroom

## Four-Letter Words

**By Dennis Koyama**

This activity is one that I have successfully adapted to a variety of teaching and learning goals in the writing- and speaking-focused classroom. The basic premise is a student will change one letter in a word to create a meaningful vocabulary word, without repeating a word previously used. For example, you can start by writing the word “HOME” on the blackboard. Then a student (or a student group) begins by changing the starting word, like “HOME.” This can be changed to “HONE” by changing the “M” to an “N.” The next student or group might change “HONE” to “TONE” by changing the “H” to a “T.” It is probably a good idea to set the rule that groups should avoid proper names because a student, pressed for time, might say, “But, ‘PONE’ is the name of a city in my country!”

There is typically a preset time limit, but there is no “best limit.” If this activity is done orally, by having students individually take turns saying their word aloud, you may want to limit students’ turns to between five and seven seconds and limit the whole activity to about four or five minutes. If the oral mode seems best for your lesson goals, it is a good idea to have students write down all the words. This is so you can know if a word has been repeated and so you can incorporate those words into the lesson for the day.

If you decide to use this in pairs and focus on writing words down, I recommend using the length of one or two songs if you have access to audio-speakers in your classroom. This is for three practical reasons. First, you can walk around the room and listen to the interactions of the students, collecting language tokens and communication strategies to incorporate into the lesson. Second, the music will cover up what the students are saying so other groups and students won’t overhear possible words. Third, as Pavlov would have predicted, the students (usually) stop writing new words as soon as the music stops, which keeps the class on schedule.



Let us consider a writing lesson using this as a warm up. I would distribute a grid that fills the length of a sheet of letter-sized paper with rows, and I would cut the paper into strips. Here is an abbreviated table with the starting word “BEAR.”

b	e	a	r

Students would be put in pairs, and I would play one or two songs that last a total of about four or five minutes. I might use Queen’s “We Will Rock You” and “We Are The Champions” which add up to 5:02, and they are consecutively listed on the album I have. Once the music stops, you should ask the student pairs to stop writing.

Then you should ask a group to call out their words to you and the rest of the class. While they are calling their words out, write down all the words and ask the other groups if they have the same word. For example, group 1 calls out the word “beat” and you ask, “Does any group have ‘beat’ on their list?”

Then you should keep track of the words that overlap between groups and make a list of unique words. Once you have the lists, you can use whichever list you like, the unique words or the overlapping words, to have students write a sentence using each word. Here is a sample set of tables with numbered rows (for convenience) for three student groups; the red letters are the changed letters:

Group 1				Group 2				Group 3						
	b	e	a	r		b	e	a	r		b	e	a	r
1	b	e	e	r	1	f	e	a	r	1	p	e	a	r
2	b	e	e	t	2	n	e	a	r	2	p	e	e	r
3	b	e	a	t	3	n	e	a	t	3	b	e	e	r
4	s	e	a	t	4	s	e	a	t	4	b	e	e	n
5	s	l	a	t	5	b	e	a	t	5	s	e	e	n
6	f	l	a	t	6	f	e	a	t	6	s	e	e	m
7	f	l	a	w	7	f	e	e	t	7	s	e	a	m

Here are tables with the results:

common words	unique words		
bear	beet	neat	seen
beer	slat	feat	seem
beat	flat	feet	seam
seat	flaw	pear	hear
	fear	peer	been

The next thing I would do is have the students—in pairs—write at least one sentence for each unique word. One of the great points of flexibility in this activity is the students can decide the classification of the words. Thus, “peer” can be either a noun or a verb depending on what the students want to do with the word. The interaction produced during this sort of pair work comes with the opportunity for students to learn from each other, and the opportunities for productive interactions can be increased by providing guidelines to students. Here are some random examples of things students can do with words on either list:

- Write one question using a verb with a modal auxiliary;
- Write two sentences, one using a noun as the object of a sentence and another with the same noun as a subject of a sentence;
- Create a sentence with a gerund form of one of the unique words;
- Write one sentence using the past-progressive;
- Use two “if - then” clauses with different subjects;
- In any way you like, use one each of reason (e.g., because), time (e.g., when), and concession (e.g., although) adverbs.

[Note, I would not insert these ‘e.g.’ examples, let them ask you or their partner for help], etc...

As you can imagine, a very long list of potential guidelines can be generated in a very short period. Additionally, I would try to use all the words the students generated. I might ask students to write one sentence using all the common words. This sentence does not have to be realistic. For example, “My heart skipped a *beat* when I saw a *bear* drinking *beer* in my *seat*.” I might challenge students to think about combining clauses or other aspects that might be pertinent to the lessons of a given week. The focus of this activity does not have to be grammar, however. It can be used to have students organize the words into groups by similarities or contrasts. The words can also be used to create concept maps of each of the unique words. For example, linking: Beer → drink → thirst → heat → summer → beach → salt → cooking → ... This seems like a roundabout way of teaching concept mapping for the brainstorming lesson of writing, but I have found that students seem to more fully participate because they are generating the lesson of the day, and teacher talk is substantially reduced.

## Advice From Our Alumni

### ***Professor Christine Tardy, University of Arizona:***

**Ph.D. in English, Purdue University**

**Specialization: English Language & Linguistics, English as a Second Language**

**Secondary Specialization: Rhetoric and Composition**

**Website: <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~ctardy/>**

Professor Tardy gives advice to graduate students in the SLS/ESL Program:

“The most valuable experience as a graduate students at Purdue was...I don't think I can name just one! Certainly my coursework and the personal and professional relationships I formed were very valuable, but my teaching was also significant. The opportunity to teach a range of classes with different student populations, covering different kinds of content, offered me unique experiences and perspectives that contributed to my research and my future teaching.”

My advice to graduate students in the SLS/ESL program would be...take advantage of the amazing opportunities you have to learn from and with your professors and peers. Academic work can be isolating, especially once you have a full-time position, but graduate school offers the rare opportunity to really engage in exciting conversations and collaborations with others who share your interests.”

**ESL GO! Website:**

<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~eslgo/index.html>

**SLS/ESL Facebook Page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/117624535104094/>

**ESL GO! Newsletter Editor**

Lena Shvidko

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