

ESL GO! NEWSLETTER

2014-2015 / Issue 3

Second Language Studies/ESL at Purdue University

Support: Let's Create it Together

Dear Readers,

For this issues, we have invited doctoral students and alumni from our program to share their suggestions and experiences in a variety of areas related to graduate student life and to our Second Language Studies / ESL program. Please enjoy their contributions .



The 14th Symposium on Second Language Writing:

Learning to Write for Academic Purposes

November 19-21, 2015

AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand

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10 Tips for a Successful Conference Experience

by **Elena Shvidko**

I love attending professional conferences in our field! It's a place where I can learn from experienced teachers and established scholars, participate in intellectual conversations, share my own teaching ideas, and, of course, meet new people and feel a part of our diverse academic community. Conferences have definitely become hallmarks of my professional life.

For many of us, graduate students, attending a conference requires tremendous sacrifices—both timely and monetary; therefore, it is absolutely necessary to make it a positive and enlightening event. I would like to offer 10 suggestions how to get the most out of your conference experience.

1. Make a Personalized Conference Schedule

The amount of sessions offered at a conference can be quite overwhelming. Therefore, plan in advance and create your personal schedule. Most conference organizers nowadays make conference programs available online even before the event takes place. So I suggest that you spend some time getting acquainted with the conference agenda and create your itinerary, which of course will depend on your goals. In other words, what do you want to take away from attending this event? Are you looking for employment? Do you have research ideas that need to be developed? Are you looking for practical classroom ideas? Or is your goal to strengthen your professional network? All these questions can help you create a productive personalized itinerary.

2. Be Flexible

But be ready to make changes in your schedule. You may have to decide between a lunch with a potential employer and a presentation on an interesting for you research topic. Once again, follow your goals and be ready to sacrifice the good for the better.

3. Have a Conference Buddy

From my experience, there will always be at least two presentations happening at the same time that you desperately want to attend. So pair up with a colleague and take notes at concurrent sessions.

4. Take Good Notes

The notes that you take during a conference can result in great research projects, new ideas for your teaching, or lead to personal opportunities for professional development. Although many presenters prepare handouts of their sessions, I like to write down my own impressions, ideas, and inspirations that come during presentations.

5. Use Networking Opportunities

Academic conferences are the best place to meet people whose work you admire. Get out of your comfort zone and don't miss the opportunity to get to know them personally, especially if their areas of expertise correlate with your professional interests. But meeting them after their presentations and asking them a question or two is not the only way to increase your professional network. I encourage you to attend social meetings and receptions where you can introduce yourself to other people in an informal—and certainly more relaxed—environment.

6. Have Your Own Business Cards

This is particularly important if you seek to develop your professional network. There is a good chance that people will remember you better if they have your business card. Your business card also demonstrates your professionalism.

7. Organize Other People's Business Cards

Many conversations at professional meetings result in the exchange of business cards, so by the end of the conference you may end up with a large number of business cards. Unfortunately, but truthfully, you won't find them all equally useful for you, so organize them for your convenience. For example, make a group called "Future collaboration", or "Good-to-Have-Contacts" or something else.

8. Get Good Rest and Eat Well

You will get physically exhausted! So in order to enjoy a conference to the fullest, get enough sleep and nutrition.

9. Turn Knowledge Into Action

Leave the conference with a desire to act upon the knowledge that you received. Make a goal to make goals! After the conference is over, read your notes, look through the handouts, and plan your next step.

And finally...

10. Don't Forget to Thank the Organizers

Organizing a professional conference is a tremendous amount of work! For several months these people work hard to make it an unforgettable event; they invest in it intellectually, financially, and emotionally. So they certainly deserve your appreciation.

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Upcoming Conferences:

March 18-21: CCCC, Tampa, Florida

<http://www.ncte.org/cccc/conv>

March 18-20: Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC), Toronto, Canada

<http://ltrc2015.wildapricot.org/>

March 21-24: AAAL, Toronto, Canada

<http://www.aaal.org/2015conference>

March 25-28: TESOL, Toronto, Canada (Submissions for CALL-IS Electronic Village Events are extended till December 7, 2014)

<http://www.tesol.org/convention2015>

April 4: Purdue Graduate Student Symposium on Second Language Studies & ESL, West Lafayette, IN Symposium on Second Language Writing, Auckland, New Zealand
"Second language learning, literacy, and technology"

April 16-20: AERA, Chicago, IL

"Toward Justice: Culture, Language, and Heritage in Education Research and Praxis"

[http://www.aera.net/EventsMeetings/AnnualMeeting/2015AnnualMeetingTheme/
tabid/15492/Default.aspx](http://www.aera.net/EventsMeetings/AnnualMeeting/2015AnnualMeetingTheme/tabid/15492/Default.aspx)

May 29: Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Conference, Fairfield, CT

"Collaborations for Empowerment and Learning"

Proposals due: March 6, 2015

<http://www.nefdc.org/>

May 28-31: European Association for Language Testing and Assessment, Copenhagen, Denmark

"Policy and Practice in Language Testing and Assessment"

Events are extended till December 7, 2014)

<http://ealta2015.ku.dk/>

November 19-21: Symposium on Second Language Writing, Auckland, New Zealand

"Learning to Write for Academic Purposes"

<http://sslw.asu.edu/2015/>

Developing an English Language Support Program at Purdue

by Matthew Allen and Lixia Cheng

On February 5, 2015, ESL GO sponsored a Brownbag discussion about the development of the Purdue Language and Cultural Exchange (PLaCE) program. This article provides an overview of the program during its first year of operation, starting with some background.

In recent years, Purdue's already large international student population experienced significant growth among undergraduates. This increase led to discussions around campus about the need for academic English language support. One response was the creation of GS 490 classes, led by Student Success at Purdue, which was offered as an integrated-skills English language class for international undergraduates for several semesters; in fall 2013, eight sections of GS 490, with about 150 students, were offered; in spring 2014, six sections with about 80 students were offered.

At around this time, PLaCE was approved as a two-year pilot program, with the goal of creating two semester-long courses (GS 100 and GS 101) to improve students' English language skills, introduce them to American culture, and teach critical thinking skills needed to succeed at Purdue. The basic plan was to select students who had demonstrated lower English language proficiency based on their TOEFL speaking score, and then to provide support for two semesters before they moved on to COMM 114 (a public speaking course), to give students more confidence in this and future classes. Implementing the plan is an ongoing task because of real-world issues, including the large number of people, departments, and units involved in the creation of an ESL program.

In fall 2014, PLaCE offered 23 sections of GS 100: Reading, Writing, and Speaking for International Students 1, and over 320 first-year international students enrolled. In spring 2015, due to changes in enrollment patterns from fall, fewer sections of GS 101 were offered for undergraduates and several sections were added for graduate students. About 160 students are enrolled, split between graduate and undergraduate students.

One of the challenges for developing an ESL program at Purdue right now is fitting the courses into students' busy schedules and plans of study. Due to Purdue's particular requirements and structure, it is yet to be determined exactly how PLaCE courses will fit into students' un-

dergraduate course requirements and electives. One reason is that there are many different plans of study across undergraduate majors. Another reason is that a state mandate limits course hour requirements to 120 hours. Students in GS English classes have largely expressed positive feedback for the courses, though the additional course in their course load does seem to be a sticking point.

An important part of PLaCE's pilot phase is the piloting, scaling, and validation of the Assessment of College English - International (ACE-In). The ACE-In is a locally developed and marked, internet-based, post-admission test of English proficiency for international undergraduate students. There are four comparable forms of the test, and they are randomly assigned to examinees during test administration in an ITaP instructional lab on Purdue's West Lafayette campus. Test responses are automatically saved to a server after examinees complete the entire test or just portions of it. The test contains three modules, and all items within each module are timed to evaluate examinees' real time abilities to comprehend, speak, and write English. Module 1, "Reading and Speaking," includes four Word Completion items, two Word Deletion items, and 24 Listen and Repeat items. Module 2, "Speaking and Listening," includes one Read Aloud item, two items for examinees to express their opinions on a given statement, and a fourth item requiring an oral summary of an audio recorded conversation between a professor and an undergraduate student. Module 3, "Timed Writing," asks examinees to write a response to a given statement within 35 minutes.

PLaCE offices are located in the basement of Heavilon Hall. PLaCE staff consists of four administrative staff members: April Ginther (Faculty Advisor for PLaCE and director of Purdue's Oral English Proficiency Program), Matthew Allen (Course Coordinator), Lixia Cheng (Testing and Assessment Coordinator), and Reina Tan (Program Assistant). Seven instructors currently work in PLaCE: Chelsy Albertson, Jenn Baechle, Hannah Bush, Ty Climer, Sarah Fehrman, Steve Moriarty, and Sunyung Song. Their responsibilities include teaching GS 100 and GS 101, as well as participating in the development of ACE-In test rating scales.

We are currently planning for future of PLaCE. We hope to have graduate student TA lines in the future, but in the meantime, graduate students who want to learn about PLaCE and about opportunities to become involved, should contact us through place@purdue.edu. In addition to getting involved in the ACE-In piloting and scaling studies, interested graduate students in SLS could also collaborate on curriculum development as well as PLaCE outreach projects.

Teaching Tip: Blogging

by Kamal Belmihoub

This semester, I replaced the Writing Autobiography assignment with a blogging assignment in 106i. I created a WordPress blog, and students post as authors during the days they do not have class because of conferences. Just like the Writing Autobiography, the blogging posts are personal writing, whereby students reflect on learning to write. Students also use their post to share what they learned about their topic with their classmates, or get a head start on their Synthesis Paper by summarizing and sharing interesting sources they find about their topic. I have them write at least 300 words when we have three-day conferences and 400 when we have five-day conferences. In addition to the post, students are also asked to comment on their peers posts.

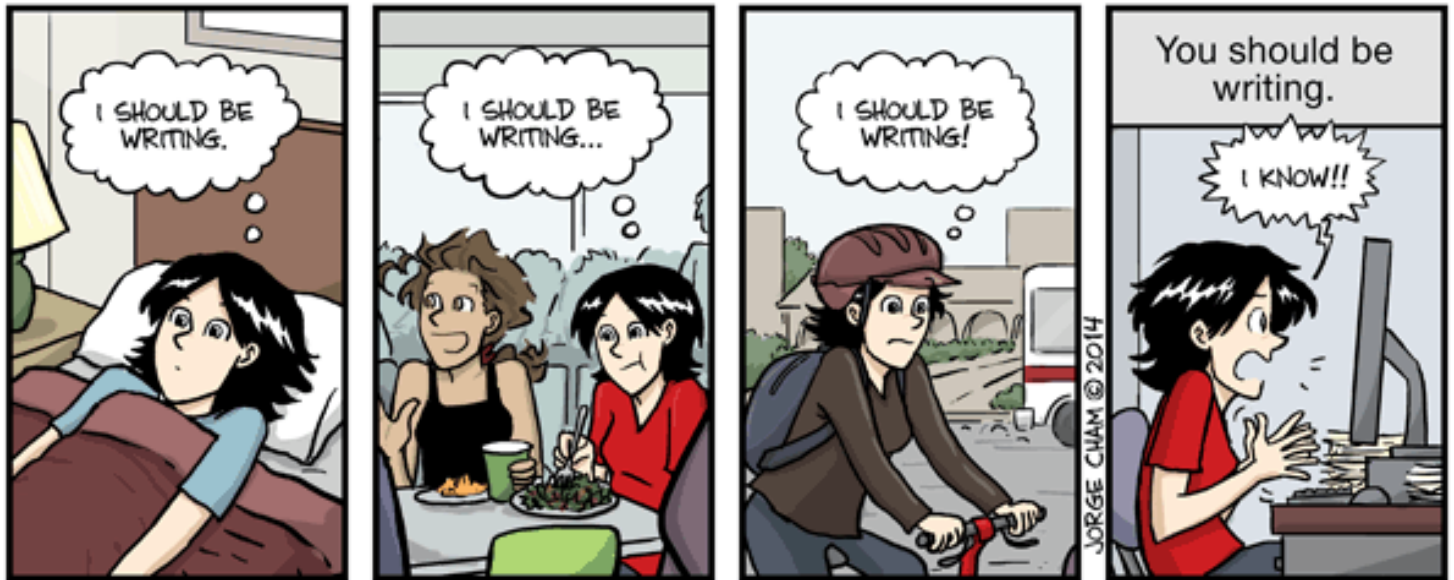
Students seem to prefer this activity over the Writing Autobiography assignment based on their comments. However, I am still experimenting with ways to get them more engaged in the blog, to make it more interactive. Students seem to comment vaguely on their classmates posts, but I hope to foster a more interactive discussion around their posts. However, as a teacher, I personally enjoy the flexibility the blog provides me. I have the opportunity to have them write on various issues depending on their progress. For example, if an issue related to a student's topic is in the news at Purdue, in the community, nationally or globally, I ask them to address it in a post. I hope you'll consider incorporating a blog in your teaching!



Kamal Belmihoub is a third year Ph.D. Candidate in the SLS/ESL program. His scholarly interests include world Englishes and writing. He loves listening to podcasts such as Wait Wait ... Don't Tell Me!, On Being, The TED Radio Hour, and Freakonomics!

Photo courtesy of Kamal Belmihoub

Final Papers, Prelim, Prospectus, Dissertation, Manuscripts, well, you get it.



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Piled Higher and Deeper" by Jorge Cham

Get involved with ESL GO!

Have ideas on what we could be doing better? Want to get involved? Contact our president, Xun Yan at yan50@purdue.edu with questions and suggestions. We would love to hear your ideas!

Contact Us

Email your submissions to: vmalibor@purdue.edu

ESL GO! Website:

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

SLS/ESL Facebook Page:

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

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