New Addition!
Project BRIDGE

Project BRIDGE (Bringing Resources that Incorporate Development in General Education) is a five year US Department of Education Grant to SUNY Fredonia for the purpose of enhancing instruction for Middle and High School English Language Learners (ELL’s) via long-term, intensive professional development for secondary mainstream teachers.

The grant also will be working with SUNY Fredonia faculty from secondary content areas, as well as undergraduate faculty in the teacher education program to infuse the curriculum with strategies to enhance instructions for ELLs.

For more information on how to participate in this grant, please contact:

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SUNY Fredonia Awarded with New ELA!

This past year Project ELA was awarded a new cycle for the grant for the years 2007-2012. This proposal was developed on the basis of successful ongoing collaborative efforts by the current Project ELA Director, Cynthia Jonsson, consulting SUNY Fredonia faculty in conjunction with regional school district administrators, school principals, and ESL/BE teachers. Cynthia Jonsson worked with Principal Investigator John Liontas, Ph.D to address identified gaps in services.

The goals of this enhanced Project ELA proposal are:

1. To provide college credit-bearing courses to pre-service and in-service teachers and other educational personnel who expect to or who currently serve LEP students, and to assist these individuals in meeting State and local standards for certification and licensure as teachers of English as a Second Language.

2. To support secondary content teachers towards ESL certification to provide enhanced content instruction that improves academic achievement and literacy and language development of their LEP students.

3. To assess MS Tesol program graduates and program completer’s impact on LEP students, and project participant effectiveness in the K-12 setting.

4. To provide systematic and specific professional development opportunities to Project ELA participants related to the challenges of educating LEP students in WNY, course support topics, and job search skills. Project ELA will also assist in offering collaborative opportunities to disseminate current research and best practices to those in the educational community at large who work with LEPs.

The change in focus of the 2007 competition allows Project ELA to expand on what it has done well, and to include a number of new important priorities to ensure that the ELLs in our rural and struggling area receive the best education possible. Our focus will be on teacher training, teacher effectiveness, and building a strong foundation for continued professional development. It is important to mention that SUNY Fredonia was the only university in the State to be awarded with such a renowned grant.

Cover Photo:
Project ELA at the 2008 NYSABE Conference.
From left to right: Cynthia Jonsson, Project ELA/BRIDGE Director; Dr. John Liontas, SUNY Fredonia TESOL Coordinator; Raisa Portman, Project ELA/BRIDGE Coordinator
What Can Pod Casting Do For Your ESL Classroom?

By: Anna Pacifico

The more we learn about multiple intelligences, the bigger the responsibility rests on teachers to diversify their instruction. One such way of creating exciting and cooperative learning-based projects is through the use of technology in the classroom. During the 2008 TESOL Convention in New York City, Scott Duarte and Scott Shinnall, both ESL teachers at Kansai Gaidai University in Osaka, Japan, described the myriad of benefits that audio and video projects have for their ESL students.

Some of the group video projects included “A Day in the life of,” a project in which students document a day in the life of anyone in their community. The “Scotts” provided an example during the presentation of a former student who documented a day in the life of a sushi chef. Another project the “Scotts” provided was called the “Advertising Project,” in which students were responsible for creating a minute and a half advertisement about a product, service, or idea.

In order to implement these assignments, teachers need a video camera, an external microphone, a backup video camera, and a computer. The main camera is used for the main taping, the external microphone picks up better sound, the backup camera is to tape the filming to ensure that English is being spoken, and the computer is used for editing and downloading. Although many teachers may think these technologies are too costly, the “Scotts” encouraged the audience not to underestimate the possibility of school funding or even local and federal grants. Being such a technology driven society often time makes it easier to get a computer in the classroom rather than crayons. During these video projects, each student is assigned a rotating role of the director, producer, editor, actor, or translator when applicable. Students are graded on their use of English, acting, editing, and creativity.

Some of the free resources that the “Scotts” provided enhance the editing process. For recording and editing sounds, www.audacity.sourceforge.net works well, and free podcast music can be found at www.ccmixter.org, www.podsafeaudio.com, among others. There are numerous benefits to the aforementioned projects in an ESL classroom, of course when age and English proficiency permitting.

“Students are graded on their use of English, acting, editing, and creativity.”

Video and audio projects can increase the output and fluency in both spoken and cognitive English abilities, increase English language motivation through group-oriented, project-based learning and establish creative and technological skills that will set students apart. The final task of completing the podcast is posting it on the Internet (optional). Podcasts can be posted free on www.youtube.com, www.switchpod.com, or www.podomatic.com. The posting aspect encourages students to produce quality work of which they can be proud.
Where are They Now?  TESOL Graduates

Hello, my name is Danielle Vacca and I am a TESOL graduate from SUNY Fredonia. I now teach in Syracuse, NY at Nottingham High School. There are four High Schools in the city of Syracuse. Nottingham has the most ESL students. We have roughly 170.

I teach Beginners only from grades 9-12. I mainly have ninth graders but we sometimes get beginners who are a little bit older. Students come from a variety of background and languages. I have students from China, Somalia, Myanmar (Burma), Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Vietnam and Burundi. Our most recent students have come from Myanmar and Burundi. Many of them have lived in camps outside their own countries.

Our ESL program is really great. We have classes for Beginners (low - high), Content for Beginners (low - high), Beginning High, Content for Beginning High Intermediate, and Advanced. I also recently started teaching a literacy computer class to our beginners called FastForWord, which has been going well.
On April 22nd, 2008 I attended a Conference entitled: *English Language Learners in American Schools: 101 Questions 101 Answers* by Dr. Steven Krashen. SUNY Fredonia’s Project ELA, Project BRIDGE and the College of Education collaborated to coordinate and sponsor Dr. Steven Krashen, a nationally renowned researcher, advocate, and speaker on the topic of Bilingual Education. It was my first semester in SUNY Fredonia’s TESOL program, and I knew very little about Dr. Steven Krashen and the study of second language acquisition. But, I did know that Dr. Krashen was a linguist and that second language acquisition knowledge had some relevance to teaching English language learners (ELL’s).

As I sat in the second row of SUNY Fredonia’s Rosh Recital Hall, with a handout that contained 52 questions, I felt overwhelmed. Even though I knew him to be a leader in the field of Bilingual Education, I did not understand the scope and significance of Dr. Krashen’s work and his contributions to the field. As Dr. Krashen began to answer the questions on the handout, I began to become interested in the topics. Three of the questions that had the greatest impact on me are as follows: “Does the public understand bilingual education?” “How can bilingual education be improved?” and “Is there evidence that social class (SES) matters?”

The answer to “Does the public understand bilingual education” is yes and no. Dr. Krashen said that the public does understand bilingual education. He said yes as he referenced his former student Fay Shin’s research which shows that, when people are asked if they believe in the underlying principles of bilingual education (building on an existing linguistic foundation, using native language to continue to acquire content knowledge while learning English, etc), they wholeheartedly agree. On the flip side he said that the public does not agree when they are asked if they support “Bilingual Education” and do not know the underlying principles. I found this important because as a teacher I can advocate for bilingual education by stressing the underlying principles to the public.

In thinking about Krashen’s question, “How can bilingual education be improved?” I was intrigued. It was not so much the question that intrigued me, but Dr. Krashen’s response. He said that it is important to read books in the language that you are trying to learn. Dr. Krashen recommended carrying a book or magazine with you at all times so that when you have a spare moment you can access it (read!). By doing this you are creating an easy and fun way to access text that is comprehensible and compelling. The key word here is compelling.

The students need to find a medium in which they are interested weather it is a book, comic strip, magazine or even reading the lyrics to a song. The classroom would be the ideal place to provide students with access to a wide variety of books and other types of interesting reading materials and also to provide them with time for independent reading each day.

When looking at the question, “Is there evidence that social class (SES) matters? The answer seems to automatically be “yes”. Caregivers who can provide help in the primary language provide a positive environment for students who are English language learners or bilingual education students. Dr. Krashen talked about how wealthier caregivers can, in general, help in tutoring the child and providing access to print. In addition, they are usually able to provide better nutrition and healthcare, have fewer social problems and more stable employment. It was also said that if the student had received formal schooling in their primary language prior to immigration, then these students would have fuller backgrounds in education in the United States and higher academic success. Literacy in the native language helps build literacy in the second language.
Project ELA: A presence at the 42nd Annual TESOL Conference
April 1-5, 2008

The magnificent city of New York, built and developed by immigrants from every region of the globe was the perfect setting for the theme of the 42nd Annual TESOL Conference and for its theme, “Worlds of TESOL: Building Communities of Practice, Inquiry, and Creativity”. This time TESOL gave its members and non-members the opportunity to share our worlds with each other and build communities that enrich us all.

Project ELA sponsored its Graduate Assistants and ELA members to be present at this important event. Travis Moore, a graduate student and ELA member, was a presenter during the Graduate Student Forum. The students were able to attend and listen to recognized plenary speakers from all over the world and to choose from academic sessions that addressed current practical issues such as assessment, teaching strategies and collaboration with mainstream classroom teachers.

The convention also held a Job MarketPlace where job seekers in the field of TESOL had the opportunity to construct or upload electronic résumés, search jobs online, request interviews online, meet recruiters and interview face to face and network with other professionals in the field. This represented a great experience for our participants.
Background Information

The LAB-R is used to determine the proficiency and program placement of any New York State student, kindergarten through grade twelve, whose home language is other than English. The test is broken down into five levels: grades K-1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12. The test is administered by the school district within ten days of entry and establishes whether or not the student is in need of Bilingual/English as a second language (ESL) classes or is able to be placed in a general education English language art class. Since No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires that all Limited English proficient (LEP) students be assessed in the four modalities of language (listening, reading, writing, and speaking), the LAB-R focuses exclusively on these skills. New York State recognizes the five proficiency levels that show what students possess in terms of skills and knowledge in English: beginning, intermediate, advanced, transitional, and proficient.

The LAB-R is taken only once, the purpose of which is to solely determine placement of the student. Subsequent to taking the LAB-R, students determined to be LEP will take the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) annually until the results indicate that the student has gained enough proficiency to succeed in the mainstream classroom.

Merits

An assessment is necessary to serve as a baseline to initially determine proficiency of a student in addition to in which program a student should be placed. The LAB-R serves that purpose. Any and all students who enter a NYS school whose home language is other than English should be administered this test and therefore are being assessed and placed according to the same standards. Knowledge of and familiarity with this test is especially important for ESL teachers because the results provide the teacher a starting point with the students in terms of areas of strengths and weaknesses.

Another benefit of the LAB-R is that it assesses students based on all four modalities of language – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. ESL curriculum in New York State is driven by the ESL Standards and performance indicators. Anything and everything needs to be supported by these standards. It is imperative that, if nothing else, the LAB-R be used to establish both proficiency and program placement of students and furthermore, be aligned with what and how the students are being instructed.
Making Connections

There exist many criticisms regarding the LAB-R but the reality is that the test is required to be taken by all students whose home language is other than English and the scores alone dictate placement. It basically assesses BICS, social language, yet no academic language or even content which are two key components that the students will be assessed on in the future. The LAB-R is also culturally biased meaning that it does not take into account any culture other than that of the United States.

Unfortunately, as the LAB-R stands today, it is inadequate at determining at what level is the student truly at. Assessment is a very complex process and is influenced by many factors, such as socio-cultural, psychological, and even economic issues. It is a duty of the teacher to conduct additional assessments in the classroom with regards to proficiency in order to truthfully structure lessons according to the students needs.

It is our job as teachers and professionals to remain consistent in the administration and grading of the tests regardless of personal biases. While the test concentrates on reading, writing, listening, and speaking, in some cases it can be too easy and students may place more advanced than they can perform. Despite everything, standardized testing is an inevitable feature of our educational system and oftentimes lessons are being geared mainly to success of our students on these tests. But the question remains are students really learning anything? Are they expanding their knowledge and adjusting their points of view as they receive more and different and new information? I believe that it is possible to challenge our students while at the same time prepare them for the numerous state tests they must take but it requires teachers to adjust their approach to teaching.

Useful Resources:

http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/lab-r

http://schools.nyc.gov
On May 28 to April 1, I had the opportunity to attend one of the most renowned national conferences in the educational field. The National School board Association held its 68th annual conference in Orlando, Florida. Having never attended even a small local conference before, walking into one attended by over 13,000 people was overwhelming, to put it mildly.

The National School Board Association is a non-profit confederation of all of the different state school boards. Its mission is to encourage school leadership and academic success through school board involvement. The annual conference is an opportunity for school board members to share ideas and learn from other leaders in the field of education. School boards are generally comprised of the school’s superintendent, district administrators, and elected officials. Together, these members make executive decisions regarding the school’s growth, funding, and adoption of new programs. Because the elected officials may have little familiarity with the educational field, they are often parents, who work other jobs, attending conferences is an opportunity to learn and share ideas.

The NSBA’s annual conference general session speakers were the Honorable Sandra Day O’Connor, Former Supreme Court Justice, Sidney Poitier, actor and civil rights advocate, Jim Lehrer, new anchor and author, and Garrison Keillor, author and host of A Prairie Home Companion.

There was one general session per day of the conference, and the attendance was impressive. The NSBA is a big proponent of music education so before the speaker was introduced, conference attendees enjoyed short concerts performed by talented student bands, orchestras, and choirs.

Sandra Day O’Connor kicked off the conference by reminding us that while reading and math instruction are vital to students’ success; other valuable subjects should not be allowed to fall by the wayside. She urged school board members to bring into our classrooms an emphasis on civil education. According to her, doing so will ensure our country’s democracy and better our justice system.

Sidney Poitier entertained, horrified, and evoked sympathy in audience members with a narrative about his life. He reminded us that the civil rights struggle is still not over and that educators have a responsibility to encourage equality.

Jim Lehrer instructed audience members to focus attention on the current political race and carefully listen to the candidates’ different commentaries on educational topics. According to Lehrer, educated voting for elected officials is the way to affect change.

Garrison Keillor concluded the conference with a hilariously satirical and thought-provoking commentary. He told us we must avoid power struggles, dirty politics, and petty lawsuits if we want our schools to succeed.

Attending the NSBA’s annual conference left me feeling inspired and motivated to effect change; it reignited my desire to teach.
Everyone knows the joke. For those of us who have ventured out of our English safety zones and into the realms of learning a second language, being the American punch line makes us all cringe.

In my experiences with the many trials and tribulations of learning French, once I felt I had reached even the slightest bit of proficiency of the language, I never wanted to lose it. Unfortunately, it has been three years since I have set foot on French soil. Moreover, it has almost been exactly two years since my last SUNY Fredonia French course and I’m feeling insecure about communicating in the language I worked so hard to learn. Yes, I can tip the Maître d’ in Saint Martin or ask for directions on my annual road trip to Quebec but if were asked to teach a subject in French, well Mon Dieu! I do not think I am alone in my quest to savor my second language skills so, not entirely for selfish reasons, I have researched a few worthwhile summer ventures for all of us.

One such venture is the Alliance Française de Buffalo, which offers French conversation groups for multiple proficiency level Francophones and Francophiles alike.

The Alliance also keeps a keen eye out for all things French going on in all of the far corners of Western New York. There is a $35.00 annual fee to belong but teachers receive a ten-dollar discount. Even more exciting for teachers is the French library located at 266 Virginia Street in Buffalo, which offers not only many French texts but children’s books in the language as well. For more information, please visit http://www.afbuffalo.org/index.html.

While I am less familiar with conversation groups that focus on other languages, I am familiar with www.LiveMocha.com. The website not only offers courses in a variety of languages but also allows users to give and receive feedback from native speakers. It works well for anyone looking to practice a language they have had previous exposure to but not so much for the first time language learner.

A more leisurely option for second language upkeep, and something I have borrowed from Dr. Steven Krashen’s lecture, is the use of reading something you really enjoy, regardless of what it is, in the language you are working on.

My summer reading list not only includes some staple works of literature (on the subject of education and TESOL, of course) but select pieces of junk reading in French. I plan to subscribe to at least one flighty fashion magazine in French rather than in English. I would be reading it anyway, but the language learning takes the element of guilt away; at least a little.

Rachael Rossi,
Graduate Assistant,
Biography

I moved to El Paso, Texas in high school and it was here that I witnessed firsthand the limitations people had not being able to speak or read in English. After finishing high school, I returned to New York and started by Bachelor of Arts degree at the University at Buffalo in English. I also began volunteering at The Salvation Army of Niagara Falls as a tutor. I worked mainly with students who were preparing for their GED exam, several of whom were English Language Learners.

I decided I wanted to teach and selected SUNY Fredonia for continuing my education because the TESOL program would give me both a Master’s of Science degree in Education and a teaching certificate. This past summer I studied abroad in Swansea, Wales.
Project ELA and TESOL at the NYSABE Conference

Project ELA of SUNY Fredonia participated at the 31st New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE) Conference in Melville, New York, during the days of March 13-16, 2008. The Conference hosted a career and job fair where SUNY Fredonia held a booth promoting the TESOL and Project ELA programs. Educators, parents, school administrators, college professors, researchers and students from all over the state attend this Conference looking for the latest information. Project ELA – English Language Acquisition Project - is a national professional development grant from the U.S Department of Education that supports pre-service and in-service teachers who work with English language learners. The Director of Project ELA, Cynthia Jonsson worked diligently in conjunction with the NYSABE President and Chairs of the Conference to host this important fair for the first time.

TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) is a rigorous academic program that trains pre-service and in-service teachers for professional careers in TESOL. Dr. John Liontas, TESOL Coordinator, represented the program. This great experience allowed us to learn about other TESOL programs in the state as well as the current situation of educational grants in other institutions. Once again, SUNY Fredonia demonstrated its commitment to excellence, success and tradition by representing itself to teachers, administrators and other institutions of higher education across the state.
A Critical Review of Rosetta Stone

By: Kiersten M. Hansen

Rosetta Stone Language Library is a translation free, pedagogical approach to language acquisition. This software boasts the ability to recreate the natural environment through which we all acquire our native language. By implementing their coined term ‘Dynamic Immersion’ which is the union of interactive technology, listening comprehension, structure and sequence, deduction and problem solving and readiness to speak, Rosetta Stone attempts to facilitate learners of any level and age in successful language acquisition. After using their programs, Rosetta Stone claims that learners will have a spoken mastery of the target language and a readiness and confidence level that other language programs fail to provide.

According to Krashen and Terrell, “spoken fluency in second languages is not taught directly. Rather, the ability to speak fluently and easily in a second language emerges by itself after a sufficient amount of competence has been acquired through input.” Rosetta Stone makes an honest attempt at upholding this idea but in the end, falls short of their goal. Rosetta Stone English (US) 1, 2 & 3 Set: Personal Edition is a fine tool for language learning; however, it is not as powerful a tool as its creator Fairfield Language Technologies may boast. It does utilize all four learning modes creating a sort of ‘learning web’ that supports the learner throughout their studies but it lacks in other areas. In contrast to its deficiencies, there are some positive points; however, they are not in language instruction but in the program’s aesthetics. The color scheme of the program is quite nice. It utilizes calming blues and grays to provide a clean and modern feel, ensuring that the learner is not distracted by flashy graphics and colors. The layout of the lessons is also easy to follow allowing the learner to focus only on the language tasks at hand.

There is one item in particular to take issue with; the lack of discourse in this program. There is no opportunity for communication. This poses a problem, as interaction is essential for the creation of meaning. (Fotos, 2004.) There is no opportunity for discussion. The learners may engage themselves with the computer and receive immediate feedback but there is no real prospect of discourse. Due to the absence of discourse within this program, there is no opportunity to negotiate meaning, or to experience emotive language, or social exchange. Without these elements, there is no real context through which the language learner can function. Consequently, the student fails in successfully mastering the target language.

In short, this program can be somewhat effective. I believe though that it must be married with another approach in order to be successful in any language acquisition endeavors. I suggest using it if you are planning to travel, then there will be some real context in which the acquired language can be used.

The program is also quite expensive for the results it produces. A program that costs $500 should provide exactly what it promises. In this case, it is a spoken mastery of the target language and a readiness to speak with the confidence of a native speaker. However wonderful an idea this may be, Rosetta Stone falls short. My advice: Save your money.
Upcoming Events

• [www.fredonia.edu/projectela](http://www.fredonia.edu/projectela)

Please refer to the Project ELA website for upcoming events.
Website is updated regularly to keep events current.