

Dec. 14, 2007

TESOL Conference

Just when an ESOL teacher thinks, "I've seen or heard it all," another TESOL Conference comes around to dispell that thought. This year's conference left many teachers excited to return to their classrooms to try these new ideas.

Probably one of the most challenging aspects of being an ESOL teacher is the need for repetition. When one hears the word "repetition," it conjures up thoughts of the dreaded daily piano practice as a child. Luckily, Kathy Olson, Judith O'Loughlin, and Dr. Stephen White presented teachers with a variety of ways to reinforce lessons, especially those dealing with reading comprehension and vocabulary.

In Kathy Olson's session, "Repetition: Multiple Strategies Using One Reading Selection," teachers were given a handout with over forty ideas that could be used with various levels of ability. Students have enjoyed finding collocations, hearing a story with mistakes and correcting them, and building the text when given part of a story. With all of Kathy's suggestions, even a teacher doesn't have to repeat techniques to reinforce the lesson.

Judith O'Loughlin's presentation, "Beyond the Definition - Dictionary Strategies for Beginning and Advanced ELL Learners," introduced ways to teach vocabulary. The idea of personal dictionaries stating the part(s) of speech, synonyms, antonyms, and using the words in context was

put into use in this teacher's classroom. The method was referred to as "scaffolding."

Then, there was the fifty minute session with Dr. Stephen Whole. "Many Learners - Many Faces Differentiating Literacy for ELL" was packed with information. The list of 4 strategies such as retelling a story by drawing pictures, making predictions, and summarizing covered a multi-level classroom. The Six Hat Thinking Plan which required students to write facts about a topic, express feelings about it, list positives and negatives, develop new ideas and then summarize was an excellent way to increase comprehension skills.

If a teacher was lucky enough to attend sessions like these, ~~these~~ ^{higher} students have reaped the benefits of the TESOL Conference. The bar has been set. What should teachers expect for next year?

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