



Three Rivers 2015-2016 Executive Board Members (L-R): Vice President, Kathy Ramos, St. Vincent College; Secretary, Brianne Harrison, University of Pittsburgh; President, Ece Ulus, University of Pittsburgh; Past President, Linh Phung, Chatham University; Treasurer, Brian Deutsch, University of Pittsburgh; Webmaster, Rob Mucklo, University of Pittsburgh

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is my pleasure to serve as the Three Rivers TESOL President for 2015-2016. We had a wonderfully productive Spring Meeting, and I am looking forward to a great Fall Conference.

I am happy to announce that the plenary speaker for the Fall Conference will be Yilin Sun, Past President of TESOL International. We are looking forward to her sharing her expertise and experiences that she has gained throughout her career.

Please consider submitting a proposal to present at this year's conference.

You are what makes our Fall Conference so great! You can find more information on submitting a proposal on the next page.

In addition to serving as President of Three Rivers TESOL, I currently teach English as a Second Language at the English Language Institute at the University of Pittsburgh, where I have had the pleasure of teaching for 5 years. Prior to this job, I had worked for two years as an English Language Fellow at

Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt and for one year at a Conversation School in Tsu, Japan. Both experiences were amazing, and I am happy to share those experiences with you at our upcoming events.

This year 3RT hopes to offer our members more opportunities to get involved in writing newsletter articles, becoming chairs of interest sections, and participating in professional development, as well as social, events throughout the year!

~ Ece

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Three Rivers TESOL

2015 Fall Conference

Call for Proposals

The Silver Lining:
Celebrating Teachers'
Achievements

November 7, 2015

The University of Pittsburgh



To celebrate Three Rivers TESOL's 25th Anniversary, we invite ELT professionals from all contexts to highlight their achievements, both big and small, at the Three Rivers TESOL 2015 Fall Conference. English language teaching professionals are encouraged to share their varied experiences and perspectives by celebrating and sharing their success with other ELT professionals!

We welcome success stories from a broad array of topics including but not limited to: teaching practices that foster student achievement, creative classroom activities, curricular improvements, integration of technology into instruction, and efficient methods of assessment. Scholarly and program administration achievements are also welcome.

[Click here for more information about how to submit a great proposal!](#)



PK-12 ESL Teachers Open Doors to the World!

by Kathy Ramos, 3RT Vice-President

If you are a PK-12 ESL teacher, let us take a moment during 3RTEsol's 25th year to celebrate your work and thank you for opening the doors to the world for PK-12 ELLs through education! We'd also like to extend a special invitation to you to participate in 3RTEsol's 2015 Fall Conference on November 6th and 7th in Pittsburgh (details in this newsletter).

The most powerful learning experiences take place when teachers learn from one another. We'd love for PK-12 ESL teachers to join us as presenters or as attendees! The Fall Conference is an excellent forum for sharing ideas and learning from others about many topics: best practices for helping ELLs develop academic language and literacy skills, effective scaffolds for ELLs at different proficiency levels, productive formative assessment tools, constructive collaboration with content teachers, or positive interactions with ELLs' families—just to name a few!

Like your expertise, the possibilities are endless! These are both challenging and exciting times for educating PK-12 ELLs. No one understands these challenges and opportunities better than PK-12 ESL teachers. Please consider sharing your knowledge and ideas at the 2015 Fall Conference! Individual, pair, or group presentations are welcome. Presentations can be in various formats. **Please note:** Proposals are due June 30th (details in this newsletter)!

Whether as a presenter or an attendee, the 2015 Fall Conference is an excellent opportunity to network and learn from 3RTEsol colleagues. Please spread the word and mark your calendars!

See you in November!

On April 11, 2015, Three Rivers TESOL members had the opportunity to learn about “Bridging Cultural Differences.” In this informative seminar, four panelists shared their expertise in their areas. Not only did members benefit from the information presented by the panelists, but the discussion that followed the presentations was also engaging.

Three Rivers TESOL Executive Board

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Brian Deutsch, Treasurer
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Rob Mucklo, Webmaster
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Call for Participation!

Do you want to get more involved with Three Rivers TESOL but don't have time for a long-term commitment? There are several opportunities for you!

- writing an article for the 3RT Newsletter
- submitting a proposal for the 3RT Fall Conference
- reviewing proposals for the 3RT Fall Conference
- chairing a session at the 3RT Fall Conference
- chairing an interest group section

For more information about getting involved in 3RT, please email Ece at

president@3riverstesol.org



A special thank you to our panel!

(L-R): Christine Tapu, Vivian Yamoah, Stacy Ranson,
and Arlette Ngoubene-Atioku

Spring Meeting

“Bridging Cultural Differences”

April 11, 2015

Three Rivers TESOL Executive Board 2015-2016

Kathy Ramos – Vice-President

Kathy Ramos is a teacher educator at Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, PA, where she supports pre-service and in-service teachers in learning more about culturally and linguistically responsive instruction for PK-12 ELLs. Kathy earned a Ph.D. in Language, Literacy, and Culture from the University of Pittsburgh and is dedicated to supporting educators to effectively teach and serve ELLs. Prior to her work as a teacher educator, Kathy taught ESL and Spanish in Pittsburgh Public Schools for 20 years, where she also served as a teacher leader and ESL curriculum coach. In addition to teaching, Kathy loves writing and is an avid reader. She also enjoys traveling as well as spending quiet time at home with her husband.



Linh Phung – Past-President

Linh Phung is the head of the English Language Program at Chatham University, which offers intensive English instruction to degree-seeking and non-degree-seeking students at Chatham University. She currently serves as Past President of Three Rivers TESOL, an affiliate of TESOL International, after serving as Vice President and President. She has a BA in English Education and an MA in TESL and is currently pursuing an EdD in TESOL. As an ESL teacher, she has taught EFL/ESL at Vietnam National University, the Pennsylvania State University, Carnegie Mellon University, and Chatham University.



Rob Mucklo – Webmaster

Rob Mucklo is Administrative Faculty at the English Language Institute (ELI), the intensive English as a second language program at the University of Pittsburgh. In addition to teaching ESL courses, Rob supervises the curriculum for low-intermediate and intermediate Reading and Writing courses in the program, manages curriculum and implementation of custom-designed programs, supervises practicum for teachers-in-training, and coordinates weekly social and cultural activities/field trips for students. Rob has taught in the ELI at Pitt for nearly 10 years and has additional experience teaching Spanish at the high school and university levels.



Three Rivers TESOL Executive Board 2015-2016

Brianne Harrison – Secretary

Greetings! My name is Brianne, and I am the newly-elected Three Rivers TESOL Secretary. I have spent most of my professional career working at the University of Pittsburgh as an Instructor in the English Language Institute. What I find most rewarding about working in the field of ESL is being able to provide the students with opportunities to meet and interact with native English speakers outside of the classroom. I have traveled to Salta, Argentina and Toronto, Canada. I guess you could say that I am a bit of a homebody, which I admit is unusual for someone in our profession. I hope to secure a teaching position abroad sometime in the foreseeable future.



Brian Deutsch – Treasurer

My name is Brian Deutsch, and I am pleased to serve as the Three Rivers TESOL Treasurer for the next two years. My duties will include overseeing the group's finances, monitoring membership, and guiding the application process for non-profit status. I currently work as the Program Administrator at the University of Pittsburgh's English Language Institute and was the ELI's Admissions Officer from 2011 to 2014. Prior to joining the ELI, I lived and worked in South Korea for four-and-a-half years as a student, EFL teacher, and freelance writer. I graduated from IUP with a degree in English and earned the CELTA in Seoul in 2010. If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, please feel free to email me at treasurer@3riverstesol.org.



Guidelines for publishing in the Three Rivers TESOL Newsletter

Did an activity in your class go well? Have you found a useful textbook? Why don't you share it with 3RT members? Submit an article for the next newsletter! Here are some guidelines to get you started:

1. Title: 10 words or less
2. By line: includes your name, email address and work affiliation if applicable
3. Length: 150-250 words
4. Style: Times New Roman 12 point font, double spaced
5. Format: Send as a word document.
6. Pictures: Jpegs of pictures that are appropriate for the article may be sent but might not be included, depending upon space in the newsletter.
7. Send articles to secretary@3riverstesol.org.

Late-Breaking News!

On June 8, Three Rivers TESOL received word that we were officially incorporated as a non-profit in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This is the first step to our goal of becoming officially recognized as a non-profit organization at the federal level. We are pleased with our growth during the first 25 years of our history and believe full recognition as a non-profit organization will allow for bigger and better things in the future!

3RT Members' Teaching Tips

Product Quality Control Project in Applied English Science Course

Jamie G. Sturges

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Introduction:

This project was inspired by the IECP Applied English: Science 122 text, *English for Science and Engineering* by Ivor Williams. It can easily be carried out in any listening/speaking or oral communications class, or modified to a completely written report form for a writing course.

Procedure

Step 1:

Introduce the PDCA approach. The PDCA approach (plan, do, check, act) is a common method used for quality checking and improving products and processes. Research and development departments study a product that could be improved, plan its improvement, do a small-scale study and experiment of the improvement, check its performance using focus groups and feedback, and then act on that feedback (keep the change, build on it, or try another idea entirely). This is also explained in [Appendix 1](#).

Step 2:

Assign student groups/pairs generic, known objects they can easily modify/manipulate. Examples include pencils/pens, sunglasses, and phone chargers. Distribute assignment sheet (see [Appendix 2](#)).

Step 3:

Students “study” their assigned object: Do they use the object regularly? What are the most popular types or brands? What are some ideas they have about improving it?

Step 4:

Students conduct their first focus group survey (see [Appendix 3](#)) and take their completed surveys back to their groups to review and put into consideration. This, combined with Step 3, make up the “Plan” part of the PDCA cycle.

Step 5:

Students create an improved version of their product—using Google Images to approximate a prototype, drawing on poster paper, or using raw materials. This is the “Do” part of the PDCA cycle.

Step 6: Students take their prototypes back to the focus groups and conduct another survey (see [Appendix 4](#)). With this action, students have now completed the “Check” part of the PDCA cycle.

Step 7: Groups either orally present live or record a summary of the PDCA cycle regarding their object. To fulfill the “Act” part of the PDCA cycle, they also discuss possible future modifications to their object.

From Task to Engagement to Learning: Task Design Principles

By Linh Phung

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As an approach to language teaching that emphasizes communicative activities, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has attracted substantial attention from teachers, curriculum developers, materials writers, and SLA researchers in the past few decades (Robinson, 2011). While the term “tasks” has been widely used to describe various language learning activities, many activities do not meet the criteria of being tasks as often defined in the TBLT literature. Therefore, these so-called tasks do not provide students with learning opportunities that tasks have been shown to provide.

With an interest in activities that encourage learners to primarily focus on meaning, utilize and restructure their linguistic resources, and collaborate with peers, I have developed and used various tasks in my language courses. My task development has been informed by literature on the effects of different task characteristics on interaction, language production, and language learning. In designing tasks, apart from other principles in task design, I follow the four criteria of tasks outlined by Ellis (2003). In addition, I aim to increase the meaningfulness of the tasks to the learners in order to maximize their engagement with the tasks.

To be specific, according to Ellis (2003), tasks have to meet the following four criteria:

1. The primary focus has to be on meaning.
2. There needs to be some communicative gap, such as an information gap or an opinion gap.
3. The learners need to use their existing linguistic resources instead of practicing predetermined linguistic forms.
4. There needs to be a clear outcome.

To encourage better learner engagement, I often involve learners in developing the materials for the task they later perform. When I gave two versions of a task to different groups of learners in my communication class in spring 2015, the groups performing the version to which they contributed the materials seemed to generate more words and more idea units than the groups performing the version generated by the teacher, which might indicate the former group’s better engagement with the task. I’d be happy to share through email some tasks I developed to those interested in learning more about this.

References:

- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Robinson, P. (2011). Task-based language learning: A review of issues. *Language Learning*, 61, 1–36.



The Marker Game

Carol Harmatz

English Language Institute, the University of Pittsburgh



A Korean student in my advanced speaking class came up to me after class and told me that she had played “The Marker Game” with her American roommates over the weekend and how much everyone had loved it. “The Marker Game?” I thought to myself. “What does she mean?” Then I realized she was talking about the fluency exercise that I had had the class do on Friday, the example for which was about markers. It was then that I also realized that I had found a simple way to demystify for students how to organize a speech.

In writing classes we have students practice over and over how to write a well-structured paragraph with a topic sentence, three supporting sentences, and a conclusion. However, even advanced students struggle to apply the same organization to a brief impromptu speech. I reminded them that they already knew what to do. In addition, instead of assigning the usual ESL topics for practice, I gave them the name of a simple, everyday object to talk about. The challenge was to quickly identify one aspect of the object to talk about and then to develop in sixty seconds.

My example was about the marker that I had been using on the classroom whiteboard. I explained that I didn’t like using markers. The smell made me a little dizzy, I usually left class with blue or red fingers from erasing small mistakes with my hands, and the boards never seemed to get really clean. For all of these reasons, I really prefer old-fashioned chalk.

Students were to speak in pairs for sixty seconds each, followed by their giving feedback to one other. The first speech was about *cellphones*. Afterwards, I elicited what they had included in their speeches and listed their ideas on the board: advantages, brands, apps, cost, frustration with, and so on. I continued this exercise with a few other nouns. For the example of *bananas*, the students explained recipes, health benefits, where they are grown, and why bananas here don’t taste good.

I wasn’t sure that this exercise would achieve its intended goal, but it did. The students simply needed guidance about how to quickly develop an idea, and they needed non-threatening, user-friendly topics to practice with. I reminded the class that they could practice this when waiting for the bus or walking to campus. It wouldn’t take long to become good at it, and this approach could be applied in a multitude of settings.