

PIGTESOL 2007

(BAAL News Summer 2007)

This year's one-day conference of the Pitcairn Islands Group of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages was, if anything, an even greater success than last year's. There were some logistical difficulties arising from the committee's decision to hold the sessions in the new West Cliff Conference and Leisure Centre, which is only accessible by boat and rope ladder, but these were overcome in typical PIGTESOL can-do style, and the occasional drenching was generally taken in good part.

The dominant theme of the 2007 conference was 'Strategies'. In his thought-provoking opening plenary, Professor Humbert Mähdrescher, Disney Professor of Experimental Morphology at the University of Deadman's Rock, Montana, addressed the topic of 'What strategies are relevant to teaching learning strategies and learning teaching strategies?' This was followed by a panel discussion, chaired by Dr Grommit Pucklechurch of Hereward the Wake Agricultural Polytechnic, Bicester North. Panellists exchanged views on a number of interesting strategy-related questions raised by members of the audience, including:

'The more language you learn, the more language input you can access for further learning. So is language learning a language learning strategy?'

'Choosing appropriate metacognitive strategies is itself a strategy. Do we therefore need to establish a category of hypermetacognitive strategies, and if so, what would be other instances?'

'Is guessing unknown words from context a strategy, given that it doesn't work?'

'If so, should we add 'ineffective strategies' to the standard taxonomies?'

'How can you train students to be autonomous if they won't follow your instructions?'

After a traditional PI 'Catch it yourself' lunch, the afternoon was devoted to parallel sessions. Participants were able to choose among no less than 40 papers, on a wide range of topics more or less closely related to the theme of the conference. These were:

- Using Fourier analysis in teaching pronunciation.
- Put that empty bottle to communicative use!
- The future perfect progressive: a multi-disciplinary approach.
- A simple mime game for mastering the apostrophe.
- Subvocalisation and the relationship between articulatory setting and academic writing skills.
- Task-based work with driftwood.
- Bringing free radicals into the classroom.
- Is English really a crypto-tone language?
- Let's all dress up! A new route to mastery of conditionals.
- Developing reading skills through rugby songs.
- Pope Gregory VII – a methodological innovator?

- Exploiting the wastebasket.
- The assault course as a motivational aid.
- Why don't my students understand me? A cry for help.
- 'I am a parking meter': role play in the elementary class.
- Explaining tense use with paper aeroplanes.
- Word poker.
- Learning inflectional morphology through internet chat groups.
- Physio-linguistic programming: safety rules for attaching electrodes.
- Developing pragmatic competence by working with a gang of muggers: a student's diary.
- A good icebreaker: talking about body hair.
- Learning to mutter in English: the effectiveness of task rehearsal as against task repetition.
- New ways with seashells.
- Parasitic gaps and wh-extraction – do learners need the whole truth?
- Using the mid-brain: the legacy of our reptilian ancestors.
- English for outrigger-building.
- Whole-body learning of phrasal verbs.
- Intonation through acupuncture.
- ZZZ – pros and cons.
- Promoting fluency through Boolean logic.
- How can subcutaneous implants help the advanced learner?
- Language as clothing, clothing as language.
- Madrigals: a note of caution.
- Group activities for developing register-specific grammars.
- Exploiting unintelligibility.
- Syntactic development through the casting of tantric horoscopes.
- Glove puppets: a neglected resource?
- A humanistic approach to teaching irregular verbs.
- Never mind materials – all you need is yourself and one coconut.
- The converse of multiple intelligence: a failed attempt to teach present tenses to a group of civil servants.

Planning for next year's PIGTESOL conference is already underway. The theme will be 'Altered states and the language classroom'. For registration details, membership information and other enquiries, go to the website or contact Lorraine in the Lagoon Bar in the usual way.