

Available Talks (2009-2010)

JoAnn Miller, joannmillerj@gmail.com, <http://www.eftasks.net>

Bio-Data:

JoAnn Miller has taught English in Mexico City for over thirty five years. She has a BA from San Diego State University, an MA from the National University of Mexico and doctoral studies at the University of Wisconsin. She was at the Mexico City bi-national (US/Mexico-Instituto Mexicano Norteamericana de Cultura) for 18 years as teacher and coordinator. She worked at the private Universidad del Valle de Mexico for 9 years and was Institutional Coordinator for 8 of those years. She was editor of the MEXTESOL Journal for 7 years and is still member of the Editorial Board. She was on the Board of Directors of TESOL, Inc. (2003-2006) and is now the Co-Coordinator of the CALL Electronic Village Online (2010). She is currently working as a free lance consultant and materials developer. Her major interests are development of communicative materials, the use of online materials, assessment and online teacher training. She has collaborated with Macmillan by developing the exam disks for the series *Style, Skyline, Skyhigh, Attitude, Oxygen and Trends*, the Workbooks for *Skyhigh* and other supplementary materials. She has also developed special exam materials for schools in Venezuela, El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Mexico.

JoAnn Miller tiene una Licenciatura de la Universidad de California San Diego, Maestría de la UNAM y estudios de doctorado de la Universidad de Wisconsin-Madison. Enseño inglés y coordinó el programa de capacitación para maestros del Instituto Mexicano Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales por 18 años. Trabajó como profesora en la Universidad del Valle de México por 4 años y fue Coordinadora Institucional en esa institución por 8 años. Fue editora de la Revista MEXTESOL Journal por 7 años y sigue como miembro de consejo consultivo. Fue miembro de la mesa directiva de TESOL, Inc (2003-2006). Sus intereses principales son el desarrollo de materiales comunicativos y de materiales en-línea, la evaluación y la capacitación de maestros de inglés. Ha colaborado con Macmillan en el desarrollo de exámenes para las series *Style, Skyline, Skyhigh, Attitude, Oxygen y Trends*, los cuadernos de trabajo de *Skyhigh*. También ha desarrollado exámenes para escuelas en Venezuela, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, Costa Rica y México.

50 words

JoAnn Miller has taught in Mexico for over 35 years. She was editor of the MEXTESOL Journal and is member of the Editorial Board. She was on the Board of Directors of TESOL and is now CALL Electronic Village Online Co-coordinator. She works as a free-lance consultant and materials developer.

Possible plenaries which can also be given as more informal talks:

Are you a professional or is it just another job, (50 minute lecture or plenary)

Being a professional is more than just being a good teacher and more and more institutions are requiring university degrees and professional training. This talk examines what a professional is and how a teacher can become a professional in the field of English Language Teaching.

Rethinking grammar, (50 minute lecture or plenary)

After thirty years of teaching the present tense, the passive, possessives and indirect speech, I'm beginning to wonder if I've really been doing the right thing for my students. Maybe grammar isn't the only way to teach English. I've got reasons for this radical change of opinion and even some interesting facts. This talk will share my doubts with the participants...it won't offer answers, but just a series of questions that, I hope, will get teachers reflecting on what they do in class and, maybe, even try out some radical ideas.

Wikis? Twittering? YouTube? Web 2.0 for EFL (1 hour 15 minute to 2 hour talk or plenary)—For all teachers including those experienced in using the Internet.

Have you heard of Wikis, Blogs, YouTube, Twitter, Google Earth, etc., but just can't see how to use them in your classes? Do your students seem to live in a different world? This workshop will explore various Web 2.0 applications that are now popular with teenagers and young adults (and some older ones too) and, with the participants' input, discuss how they can be incorporated into EFL classrooms. Extensive links and references will be provided. The talk is constantly updated as new sites appear.

Talks (lectures) and Workshops

Technology:

Blended Learning: A Step into the Future of Communication (50 minute lecture)—For teachers with little experience in Internet use.
Students today increasingly expect us to bring the technology they use in everyday life into the classroom. Technological competence is fast becoming a must for teachers and if we leave it unaddressed we risk being left behind as ELT professionals. This talk will explain what is happening in this paradigm shift and give practical methodological uses of technology in the English language classroom so that we can combine it with effective face to face teaching.

Creating a Webquest: The First Steps (50 minute lecture, 1 hour 15 minute workshop)—for teachers with some experience in Internet use.

A WebQuest is an online tool that is specifically developed to foment critical thinking using the World Wide Web. It can be used solely in class or as a basis for independent project work. The websites the activity are built around are pre-selected by the teacher/creator so students spend their time using the information on the sites, not searching for them. In this demonstration, participants will be able to learn about all the necessary components of a WebQuest and begin to think about one of their own. The session will make use of QuestGarden (<http://webquest.org/questgarden>), a free site designed by Bernie Dodge that helps teachers create WebQuests without having to know web editing and stores them on the site so teachers can use them during their classes.

Digital Storytelling: Blended Learning at its Best (50 minute lecture)—Available after October 2009.—for teachers with some experience in Internet use.

Storytelling has been in existence ever since speech began in the first proto-human. The most recent form of storytelling uses a digital medium: computers, cameras, sound and music that people from all walks of life use to communicate events, feelings and beliefs. This talk will examine how digital storytelling can be used in the classroom. Examples will be presented and a discussion of tools available for creating, saving and sharing digital stories will be presented.

The virtual classroom: on-line teaching (50 minute lecture)—For teachers with little experience in Internet use.

This talk will present various activities such as WebQuests (complex activities in which a student researches a specific theme or point of view on the Internet and then uses the information found there for an in-class activity), Treasure Hunts (a rally in which students surf through various pre-established websites to answer specific questions), Multi-media Scrapbooks (in which students surf around and build their own Scrapbooks, either on line or on a disk) and Hotlists (lists of interesting sites that the teacher wants to students to visit for a specific purpose related to something going on in class) that the teacher can use for bridging. We will specifically be using the Filimentality site (www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/). Participants will be given various useful websites.

Wikis? Twittering? YouTube? Web 2.0 for EFL (1 hour 15 minute to 2 hour talk or plenary)—For all teachers including those experienced in using the Internet.

Have you heard of Wikis, Blogs, YouTube, Twitter, Google Earth, etc., but just can't see how to use them in your classes? Do your students seem to live in a different world? This workshop will explore various Web 2.0 applications that are now popular with teenagers and young adults (and some older ones too) and, with the participants' input, discuss how they can be incorporated into EFL classrooms. Extensive links and references will be provided. The talk is constantly updated as new sites appear.

Assessment:

Communicative exams with a storyline (50 minute talk)

This talk will outline techniques for making achievement exams more communicative by building them around a storyline. After a brief review of exam writing approaches, participants will be offered an opportunity to devise some original storylines for specified grammar points. All participants will receive explanatory handouts and examples of exams.

Grading communicative exams communicatively (50 minute talk)

Although we try to produce communicative exams to reflect the communicative content of our classes, we often forget what communication really means and how to carry that communicative purpose out when we are correcting exams. In this talk, we will look briefly at different exam formats that can be used to test communication—both with production and recognition—and how certain open sections can be corrected with emphasis on communication, not grammar.

Me? Write an exam? How to write a communicative exam (1 hour 15 minute workshop)

Even experienced teachers have problems when they are asked to write an exam. This workshop examines the exam-writing process from content-analysis through the actual creation of the exam. It is useful both for teachers who might be writing exams for their own classes and coordinators and teachers organizing school exam banks.

Oral testing of accuracy and fluency (50 minute lecture)

This talk will present a technique for oral testing both accuracy and fluency that has been used successfully for over three years in groups of institutional achievement exams. The technique is used to test beginning- and intermediate-level students in groups of 20 to 30 and can be completed in a 50-minute class period. Grading, examiner training and problems encountered will be discussed. Participants will be given the opportunity to experience both types of exams and will receive copies of many of the exam activities.

(Continued next page)

Available Talks

JoAnn Miller, joannmillerj@gmail.com, <http://www.efltasks.net>

Testing Reading , (50 minute lecture, 1.5 - 2 hour workshop)

Writing exams can be very difficult. While writing exams for testing reading comprehension seems easy, there are many aspects that have to be taken into account while writing the exam. This talk examines what to test and how to test it. Special emphasis is given on multiple choice testing.

Classroom Management: (Note: The first two talks are similar. The major difference is the emphasis.)

Getting your students to participate more , (50 minute lecture or 1 hour 15 minute workshop)

This workshop is designed to heighten participants' awareness of the different types of activities they can use to encourage student participation and to limit teacher talk. After a brief theoretical introduction and the presentation of some examples, techniques that can be used to help teachers provide realistic communicative opportunities will be presented. Techniques that are encouraged include elicitation, student supplied examples, students as teachers, various kinds of pair and group.

Group and Pair work (2 hour workshop)

One of the most important changes that communicative language teaching made in methodology was the use of pairs and groups to maximize student participation. This workshop begins with a historical perspective and then examines the changes communicative teaching has made in classroom organization. Group/Pair formation, seating patterns and hints for increasing participation are included. Participants experience group and pair work and work on adapting existing materials.

Using student-made activities, exercises and exam-reviews (50 minute demonstration)

Exploring language, making and correcting errors, trying to communicate lead to language acquisition and improved motivation. One way to get students more involved in the learning process is to involve them in the teaching process. This demonstration will explore how students can become involved in this process by creating their own materials. Teacher involvement and error correction will be addressed. Activities for the four skills, grammar and vocabulary will be presented.

Projects:

Using projects in university-level classes, (50 minute talk)

Projects are long-term activities that can be developed by students (usually working in groups) outside of the classroom. The results of the project are presented to the class as a whole. This talk will discuss what projects are and how they can be adapted to university-level classes.

Using projects to increase interaction, (50 minute talk)

Projects are long-term activities that can be developed by students (usually working in groups) outside of the classroom. The results of the project are presented to the class as a whole. This talk will discuss what projects are and how they help increase student interaction. Directed at primary, secondary and university levels.

Four-Skill Activities:

Charlie Brown, Garfield and Dagwood in the Classroom? (1 hour 15 minute workshop)

This fun workshop will introduce teachers to a series of activities using cartoons and comics that they can exploit in their classrooms.

Communicative activities for beginning EFL students , (1 hour 15 minute workshop)

There has always been, and continues to be, a great lack of entertaining, communicative materials for very basic levels. Because the beginning level student's vocabulary is so limited, we tend to think that a lot of the interesting activities are beyond them . In this workshop we will present two or three entertaining, original interactive, multi-skilled activities for beginners.

OK, it's Friday...let's sing (50 minute talk)

This workshop will present various popular songs that can be used for teaching grammar, functions or culture or practicing listening comprehension or pronunciation. Suggestions for the selection of songs and the development of activities will also be discussed.

Reading:

Reading: Comprehension, strategies and activities. (1 - 2 hour workshop)

Many times we get into a rut teaching reading. The students read the material and then answer the questions and then we correct them. Much more can be done with reading. This workshop will begin with a brief example of what not to do and then it will continue with ideas for working with reading comprehension and strategies. Various activities will be presented that can be used in most every classroom situation.

Testing Reading , (50 minute lecture, 1.5 - 2 hour workshop)

Writing exams can be very difficult. While writing exams for testing reading comprehension seems easy, there are many aspects that have to be taken into account while writing the exam. This talk examines what to test and how to test it. Special emphasis is given on multiple choice testing.

Grammar:

Rediscovering discovery techniques , (50 minute talk or 1 hour 15 minute workshop)

This workshop examines how discovery techniques can be used successfully to teach vocabulary and grammar. We will examine how discovery techniques have been used in the past and participants will experience discovery techniques first hand with some uncommon languages.

Rethinking grammar , (50 minute lecture or plenary)

After thirty years of teaching the present tense, the passive, possessives and indirect speech, I'm beginning to wonder if I've really been doing the right thing for my students. Maybe grammar isn't the only way to teach English. I've got reasons for this radical change of opinion and even some interesting facts. This talk will share my doubts with the participants...it won't offer answers, but just a serious of questions that, I hope, will get teachers reflecting on what they do in class and, maybe, even try out some radical ideas.

Writing:

Process Writing , (50 minute talk, 1 hour 15 minute workshop)

Writing is an important skill for our students. Process writing was developed many years ago and was very popular at the time. Many teachers incorporated it into their repertoire of techniques. However, in recent years it has started to become forgotten. This talk presents the theory of process writing and supplies a concrete example of communicative process writing. The workshop delves into the process of writing in more depth, including examples of the different stages involved in the process itself.

Listening Comprehension

Re-examining Listening Comprehension (50 minute talk, 1 hour 15 minute workshop)

We all teach listening in our classes, but when do we ever go beyond the comprehension exercises in the textbook? This workshop will examine how teachers can develop their own listening exercises that do more than simply test comprehension. Tasks involving critical thinking and combining listening with the skills of speaking, reading and writing will also be examined. We will also discuss where to find material and participants will practice adapting them for their classes.

Oral work:

Getting your students to participate more , (50 minute lecture or 1 hour 15 minute workshop)

This workshop is designed to heighten participants' awareness of the different types of activities they can use to encourage student participation and to limit teacher talk. After a brief theoretical introduction and the presentation of some examples, techniques that can be used to help teachers provide realistic communicative opportunities will be presented. Techniques that are encouraged include elicitation, student supplied examples, students as teachers, various kinds of pair and group.

How to get the message across: communicative strategies. (50 minute talk)

This talk will show easy to device exercises developed from reading, listening and other communicative practices that can help students learn to use such communication strategies as circumlocution, paraphrase, miming or even drawing that can help the student get the message across.

Oral testing of accuracy and fluency , (50 minute lecture)

This talk will present a technique for oral testing both accuracy and fluency that has been used successfully for over three years in groups of institutional achievement exams. The technique is used to test beginning- and intermediate-level students in groups of 20 to 30 and can be completed in a 50-minute class period. Grading, examiner training and problems encountered will be discussed. Participants will be given the opportunity to experience both types of exams and will receive copies of many of the exam activities.

Pronunciation:

Improving your pronunciation , (1.5 - 5 hour workshop)

Non-native and native English-speaking teachers alike can learn from this workshop. In the shorter version, common pronunciation problems are presented and discussed. In the longer versions, a review of English phonetics (which can be combined with an analysis of teachers' pronunciation problems) is added and more practice activities are presented.

Using spelling cues to improve pronunciation (1 hour talk)—available with a month's notice

Although the English spelling system is exceedingly complex, there are rules (all with exceptions, of course) that can help learners not only pronounce unknown words correctly, but can also help them improve their pronunciation of known words. This demonstration will examine some common spelling rules related to the pronunciation of both consonants and vowels. Participants will be given handouts illustrating the rules and practice pronouncing unknown words using the spelling rules.

Available Talks

JoAnn Miller, joannmillerj@gmail.com, <http://www.efltasks.net>

Vocabulary:

Teaching vocabulary chunk by chunk, (1 hour 15 minute workshop)

For many years vocabulary was considered less important than grammar, but recent research has shown that it is a vital part of language acquisition. However, the days of memorizing vocabulary lists is in the past. This workshop will examine various types of useful vocabulary chunks and examine how native speakers use them. Then attendees will participate in some communicative activities for presenting, practicing and learning new vocabulary.

General:

Are you a professional or is it just another job, (50 minute lecture or plenary)

Being a professional is more than just being a good teacher and more and more institutions are requiring university degrees and professional training. This talk examines what a professional is and how a teacher can become a professional in the field of English Language Teaching.

Accuracy and fluency: Giving each its place, (50 minute talk or 1 hour 15 minute workshop)

Spontaneous speech is not planned and includes evidence of real-time composing, reflecting normal speech between native speakers. Planned speech is used for presenting in public and is more lexically rich and syntactically complex. Spontaneous speech puts stress on fluency skills while planned speech stresses accuracy. Students need exposure to and practice in both types of speech. This talk will offer a brief theoretical discussion and then some activities to practice accuracy and fluency in writing and speaking.

Teaching Extremes: The history of language teaching, (50 minute lecture)

An understanding of the past is essential for comprehension of the present. Although the theories and methods we use today in our ESL classes seem to be the latest advances in the field, many have their roots in the past and others are just weak copies of ideas that existed years ago and that were forgotten. This talk is a trip through the history of language teaching to see how it relates to modern theories.

Theory:

Learning Styles, (1 hour 15 minute workshop)

In this workshop we will first look at a brief description of what learning styles are and how they affect our students. Then each participant will take an exam which determines what their learning styles are. Finally, some suggestions will be made as to how we can get through to groups of students with varied learning styles through different types of explanations and practice.

Task-based language teaching (50 minute lecture or 1 hour 15 minute workshop)

Much work has been done recently attacking many of the accepted tenets of the Communicative Approach, recommending a more flexible, task-based approach to language learning. Will these new attacks signal the end of communicative teaching as we know it or will teachers adapt the task-based methods and incorporate and transform them into more personal techniques? This talk will examine this controversy by first presenting a brief overview of what are considered to be the weaknesses of PPP methods. Then a version of task-based techniques will be examined. Finally, suggestions for adapting tasks to a teacher's present teaching style will be mentioned.

Professional Presentations:

Giving professional presentations, for English teachers (2-3 hour workshop)

This hands-on workshop will take the would-be presenter through the various steps necessary to prepare a workshop and will concentrate on the workshop presentation itself: organization (openers, presentation, practice, application and closure), general presentation techniques, audiovisual equipment and handouts.

Why don't you give a workshop? Getting started (1 hour 15 minute workshop)

This hands-on workshop will take the would-be presenter through the various steps necessary to prepare a workshop. This first part will concentrate on choosing a topic, focusing ideas, researching what has been done before and, finally, writing the abstract. Participants will work in groups, as they develop their ideas and, hopefully, by the end of the workshop will have a rough draft of an abstract.