

# In This Issue

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ORTESOL Journal Editors

Are we culturally arrogant? The feature articles of this issue of the *ORTESOL Journal* focus on culture. The authors ask you to reflect on the role that culture plays in your classroom practices, your curricula, and your materials.

In “The Globalization of English: A Personal Reflection from Costa Rica,” Winograd views English as a sort of Juggernaut that purports to economically benefit developing nations, but, in fact, carries an imperialistic Western bias. Can (should?) English be taught as a world language, devoid of cultural (Western) bias? Winograd proposes that well-intentioned language teachers “who are sensitive to the risks and dangers of cultural imperialism” can and should teach English in such a way that it is “embedded in local cultures and goals and should be available to everyone, at every level of society, not just the elite.”

Picking up on this theme, Lee Ann McNeerney and Hiromi Beppu, in “Creating a Multi-Cultural, Student-Centered Classroom,” point out that in the U. S., there is a high rate of attrition among high school ESL learners due to a feeling of being shunted aside in the classroom. Their own cultures and ways of learning are ignored while teachers from the “dominant group” impose their cultural understandings upon them. The authors enumerate ways in which “teachers can provide students with opportunities to share and express their culture in learning activities, better understand cultural differences and their own biases, adapt lessons using students’ own prior learning experiences, involve parents, and use non-traditional assessment tools to create a successful multi-cultural, student-centered classroom.”

Susan Matson and Mark Algren give us some advice on how to be culturally sensitive to Saudi

students, whose numbers have increased greatly in recent years. They extracted pertinent passages from Margaret Nydell’s book, *Understanding Arabs*, and commented on how the cultural inclinations of Arab students can be interpreted and dealt with in classroom situations.

Dr. Ali Al-Issa of Sultan Qaboos University speaks to us from the perspective of a non-native instructor who has studied the problems facing Omani learners of English. He points out that EFL in Oman is still in the grips of old-school thoughts on imparting knowledge *about* the English language to students while depriving them of practice in learning communicative language skills.

One more feature article, “No Culture Left Behind,” is summarized in this issue. Barbara Swanson and her colleagues traveled to Mexico, partially sponsored by ORTESOL’s Nattinger Grant, to investigate the culture of the indigenous Purepecha people. The full version is available in electronic form to ORTESOL members on our web site: <http://www.ortesol.org>.

In addition to these feature articles, this issue contains five Teaching Notes from seasoned experts. John Sparks throws away clunky old cassette tapes in favor of voice e-mail and gains quite a bit of convenience and efficiency along the way. Char Heitman shows us how to help students become independent learners of oral skills. Tom Delaney gives some pointers on how to go about doing some paperless teaching. Marna Broekhoff has some “right brain” suggestions for building student interest in the writing classroom. Finally, Lora Yasen finds an alternative way to assess her upper level integrated skills students by having them produce end-of-semester projects using Publisher and PowerPoint.