

# In This Issue

*Deborah Healey & Byrne Brewerton*  
ORTESOL Journal *Editors*

This issue of *ORTESOL Journal* covers topics from secondary education to teaching at a distance and from paper-based activities to Web 2.0. We lead off with Irina Blekhman's look at assessment in secondary ESL classes. She focuses an Oregon lens on issues affecting all elementary and secondary teachers working under the constraints of No Child Left Behind legislation. Her questions and suggestions about in-class assessments apply to teachers at all levels.

Keli Yerian reminds us that we need to offer more than lip service to learners who are stronger with graphics than text. That bedrock of university-level course documents, the course description, is too often densely written. Key pieces of information get lost in paragraph after paragraph of text. A graphical syllabus can help every student, not just graphical learners, focus on what the teacher really wants students to remember about the structure of the course.

Distance education is becoming part of more institutional course offerings. The track record for retention in most online courses, however, is quite dismal. There are some techniques that can help encourage online learners to stick with a course and to succeed. Leslie Opp-Beckman draws upon considerable experience in designing and delivering fully online courses in her article. She has important suggestions for those who would like to be successful with their online courses.

We have three teaching tips in this issue. Russell Fauss describes a content-based approach to English for Academic Purposes. He developed and taught an Oregon-focused area studies course based on Oregon's sesquicentennial. This topic provided the opportunity to work on history, environment, economics, and culture.

English language learners are perennially confused by tag questions. They believe, probably rightly so, that English really doesn't make sense with negative tag questions (such as "He's not here, is he?"), where the response is "yes" if the negative is wrong and "no" if the negative is correct. Bruno Kamps gives us an approach to helping students make sense of tag questions across different verb tenses.

Project-based learning is a powerful tool for teachers, especially when it provides real-world activities and information for language learners. Migyu Kang describes the use of "mashup," pulling together information from different sources on the Web to create a report. Her students use Google Maps and other Web resources to create recommendations about which mp3 players to purchase.

We end with Research Notes from Tom Delaney. We all know that students should feel comfortable in class in order to be most receptive to learning. To that end, we often try to structure tasks and expectations to minimize learner anxiety. However, Tom's recent research has provided another possible view about anxiety in the classroom: that applied appropriately, it can be helpful in preparing students for more difficult tasks.

You can see some additional material, including examples of graphic syllabi from Keli Yerian and more resources for Migyu Kang's course on the ORTESOL website at <http://www.ortesol.org/>.

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