

TESOL '92

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WHAT IS TESOL?

TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) is the world's largest organization dealing with foreign language teaching, research, and applied linguistics. Membership is international, and so is attendance at its annual conference, this year held in Vancouver, B.C. TESOL is always very long (5 days), and includes a full schedule of meetings and sessions beginning at 7 am. With such an expansive program, this conference offers many sessions of interest for those of us involved with language lab management. The following titles are indicative of the types of sessions offered:

- "Language Labs: A co-sponsored CALL/ Video discussion";
- "Macintosh users' group: What's the best?";
- "Language Labs in the 90's: Issues and Options";
- "Creating a video library: Focus on active viewing";
- "Success, failures, and drop-outs in computer-assisted language lessons";
- "Computer-assisted language learning for reading and writing";
- "The computer lab: A writer's tool";
- "Desktop video: The tool for the 90's and beyond";
- "Closed-captioned video";
- "HyperCard developers";
- "Computer applications for language teachers."

IALL AT TESOL

This year, for the first time, IALL joined with TESOL's CALL and Video Interest Groups to participate in joint panels, discussions and meetings related to language

lab issues. This was accomplished through the cooperative efforts of IALL's representative to TESOL, Charlotte Groff Aldridge, and the interest, enthusiasm and support of Norman Johnson, immediate past chair of the CALL Interest Session, along with Video Interest Session chair Marshall Burgamy.

The main thrust of this cooperative effort was a colloquium on "Language Labs in the '90s: Issues and Options" chaired by Norm Johnson. Much like the approach taken in IALL's publication, "Designing the Learning Center of the Future," each participant in this colloquium offered a different perspective in looking at pressing issues for the 90's. Charlotte Groff Aldridge addressed the issue of faculty input and needs assessment in planning a language lab (read "language resource center"), while George Krikorian looked at the role of the teacher in the language lab (the system, not the facility). Multidisciplinary labs (campus-wide resource facilities) present special problems in addressing the unique needs of language learners. Susan Dever discussed these problems and some solutions. Norm Johnson's presentation dealt with an issue each of us faces: "Language Labs on a Shoestring Budget." Both Marshall Burgamy and Debra Hoven talked about various aspects of "non-traditional labs" from video production, editing and multimedia, to virtual reality. LeeAnn Stone concluded the session by addressing the issues of integration of faculty and resources, and flexibility in space planning and utilization.

The follow-up discussion was very enlightening. Several points could be clearly

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Conference Report

extrapolated from the questions posited: a) that for most attendees, "language lab" refers to the networked audio system (vs. a resource center); b) that ESL people believe the language lab has merit as a language teaching tool; but, c) they are looking for resources to help identify additional and more effective ways to use the lab.

Issues addressed at the well-attended, 7 am follow-up session took a different tack, where discussion focused on issues of needs assessment, equipment and materials selection, and facilities planning.

DIRECTION OF TESOL/IALL COOPERATION

The question that naturally emerged from these discussions was "What role should or can IALL play in cooperation with TESOL?" This was the topic for discussion at IALL's "Information Exchange" on Friday evening.

The pros and cons of establishing a Language Lab Interest Group were discussed. The point was made that TESOL members need more information and access to publications (like IALL's) that deal with effective lab utilization, and that a Language Lab Interest Session newsletter could help serve this purpose. However, would the purpose be better served with a separate language Lab Interest Session, or through mutual cooperation through existing channels (and what would those channels be)? Roger Kenner felt that IALL/ TESOL members could help to educate (and re-educate) the rest of the ESL constituency as to effective utilization of language labs.

As a language lab director, my concern was that we not "compartmentalize" language labs. To those of us managing language lab facilities, the "lab" is more than a single system; rather, it is increasingly a multimedia resource center usually

encompassing video, computers, and audio equipment, as well as other services and facilities. Within TESOL, however, these functions have already been separated. Very strong and active video and CALL interest groups already exist. Thus, if a language lab Interest Session were to be established, it would need to confine itself to the more restricted definition of language lab. With today's rapid merging of technologies, does it make sense to perpetuate this separation?

Thus, the question stands and can only be answered by active and interested TESOL members themselves: In what ways can IALL best serve to meet your language lab-related needs? The IALL Board and TESOL representative invite the input of active ESL members on this issue.

TESOL '93

At the information exchange, we also discussed plans for IALL '93. Of foremost interest to those in attendance, was to provide workshops that addressed the issue of effective lab utilization including "preparing materials for the lab," "why use a lab," "a basic newcomer's introduction," and "engaging students in the lab." Charlotte Aldridge and LeeAnn Stone agreed to explore the possibilities of scheduling a full-day pre-conference symposium at a local area school. The symposium would consist of two 1/2 day sessions with the morning session covering setting up and planning a lab, and the afternoon addressing the issue of what you do with it once you have a lab.

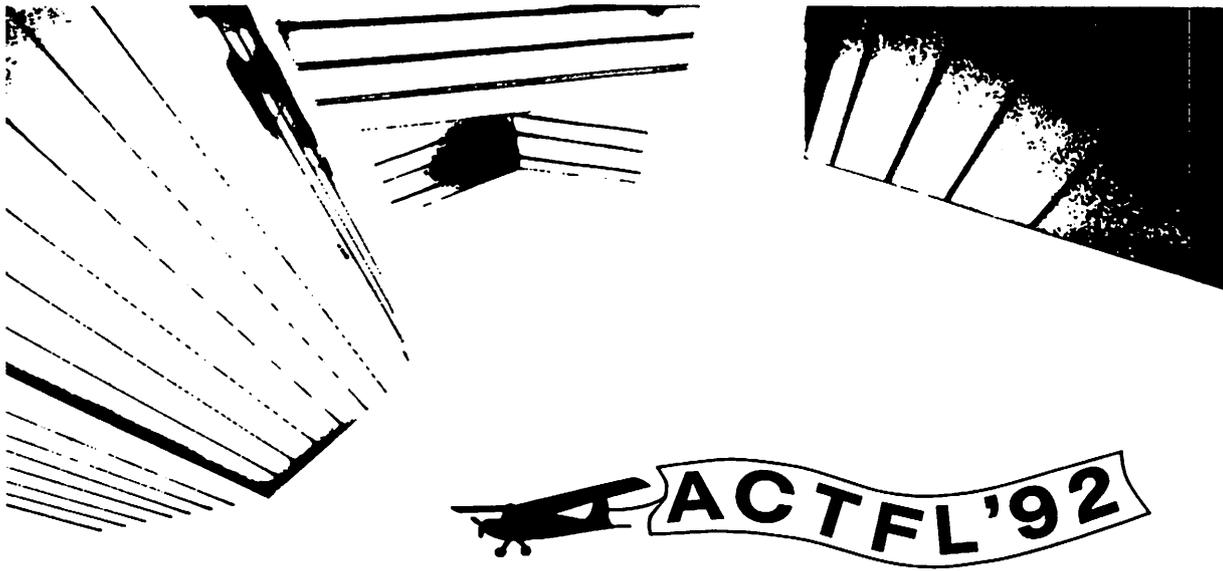
OBSERVATIONS

This was my first year attending TESOL as an IALL Board member. As such, I had an additional purpose in mind—to try to identify precisely what IALL's goal is in cooperating with TESOL. From IALL's perspective it is clear: much of what happens through the efforts of TESOL members is at

the forefront of general foreign language research and methodology. Thus, by keeping IALL members abreast of what is happening in TESOL, we are keeping ourselves on top of developments, rather than following them. Furthermore, like CALICO, the CALL Interest Session is an extremely active, knowledgeable group (many of them CALICO members themselves) whose collective resources (their software database, for example) can be of significant service to many IALL members.

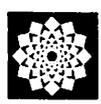
However, to be a cooperative venture IALL needs to give as well as receive. Thus,

a flow of information, a comparable exchange is what our goal should be. IALL knows basically what it wants from TESOL, now we need to hear more from our own IALL/TESOL members as well as non-IALL ESL and EFL professionals as to what they need from us. Our goal should be to address those needs, perhaps, even if it means "compartmentalizing" our field. The process of addressing those needs can also serve as an opportunity to educate and expand awareness of the potential of language labs as something more than networked audio systems.

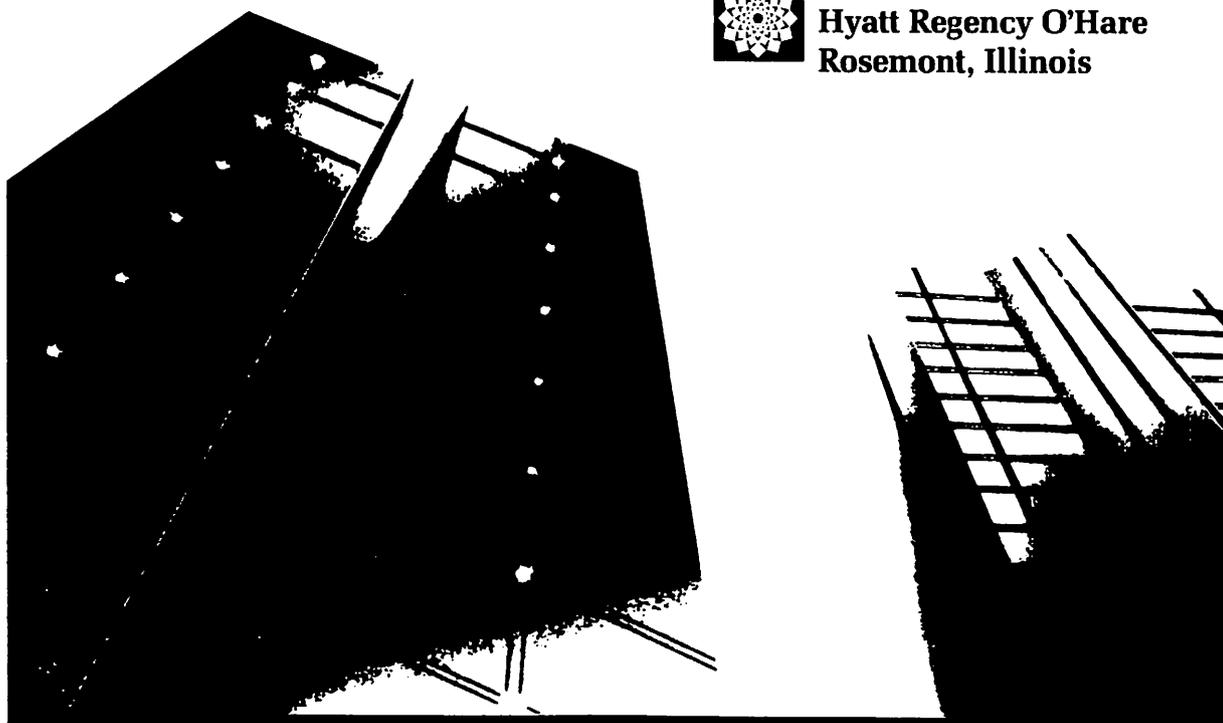


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