

Conference Reports

TESOL '94

by Pam Griffin-Castro,
University of
Minnesota

Once again this year's TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) conference in Baltimore, Maryland on March 8 – 12 was the site of interesting and stimulating information exchange on technology and teaching/learning in languages. As I was unable to attend, I am grateful for the comments and observations of many IALL members who were there.

IALL Presentations and Panel

IALL was actively involved in this year's conference! IALL member Charlotte Groff Aldridge (University of Maryland, College Park) was the Associate Program Chair, and her contributions to the quality of the conference were evident. Lois Lanier and Roberta Lavine (University of Maryland, College Park) presented a pre-conference workshop on communicative activities for the language lab. Tandberg provided support for this presentation. Unlike ACTFL, IALL does not have a "sponsored session" slot at TESOL. However, IALL President Trisha Dvorak organized a panel on "Whither the Language Lab?" The panel consisted of: Trisha Dvorak (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), Read Gilgen (University of Wisconsin, Madison), David Herren (Middlebury College), Ruth Trometer (M.I.T.), Chris Jones (Carnegie Mellon) and Brigitte Charlotteaux (George Washington University). The session was well attended, very informative, and highly rated by the attendees, several of whom called it "top notch." IALL also sponsored a general information session, and a hospitality suite to offer an informal environment for getting the word out about IALL and the expertise of our members.

Software Fair

Our members were also active in the CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) Interest Section (IS) software fair. The CALL-IS and Video-IS are the two organizations within TESOL that fit directly with IALL's interests. John McVicker (Ohio University) organized the Authors' Showcase. One observation was that there was much greater emphasis

on technology this year than in years past in the presentations and the demonstrations.

IALL's Role in TESOL

One question that always comes up is how IALL can be more actively involved in TESOL. As the macrosystem of TESOL is unlikely to create a "lab" Interest Section, we can continue to be involved by submitting proposals for workshops and panel discussions, as well as organizing informal gatherings at the conference. TESOL sponsors several different types of presentations—please contact me if you have a project or idea for presentation. Another suggestion of a way we can be involved in TESOL is by taking a more significant role in the software fair by demonstrating software. (The chasm between ESL and foreign language education does not need to be as wide as it is!) Finally, a word about costs. The costs for a booth, advertising, etc., at TESOL are prohibitive for an organization of our size. Further, the travel and registration costs of invited participants are often difficult to come up with, especially if TESOL is not a conference they usually attend. IALL has great expertise to offer members of the ESL and foreign language fields. How do we get that information out to people? (Suggestions welcome to griff008@maroon.tc.umn.edu or 7230 Imperial Ave. Court, Cottage Grove, MN 55016). Many thanks to the members of the panel and other presenters, as well as conference attendees, for their help! ■

Pam Griffin-Castro is an Administrative Fellow in the College of Education at the University of Minnesota.

Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Lan- guages April 7-10, 1994

**by Kathleen James,
Foreign Service
Institute**

The forty-first annual meeting of the Northeast Conference, the country's oldest and largest gathering of foreign language professionals, focused on "Teaching, Testing, and Assessment: Making the Connection." There was, as usual, a wide array of activities, including pre-conference workshops, concurrent sessions, special interest sessions, exhibitors' sessions, the keynote address, and the traditional Sunday morning Prime Time Panel. For the first time, two plenary sessions were held to invite audience participation on two items of national interest: statewide testing and assessment initiatives, and the national standards project. (See the *IALL Journal* 26:3 pp. 34-36, Fall 1993 for mention of this project in last year's Northeast Conference report.)

Exhibits

Among the largest of their kind, the exhibitors' displays were open Thursday evening through Saturday afternoon. Prize drawings were held at vendors' booths periodically throughout the conference. The IALL booth attracted approximately twenty-five contestants at the appointed time on the first evening and awarded two one-year memberships. The winners were Audrey Heining-Boynton, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Maria Martins, Silvea School in Fall River, Massachusetts.

Conference Highlights

David Herren (Middlebury College), with Janice Ribeiro (Brunswick School, Greenwich, CT), conducted his annual pre-conference workshop on Hypermedia. As always, it was a sell-out. The keynote speaker, Jeffrey J. Munks, Director of Marketing and Sales, AT&T Language Line, was the brains behind the telephone-based interpreter service later acquired by AT&T. He addressed trends in the uses of languages other than English in the communications field. The good news is that there continues to be a growing need for more people with competence in foreign languages. Eleanor Jordan (Professor Emerita, Cornell University) was the recipient of the Award for Outstanding Service and Leadership in the Profession.

The Sunday morning Prime Time Panel focused on "Teaching What We Test, or Testing What We Teach?" Moderated by Charles Hancock, the panel reflected on the relationship between teaching and testing.

Technology Sessions

For the first time in recent memory, counting the past ten years during which the author has attended this conference, very few of more than one hundred concurrent sessions were devoted to instructional technology. They were:

- "Developing Effective Reading Strategies on the Macintosh," presented by Randall Donaldson and Margaret Haggstrom of Loyola College;
- "Beyond the Language Lab: Creative Activities That Teach For You," presented by Janis Hennessey of the University of New Hampshire;
- "Hypermedia in the Middlebury College Language School Curriculum," presented by David Herren and Janice Ribeiro.

On the other hand, there were numerous exhibitors' sessions dedicated to multimedia, including:

- "Dynamic Japanese: Multimedia That Empowers Teachers and Students Alike" (DynEd International),

- "The Language Lab in Action!" (Tandberg Educational),
- "Texts and Teaching: Making the Connection" (D. C. Heath & Company),
- "Interactive Multimedia" (Yale University Press),
- "A New Multimedia Approach to Spanish Language Teaching" (CCLS Publishing House),
- "Enhancing the Foreign Language Learning Environment Via Distance Education" (Sony Education Systems),
- "Italianissimo, New BBC Multimedia Resources for the Italian Classroom" (National Textbook Company),
- "Language Laboratories: Are They Cost-Effective Teaching Tools?" (Educational Technology, Inc.).

Many textbook companies are now investing in the production of multimedia components. Throughout the exhibits it became obvious that technology-assisted learning materials have come into their own.

IALL Meeting

The IALL General Interest Meeting took place on Saturday morning. The room was full and remained so well beyond the appointed time. The audience exuded enthusiasm tempered by anxiety stemming from the confusion and frustration experienced by newcomers to the field. IALL represented a veritable fountain of information and a thread of hope for those seeking guidance. The topics of particular interest included:

- laboratory designs
- equipment choices
- software evaluation and purchase
- job description for laboratory directors
- sources of materials.

There was strong consensus that there is a need to collect and disseminate software reviews. John Macalla (Ramapo College, Mahwah, NJ) offered to lead this effort. Anyone interested in working on such a project should contact him at JMacalla@ultrix.ramapo.edu. Many of the expressed needs could be satisfied with existing and planned IALL publications.

Between the stimulating presentations and thought-provoking discussion, the renewing of old friendships and making of new ones, between the abundance of vendors' wares and lack of enough time to see and do it all, the Northeast Conference is always energizing and well worth the trip. ■

Kathleen James is Director, Office of Multimedia, National Foreign Affairs Training Center.

SCOLA '94 World Conference

by Irene Starr
University of
Massachusetts,
Amherst, and
Myra Lenburg,
Amherst Com-
munity Television

The Conference

The 12th annual SCOLA (Satellite Communications for Learning) World Conference, held May 2 – 4 in Taiyuan, Shanxi, People's Republic of China (PRC), was the first to meet outside the United States. It was ably organized by Lu Jia-Sheng, Director of the China Yellow River TV station (CYR), which IALL members may recognize as a source of SCOLA's Chinese news. The conference focused on mutual interests of friendship, cooperation, and development; technologies such as multimedia and distance education; use of authentic programming; and related issues. On the last night, at a banquet of Peking duck with all the traditional trimmings, SCOLA and CYR leaders signed an agreement formalizing cooperative arrangements.

Almost half of the forty USA attendees work in or manage language education, language resource, or instructional technology centers; others are affiliated with non-profit organizations, business, television production, or program distribution. They came from fifteen states, having traveled as much as forty continuous hours through twelve time zones between their homes and China. Representatives of fourteen Chinese TV stations that are regular program suppliers to CYR also attended the conference. IALL members included Dick Kuettner (Washington and Lee University) and Jackie Tanner (Georgetown University)—who are also members of the SCOLA International Board of Advisors, as well as Marni Armstrong (The Colorado College), Brigitte Charlotteaux (George Washington University), Michael Nieckoski (World Learning/School for International Training), Irene Starr (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), and Michele Zimmerman (Amherst College).

The group was treated to the most royal welcome visitors could ever hope for. The Director of Provincial Tourism from Taiyuan personally accompanied us, we were expedited through customs formalities, police escorts led our air-conditioned buses through the heavy traffic at high speed, and there were frequent formal occasions with banquet meals. The organizers' attention to detail was formidable: on one occasion we were presented with a gift of umbrellas when it rained during a scheduled campus tour. Everywhere we stopped our hosts showered us with gifts or souvenirs: silk cloth at the Suzhou Silk Institute; models of the emperor's chariot in Xian; wristwatches sporting the SCOLA insignia in Shanghai; souvenir books and trays at each stop. Moreover, prior to our departure we were presented with a video of our visit.

"The organizers' attention to detail was formidable: on one occasion we were presented with a gift of umbrellas when it rained during a scheduled campus tour."

This conference differed from IALL's and most other meetings from the very moment we stepped off the overnight train from Xian and were greeted by a welcoming committee at the Taiyuan station. The elegant hall accommodated all the participants at assigned seats. The formal conference set-up was similar to the international summit meetings one sees on the evening news. The latest Sony systems allowed access to simultaneously interpreted presentations; paper copies were also available. Periodically, conferees were graciously served tea, soda, and mineral water at their seats. News of the conference appeared on television the same day, and the local paper covered the opening sessions with a full, front-page article. A formal group photo was taken and a copy given to everyone the next morning. There were no simultaneous sessions or evaluations.

Presentations

The conference opened with Chinese leaders and television and cultural exchange officials giving speeches on the significance of the event and reviewing their province's resources, history, and cooperative ventures. An expanded exchange of television and education programs constitutes a key aspect of China's strategy to open itself to the outside world.

Mr. Lu of China Yellow River TV spoke on their efforts—in collaboration with SCOLA—to implement a "World Common Education Plan" and described the comprehensive programming CYR offers to SCOLA on China's development, resources, geography, culture, and history. CYR also provides services to 30 million domestic viewers. The ultimate goals, he said, are enhancing mutual understanding, benefiting the world economy, and peace.

Lee Lubbers, President of SCOLA, reminded us of SCOLA's international scope as a confederation of organizations that use technology for a worldwide exchange of educational programs. The SCOLA and CYR cooperation addresses a critical educational need: helping people everywhere learn about the Chinese language, culture, and economy. In particular, CYR has committed itself to sending four professionals to SCOLA's Iowa headquarters each year and has created a model collaboration of more than a dozen Chinese TV stations. The CYR staff in Iowa prepares the daily "live" PRC news and teaches a model prototype course in speaking Chinese to 350 American elementary children in nearby Council Bluffs for eventual retransmission via satellite throughout North America.

Father Lubbers also discussed SCOLA's promotion of a close relationship with UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) that would involve its sponsorship of SCOLA and worldwide transmission of its information by SCOLA. He concluded by bestowing SCOLA's highest award, the title of Founder of SCOLA International, on Mr. Lu of CYR. Brigitte Charlotteaux, Director of the Language Laboratory at George Washington University, received a belated award in recognition of hosting last year's SCOLA conference.

Members of the United States contingent presented excellent talks. Jutta Bailey, Associate Professor of German at Thunderbird Graduate School of International Management (Glendale, AZ), discussed the traditional role of the teacher and how it needs to change with the increasing use of technology. Lionel Baldwin, President of National Technological University (Ft. Collins, CO), summarized the successful activities of his institution, which provides 78 percent of all university instruction delivered by satellite in North America, and commented on the educational advantages and political obstacles to extending the concept globally. Salvatore Federico, Professor of French at the Thunderbird Graduate School of International Management, described his experimental course in business French, which immerses students in real business situations using case studies, export projects, and daily SCOLA viewing.

In addition, Dick Kuettner, Director of the Language Laboratory at Washington and Lee University, discussed the role of multimedia and distance learning in removing cultural boundaries while preserving individual identity. Robyn Mendelsohn, Marketing Communications Manager for AT&T SKYNET Distance Learning, related the excitement and significance of launching Telstar 401. Michael Nieckoski, Director of the Audio/Visual Department at the World Learning/School for International Training, demonstrated the multimedia program, "China: People, Country, Culture," which he is creating with authentic footage acquired from downlinked SCOLA and CYR satellite programs.

Conference Activities

The Shanxi Provincial and the Taiyuan Municipal Governments hosted the Conference's opening buffet lunch, presided over by a magnificent dragon assembled from roasted meats and decorated with birds and flowers carved from vegetables. Other official conference activities included visits to Shanxi

University, the CYR Station, the Taiyuan Steel Plant, cultural sites, and a night club for dancing.

Sights at Shanxi University included laser beam laboratories in the new engineering building, a museum, and a dormitory. The museum featured documents and photographs of the campus, tracing the history of the University from its founding through the Cultural Revolution and up to the present, including the modern language laboratory. The dormitory accommodates six students per room—crowded but cozy. Student performances followed a special buffet dinner in the dining commons.

At China Yellow River TV a welcoming marching band performance, tours of the extensive facilities, and two hours of viewing their educational TV programs preceded a delicious banquet. The conferees then served as the studio audience for a concert telecast live to Shanxi Province. A favorite number was a humorous and exaggerated dance showing how “lions,” each performed by two men (in one costume) from the Taiyuan Acrobatic Troupe, balance themselves on huge balls.

The steel plant in Taiyuan was one recognized by the U.N. for its reclamation project and pollution control: an old slag area had been converted to a park and the mill's by-products are made into useful items such as paving stones and bricks. The adjacent “steel city” is home to 70,000 workers. Those who preferred ancient architecture and artifacts enjoyed visits to the Ming period Twin Pagodas, the Tang Dynasty Chongshan Temple, and the Shanxi Provincial Museum—all impressive. The pagodas appear to be made of carved wood but are actually built of brick. These tours were followed by a buffet dinner at the mill headquarters—complemented by Karaoke music videos featuring bikini-clad women! When we were asked to perform, Cynthia Shearer, Director of the Modern Language Center at Carleton College, sang a lovely solo (“The Willow Song” from Verdi's *Othello*) and the group sang such American favorites as “Take Me Out to the Ball Game.”

Although the conference allowed little spare time, almost everyone found a few minutes to browse through a nearby department store with five floors of small shops. One goal was to buy an extra piece of luggage to hold the literature, souvenirs, and gifts we had received. Early morning walks provided the opportunity to see such activities of daily life as parents taking their children to school by bike, street vendors serving breakfast, and *tai chi* in the park.

Traveling

The conference was almost overshadowed by a week of intensive travel to educational, historic, cultural, and commercial sites. We covered almost 2000 miles by bus, overnight train, and plane. Our host's careful preparation enabled us to visit a remarkable number of sites beginning in Suzhou, proceeding to Shanghai, Xian, Taiyuan (site of the conference) and then to the Wutai mountains and Beijing.

Each province or city had its own look and attractions, but throughout our journey we saw bicycles, bricks, construction and a sea of people. Much of the labor—even construction labor—was done by hand. Occasionally we saw people dismantling a building, brick by brick, adjacent to a site where others were building new walls, brick by brick. Sometimes it wasn't obvious to us whether a building was going up or down. Along the sidewalks, vendors with hand-carts or small trucks sold food, clothing, kitchenware, trinkets, or repairs. "Window" shopping took on new meaning as vendors knocked on the bus windows (or sometimes confronted browsers at stalls), aggressively promoting their wares and often mistakenly assuming any sign of interest as a commitment to buy.

Other common sights seen from the bus included brightly-colored laundry drying on bamboo poles attached to apartment terraces or windows, women in mini-skirts, endless street markets (day and night), newly planted trees, window air-conditioners, separate major roads just for cyclists, new gas stations, traffic lights that indicate the number of seconds left until the light changes, and instant crowds to watch our convoy. Although rarely a problem, the term "pit stop" accurately described some facilities which were indeed pits with demarcations showing where feet should be placed. Many unique, human-powered vehicles such as "flat-bed tricycles" carried family members or huge loads of produce or building materials.

Unique experiences included a middle-of-the-night welcoming feast when we arrived from our trans-Pacific flights in Suzhou; a vegetarian breakfast with monks, in total silence, atop Wutaishan; and the opportunity for early risers to enjoy ballroom dancing with the local people in the Taiyuan park. A few individuals had the good fortune to be invited into homes or small businesses for brief visits.

Suzhou, two hours inland from Shanghai, is known as the "Venice of the East" because of its canals and its traditions in the arts and intellectual fields. Beautiful formal gardens, embroidery and silk museums, fast food lunch, a new develop-

ment zone, and dinner hosted by the government (followed by an evening cultural performance) were the major stops. We saw Shanghai from our bus, from atop an international hotel where Shanghai TV hosted an elegant lunch, and from a drive across its beautiful new harbor bridge. The other stops during our few hours in Shanghai were a "Friendship" store (now open to all, but formerly open only to non-Chinese) and the almost completed Shanghai TV Station tower which incorporates a hotel and shopping mall.

The Terra-cotta Warriors, standing guard near the tomb of Emperor Qin Shi Huang Di (221–206 BC) in Xian, were indeed amazing. Also impressive were the Bampo Tribal Village (6,000 year old dwellings), huge city wall, and Hua Qing Hot Springs with its park and cave palaces. The day in Xian concluded with shopping at a cloisonné factory and an outstanding Shaanxi TV-hosted dinner of many little dump-lings, each hand-shaped into the traditional figure of a flower, rabbit, little sack, duck, bird or other marvelous creation.

The scenic and sacred Wutai mountains were five hours from Taiyuan by bus taking us through increasingly small villages and terraced farm land and eventually climbing on a perfectly smooth road with sheer drop-offs and few guard rails. The temples and monasteries there, atop 108 steps (signifying 108 troubles to overcome), were magnificent—as was the overall beauty and serenity of the mountains. Although guides said this area suffered minimal destruction from the Cultural Revolution, a souvenir book states that only forty temples remain from 400 at one time.

Group activities in Beijing included visiting the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square, the Gate of Heavenly Peace (where Mao proclaimed the founding of the PRC), many shopping stops, and a ground-breaking ceremony for a CYR-owned building in the suburbs. Another stop was Tsinghua University, which resembles western campuses. The grounds were lovely: old trees, lots of flowers, no cars, many bikes, and a few historic buildings set aside for museum or administrative functions. The students assigned to the group spoke English well. The modern library and multi-media classroom were impressive. A few people also visited the incredible Forbidden City and then a vast street market.

Regarding food, one goes to China forewarned to avoid unboiled water and raw fruits and vegetables, but we were not prepared for the splendid, multi-course banquets, the breathtaking edible garnishes and decorations, and the abundance of such special dishes as pickled shrimp, fish-lips stew, cold chicken, pigeon feet, eel, turtle, frog, local fish, and all

forms of noodles and soups. We were also told we were served monkey-brain dumplings and curried yak—it's impossible to tell whether our hosts were teasing us or not. Breakfast came with pickled vegetables, dried tofu, steamed buns encasing sweet bean paste, gruel, soups and Chinese doughnuts. The adventuresome were treated to many new tastes and textures.

Expectations vs. Reality

"...this trip seemed to have significant political or social ramifications, and our delegation seemed to play an important part."

We were a diverse group. Some, notably employees or board members of SCOLA, may have better understood that our trip was part of a broad, political mission. Those of us not in touch with the inner workings of SCOLA, and relying solely on the official trip brochure, came with varied expectations. This brochure, stating that "this package is a major promotion on the part of mainland China to acquaint Westerners with the marvels of modern China and its amazing expanding economy..." gave few details beyond the cities to be visited, the cost and timetable. Some, for example, believed this trip was mainly a vacation tour with a short conference in the middle; some came to work out business arrangements with the Chinese; others had a mix of expectations.

In reality, this trip seemed to have significant political or social ramifications, and our delegation seemed to play an important part. Perhaps this was due to our association with the communications field and our potential ability to influence opinion about China. To further complicate matters, some participants apparently did not pay their own way; others had paid the full cost of \$2,000 (plus flights to San Francisco), an amount seen as large or small depending upon the traveler's means. This mix of personal agendas, tour costs, and expectations created some disappointments and resentment, which an orientation on the goals for the trip might have eliminated. Certainly it would have helped prepare the group for the non-stop, tightly scheduled agenda filled with formal banquets and speeches.

Conclusion

The thirteen participants who contributed their observations (on what was especially pleasing, surprising, or disappointing) **unanimously expressed appreciation for the richness of the experience and for the generosity, hospitality, friendliness, and organizational effort on the part of our host.** Over half would attend future SCOLA conferences elsewhere and hope to return to China. Many commented on the hard pace but also agreed it was necessary in order to see so many interesting places. Illness during or after the trip was common. Some loved the frequent shopping and bargaining;

others used the shopping time to explore the surrounding neighborhoods when possible. Some felt that, no matter what their feelings, courtesy to the host required total adherence to the rigorous schedule; others, for reasons ranging from exhaustion to personal interests, occasionally chose to follow their own needs. Considering diverse expectations, a fifty-year spread in ages, previous overseas travel experience ranging from none to extensive, and varying experience with the limitations of organized tours, one should not be surprised by contradictory reactions. These included:

"Our hosts went to great lengths to plan everything for us"

"Of course, the part SCOLA played in all this should not be neglected. I was not disappointed in any way. I would have welcomed some personal time to assimilate the tremendous sensory bombardment we were privileged to experience."

"I would enjoy another visit at a more relaxed pace. I consider it a distinct privilege to have been able to participate in the SCOLA '94 China Conference.... I am still at a loss to explain the high level of treatment we received from the Chinese—not complaining, you understand, just curious."

"...but if we hadn't had such a busy schedule, we wouldn't have been able to see so much. ...I'm appreciating that more, because I'm not tired now and because I'm glad that we experienced so much of China."

"In the future, I would stay extra days after a tour...."

"...How much bargaining the shopkeepers allowed; the wide stocks of merchandise on the shelves. It was wonderful to be able to wander the streets in the early mornings and see regular people at their tasks, on the way to work. The ballroom dancing was wonderful, that we could dance with the Chinese and they with us, was a treat. The whole trip was wonderful...."

"It was useful to meet so many representatives of TV stations. But with the lack of translators I had very little opportunity to speak with people in depth. Also, the conference itself was so formal and allowed no personal interaction. Then we were mostly segregated at meals. ...The trip did not allow any real time with people, in their natural environments, so it's hard to know if it's possible to make a personal connection."

"...I was disappointed that we didn't have more choice about our activities and our schedules. By scheduling everything for us and taking care of all the details, we didn't get a sense of life in China. I have no idea how much it costs

to eat one of those huge meals that we had. I don't know how much a hotel room or a domestic flight in China costs..."

"Food, good humor in group as a whole—pleased; [the occasional pit] bathrooms—surprised; lack of concern by host concerning pace—disappointing."

"Gift giving—and receiving—is an important part of the Chinese culture. It felt embarrassing that our group had not brought anything for our hosts." ■

Irene Starr is Director, Foreign Language Resource Center, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Myra Lenburg is Executive Director, Amherst Community Television, Amherst, Massachusetts.