

EPDE Newsletter

News from the *EFL/ESL Program via Distance Education*

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Greetings

As the hot summer eases up, Bloomington is revitalized with students coming from all over the world. This semester holds special significance to us as we are reviving our EFL/ESL Program via Distance Education (EPDE). Through the “New Idea Development and Implementation Grant” from the School of Education, EPDE will be an even stronger program for both pre-service teachers and in-service teachers who desire to improve their educational practice. A good beginning is half the battle. As we publish the first issue of our newsletter, we hope that it will become a serviceable vessel of useful information and also a conduit through which invaluable professional experiences are shared among our distance education faculty and students.

Feature story by Mary Spaeth

My father used to say that being a medical doctor was 90% magic and 10% science. Being an educator is not terribly different. Much of what happens between students and teachers in a classroom is situational, and often magical. The magic requires more than glitter and a wand to manifest itself however. Doctors, teachers, and in fact most service professionals need to have a passion for the subject in which they specialize; they should like their work and they should have a keen understanding of the science that defines that work. Magic has something to do with one’s intuition, character, pathos, ethos and experience. Science has something to do with the learning from those who have described and theorized practice over time.

I am a teacher, consultant, mother of two grown children, a former pilot for a couple of years, theater director, actor, and writer, but none of these are careers. At 52, I am also a PhD Candidate at the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) researching the socialized identity of architects in Scotland and Sweden and the notion of career. I have MA’s in English from SMU in Dallas, International Child Studies from Linköping University in Sweden, and Business from UWS in Paisley, UK. Life is seldom dull.

While I’ve always had an interest in languages and literature, it was not until I moved from the United States to Sweden in 2000 (on what should have been a short-term consult-

ing contract) that I really came to understand what it meant to be an immigrant and to learn a language “for life’s sake”. Intellectually, I thought I understood. I’d taken French and lived in Paris as an undergraduate, and taught junior high French for a year before graduate school. But the “in-learning” of language is not something that can be done easily in a classroom, nor even in native surroundings—especially as an adult. After nine years in Sweden, I am amply fluent, but the likelihood of my ever being able to feel the comfort that I do as a native English speaker is slim. Still, I feel both empowered by my new skill and more empathetic and sympathetic for those who struggle to express themselves

Much of my work in Sweden is related to entrepreneurship and technology commercialization in university settings. I work with students who want to start their own companies and I advise new company managers on international marketing strategies. In 2006, I realized that I might be a better advisor to these companies and even a better university professor in Sweden if I learned more about teaching English as a second language. It was this realization that prompted me to seek out a TESL certificate program. I found plenty of short programs in Taiwan and China, attached to teaching contracts there, and there was something in London, but ultimately I came across the EPDE program at Indiana. I already knew of IU’s reputation for its School of Education, and although I was somewhat dubious about distance learning, I decided to apply for the program. Two years and one certificate later I’ve not been disappointed, and if I could buy more hours in the day I’d happily continue learning in cyber space over the Atlantic.

Having earned teaching certificates in Texas and Illinois, I had a background in educational theory, but the courses served as excellent reviews and updates for current theory and practice. They provided me with the vocabulary with which to discuss current trends in education and learning facilitation, and with concepts that have been transferable to my consulting work. Unexpectedly, I benefitted tremendously from a course in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). This was a course which I assumed would be a complete waste of time and instead it proved to save my life a year ago when I was confronted with 240 masters and PhD students from 15 countries in a single entrepreneurship course at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm where I currently teach. A registration glitch led to over-booking for the course by students from five different area universities. Using such tools as Wikispaces, a course blog, and the university-based course website, I man-



aged to set up discussion forums not unlike those which I'd participated in at IU. But instead of just one discussion forum, I moderated between 16 and 20 forums with 12 -16 students in each! The online activity, in addition to in class lectures, workshops, visiting lecturers, and reading assignments, allowed me to optimize learning in what was a less than optimal learning situation. With the cooperation of department leadership, partner schools, and a marvelous course assistant, and with the science from IU, we created magic.

The sites used for the course can still be accessed at:

<http://kth-ideation.wikispaces.com>

<http://kth-ideation.blogspot.com>

<http://www.sses.se>

<http://www.jaycut.se> (<http://jaycut.se/folder/11713>) samples of three-minute video presentations created by students

This year, I am directing the course and am pleased to say that, while we again have over 200 registered for "Ideation", we also have two additional sections and two course assistants. While online learning in and of itself should not necessarily be a substitute for in-situ learning, I have come to appreciate the pedagogical benefit of distance learning. Students online are highly conversant and constructively critical. Gender bias is reduced and teacher-student interaction optimized. We will continue to use online tools for smaller classes as well, and I will try to maintain the magic, while remembering that my work day probably should end before midnight.

About the author

Mary Spaeth, president of Transmera AB, based on the Mjärdevi Science Park in Sweden, specializes in entrepreneurship, technology commercialization, FDI, and international market strategy. Mary has earned an MA in literature, an MS in child studies and education and an MPhil in Business.

Mary has taught English at several universities in the U.S. She has taught as a lecturer in Corporate Entrepreneurship at the University of the West of Scotland where she is currently a PhD researcher. She is also a lecturer at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm.

A true "pracademic", Mary has started and managed three companies, and now serves on the board of directors for the Swedish Fulbright Commission.

Employment Opportunity

The English Language Centre (ELC) of University of Macau invites applications for the senior instructor position.

Qualifications & Requirements

Applicants must have an MA in TESL/TEFL/Applied Linguistics or related field with at least 3 years of full-time teaching experience at the tertiary level (preferably teaching student populations similar to those enrolled at a medium-sized public university).

Application Procedure

Application should include cover letter, curriculum vitae, and copies of certificates and must be accompanied by at least three official letters of academic and/or professional reference. Applicants should visit <http://www.umac.mo/vacancy/> for more details, and apply ONLINE at Jobs@UM (<https://isw.umac.mo/recruitment/>) on or before October 12, 2009.



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*Information excerpted from UITS News (<http://uitsnews.iu.edu/?p=1641>).



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