

FROM JAMES STAKENBURG

As we head into the colder months I can't help thinking how nice it would be to be somewhere warm. I always get itchy feet this time of year and fondly recall my trips to Africa, being home in Australia, getting my TESOL certificate in Thailand and learning Spanish in Latin America. Our featured country with job insights



this month is Mexico - perfect for those chilly northern winters! This month's TESOL update also includes some more information on professional development offered at Rennert, a fun teaching tip to file away for the future and more. As always, please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any questions or comments. I hope you enjoy this small insight into the TESOL world.

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Left: Me on the way to the beach, Christmas Day in Sydney, 2006.

DISCOUNTED POST-CERTIFICATE TEACHING SEMINARS AVAILABLE AT RENNERT

Rennert offers a range of one-day teaching seminars that are open to all ESOL teachers in the New York area. Alumni of the SIT TESOL certificate course and Rennert teachers get a discounted rate of \$60 (regular price \$75) for all of these professional seminars.

Grammar for ESL Teachers 1
17 January, 2009
25 July, 2009

- Review Adverbs of Frequency
- A comprehensive overview of the verb tense system
- Discover how to teach grammar inductively
- Grammar Auction

Grammar for ESL Teachers 2
13 December, 2008
21 March, 2009
24 October, 2009

- What is and how to use Passive voice
- Review the Conditionals
- A comprehensive look at Modals
- Grammar Lesson Planning
- More inductive methodology

Teaching Pronunciation
21 February, 2009
19 September, 2009

- All aspects of pronunciation comprehensively covered
- Review the International Phonetic Alphabet
- Practice with Minimal pairs
- Learn how to teach pronunciation

How to Teach Vocabulary & Oral Production (Speaking) activities
25 April, 2009
21 November, 2009

- When to teach vocabulary
- Different methods for teaching vocabulary inductively
- Different activities for all levels to get students speaking

How to Teach Listening & Using Songs in the classroom
30 May, 2009

- How to plan for a Listening lesson
- Steps for teaching Listening
- Lots of Listening tasks and activities for all levels in a communicative class
- Discover lots of activities for songs you can use in the classroom

Using Drama/Theater & Audio-Visuals in the classroom
20 June, 2009

- Why it's important
- Lots of activities you can use
- Learn how to use different AV materials e.g. documentaries, movies, commercials

How to Teach Reading & Writing
22 August, 2009

- Steps for teaching & Lesson Plans
- Discover and experience a variety of different activities you can use in your General English classes

JOBS: Mexico

This month we are featuring the country just south of the border.

The Scoop (word-of-mouth advice from someone who's been there):

Wendy, American

lived in Mexico for 12 months:

"I absolutely enjoyed it. The people are very friendly. They really value friends and family a lot. It's really cool—weekly meeting with their friends is very common. And the food's fantastic and cheap.

The Mexican work week is 45 hours and in most places you will teach Saturdays. Businesses in general expect you to work Saturday mornings. I had random schedules with lots of privates. Classes were paid by the hour. A class is most often 2 hours, but if students want longer lessons, then this is more. There were also lots of evenings (4-8pm is the busiest time). There are lots of after school/work lessons and occasional 7am classes before work. It's fairly common to teach children. Most schools don't pay for prep.

You will experience the culture of wealthy people—students who can pay for private language schools are very wealthy. They can be very demanding. In particular, a lot of kids' classes had very demanding mothers who pressured their children. There were also quite a few business students and a lot of stay-at-home moms during the day doing it as a hobby or for self-improvement. Cancellations without notice or not showing up, is common, but you are paid if they cancel within 24 hours. Lateness is also very common.

Like the US they only give 2-weeks vacation a year. But they are proscribed—one week at Christmas and one week at Easter. The average pay is about \$5/hour. However, the average rent is \$250/300 a month. Meals are a lot cheaper. Note that you can be paid in cash! This pay is better than for locals.

To find a job, you can look on websites; just go; email schools directly; use networking; or go to www.Eslcafe.com to get recommendations. I would recommend going on a tourist visa even if you've secured a job beforehand (this gives you 3 months). During this time, you can find a job if you don't already have one, and get them to sign off and give you a visa. They may pay you back for the visa after you finish your contract. It is quite common for schools to sponsor teachers. The visa costs about \$250 and involves several visits to the immigration office—the red tape is a pain in the neck. Schools will give you information but you may need to do it yourself. Get your visa in the country because it's easier to figure it out then. It's supposedly easier and cheaper to renew the work visa for the second year, but I didn't do this.

About getting an apartment—accommodation is not usually provided by the school. And unlike the US, shared friend apartments are not common. It is easy to find a room. Older women (often widows) rent out rooms in their houses—often including meal (*Casa de estancia*). You can also look in the local newspaper or websites such as www.compartodepa.com.mx as well as websites for newspapers. I found a room on Craigslist. Note that they will charge higher rents to foreigners. Unless you have a Mexican look for an apartment for you, there is not much you can do about this.

Speaking Spanish is not essential, though it makes everything easier. If your boss speaks English, you can work easily. However, it is difficult to find an apartment without Spanish unless your employer helps you find an apartment.

A couple of things that stand out are that Mexicans are generally a lot more OK about romantic insinuations where I would consider it unprofessional. This wasn't culturally deviant—it was totally normal. There was no point in making a fuss. It was so normal there you just let it roll off your back—you had to take it with a grain of salt. They are also more relaxed about talking about alcohol—don't be shocked by how much they talk about beer and tequila."

Judy, American

lived in Mexico for 2 years:

"It's easy to get a job. The hardest part is to get a work permit. You need a work permit to work legally and in



order to get this, you need a job offer. When applying for the work permit, you need to have your diplomas translated by an official translator recognized by Mexican government. The Mexican government makes it hard for you—there is lots of red tape—lots of steps. I actually went with a lawyer the last time. It took about a month but it seemed like a long time because I had gone back so many times.

I found a job first in a lovely little town the first year in Acambaro. I had a really nice apartment that cost me \$150 a month furnished with a TV, VCR, CD player, everything... The people are very, very nice. It's a very nice place to live. The 2nd year I taught at a public university in Morelia. That was also a great place to live.

I found the first job by accident. I typed "jobs in Mexico" in Yahoo and this one came up. They needed someone immediately so I managed to be there in 2 weeks. They said come in on a tourist visa and we'll give you a letter and you'll apply for your work permit when you get there. So I applied for my work visa when I was in Mexico. For the university job in Morelia, I called schools when I was already living there.

I wouldn't go there not speaking anything, although I did. To get my job I had to pass a phone interview in Spanish. I studied verbs on my own and memorized some basic vocabulary so when I talked to them on the phone I did very poorly but they needed people and they just let me go by. Also your students want to ask you some questions after class and if you don't speak any Spanish at all you can't answer their questions.

Regarding my apartment—for the 1st week I stayed in a hotel and I asked around and one of my students said she had a room and she'd like me to come and live there. So for the 1st days I lived there but I didn't have hot water—I took cold showers. I ate lunch with the family at 3:00pm. I stayed there for 3 months but by that time it was winter. Asking around, talking to people I found this other place which was great. Mexicans are very, very nice—you'll always find someone who will help or give you info.

I had to teach early in the morning. In Morelia I started at 7:30am. In Acambaro I taught 32 hours a week and the hours were 10:30am to 3:30pm. In Morelia it was a question of what you taught and if you were new you taught at 7:30am. I taught on Saturdays but you got paid twice as much. As an American by the end of the year I was teaching Advanced level students.

One interesting thing in the universities is that there is *Concurso de Oposicion*—you have to teach in competition with someone else who wants your section and who competes with you, so you have to hang on to your classes. Some people got their classes taken away from them. We followed the academic year—2 semesters. We started at the end of October and we went into July.

You get paid enough to live and maybe take a few little trips but you can't go there with nothing in your pocket just in case. Credit cards are not widely accepted. I was paid \$6-7 an hour and on Saturday \$15/hour. Rent was cheap and food was cheap. And where I lived there were a lot of free things—festivals, dance festivals in the street, places to walk, fireworks display every week at the cathedral. Sundays anywhere in Mexico all you have to do is walk down the street and there are millions of things going on. It's really exciting. I have never lived anywhere where the people were nicer than they were in Mexico.

Photo above: Palenque, Mexico, 2000

TEACHING TIP OF THE MONTH

If you have any great ideas/activities etc that you would like to share, please email me tesol@rennert.com.

SHOUTING DICTATION

A great energizer for a sleepy early morning or afternoon class

Get students to stand in two lines facing each other. The lines should be a good distance apart (at least 3 yards). The person they face is their shouting dictation partner. One line has a text and the line facing them has a pen and paper. The students are given a time limit (depending on the length of the text) to dictate the passage to their partner. Their partner must spell everything correctly and accurately record the punctuation and paragraphing, etc. The noise of so many students speaking will lead to the raising of voices, hence "Shouting Dictation".

The teacher can add to this by walking up and down between the rows talking nonsense or reciting the passage or playing the radio in the middle to further the need to shout!

Variations

- Instead of setting a time limit this can be done as a race, with the winning pair getting a small prize (I find chocolates are fun prizes)
- Give each student in the pair half the passage so they both have the chance to 'dictate' and to 'take dictation'
- Write out every second word of a text, then write out the alternate words on a second copy of the text, so that each student in the pair has to shout out one word at a time, constantly alternating

This activity is a fun way to practice listening skills, spelling, pronunciation (especially if you choose a text that has lots of the same sounds) or to introduce a short text. Note: this can be very noisy so be aware of classrooms around you!

Photo above: Best Practices in TESOL course, New York, September 2008



Happy Holidays!

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REFERRAL BONUS

An easy \$50 for you! If you have friends or family who are looking for a teacher training course or a career change—let them know about our program! If they end up enrolling, we will give you a check for \$50, in appreciation for making the recommendation! Just tell your friends to write your name on their application.

FREE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS AT RENNERT

Free for all SIT TESOL Certificate Alumni

Wednesday, December 3

Time: 6:15–7:15pm
Place: Room 1617
Topic: Taking Language Outside the Classroom
Workshop Leader: Peter McGill
Have your students ever complained that they don't know how to meet Americans, and that they are having problems integrating into life in New York City? In this workshop, you will learn how to teach your students strategies for meeting Americans and using New York to improve their language skills.

Wednesday, December 17

Time: 6:15–7:15pm
Place: Room 1617
Topic: Roundtable on Troubleshooting
Workshop leader: Juhi Baig
In this session, we will take some time to have a round-table discussion and share ideas about classroom management issues and teaching techniques that affect us all. Bring lots of questions!

Extra Job Information:

In Mexico City, a good place to start is the Spanish language newspaper *El Universal* and the English language newspaper *The News* as well as the Yellow Pages. Wages tend to be highest in the capital, but due to the tourist industry, demand for English teachers is quite high in Puerto Vallarta, Cancun, Acapulco and Mazatlan also. Private lessons are also popular—you can advertise yourself in the press and give out business cards. You can also ask at local community centers (*casa de cultura*), library or chamber of commerce.

The following schools are all known to hire American teachers:

US Cultural Institutes such as:
Instituto Mexicano Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales de Saltillo (IMARC)
Teaching young children
Email:imarc@mexnet.mesas.nt

Instituto Mexicano Norteamericano de Jalisco (Guadalajara)

6-month contracts
Tel: (36) 825 58 38
Fax: (36) 825 16 71

Instituto Mexicano Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales de Nuevo Leon

Tel: (83) 340 15 83

Universities such as:
Universidad Autonoma de Chiapas

Tel: 961 50650
Fax: 961 52392

Universidad Autonoma de Chihuahua

Tel: 14 13 54 50
Fax: 14 14 49 32

Private language schools such as:
Colegio Internacional de Cuernavaca

Bilingual kindergarten teaching primary-aged children

Tel: (73) 132 905/ 116 260/ 138 496

Fax: (73) 117 451
Email: cintc@infosel.net.mx

English Unlimited

Tel: 48 33 12 77
Email: eulslp@teqcorp.com.mx

Language Connect Institute
Email: jobs@syrlang.com

Mexican Cross-Cultural Institute

Tel: 42 12 34 35
Email: mcciqr@infosel.net.mx

Please note: While every endeavor is made to ensure this information is accurate, Rennert is not responsible for incorrect information.

OBSERVING ESL CLASSES AT RENNERT

- Are you interested in teaching (ESL) as a second language (ESL) but not sure how it works?
- Do you wonder how it is actually possible to teach without translation?
- Are you wondering if teaching is right for you?

You are welcome to observe classes at Rennert before deciding to do a TESOL certificate course, during the course and whenever you like after the course.

Observing other teachers teach is a valuable experience for all teachers. You can always learn from other teachers' ideas and methods. And now, while you are maybe unsure if this is the right thing for you, it's a great chance to see real professionals in action.

FAQ of the month about the World Learning SIT TESOL Course

Why should I take the WL-SIT TESOL Certificate Course? The WL-SIT TESOL Certificate Course provides practical training in which the participants develop skills in planning lessons and teaching speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar and the culture of English. The workshop sessions are highly interactive and experiential in nature. The course includes fifteen hours of classes to ESOL students. Your trainers and fellow participants will observe you teaching and give "hands-on" advice after each session.

What people have said about the course...

"It's a GREAT Program! You'll learn so much and have a ball in the process. WELL WORTH IT." –Laura

"Following the course I got a job working for a private language institute in Boston, Massachusetts called ASPECT. I worked with people from all over the world. Thanks to the course, I felt well-prepared and most important, confident enough to manage a multi-level, multi-age, multi-cultural classroom." –Heather