



STETS

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STETS AGM

The STETS AGM was held on Saturday 23 April 2005. After the AGM, STETS members enjoyed a talk by Professor Allan Luke, Dean of the Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice at NIE on *English in the Singapore education system - today and tomorrow*.

The following office bearers were elected at the AGM.

<i>President</i>	Phyllis Wachob (NTU)
<i>Vice-President</i>	Grace Kwan (ITE)
<i>Hon. Secretary</i>	Sandra Kemp (TP)
<i>Hon. Treasurer</i>	Irene Tan (NP)
<i>Membership Secretary</i>	Rani Rubdy (NIE)

Auditors

Chin Soo Fun (RELC)
Chitra Varaprasad (NUS)

Institutional Representatives

<i>British Council</i>	David Kemp
<i>Institute of Technical Education</i>	Bhasula Somanesan
<i>Nanyang Polytechnic</i>	vacant
<i>National Institute of Education</i>	Cynthia Macknish
<i>Nanyang Technological University</i>	Loke Wei Sue
<i>National University of Singapore</i>	Ruanni Tupas
<i>Ngee Ann Polytechnic</i>	Irene Tan
<i>Regional Language Centre</i>	Shirley Doo
<i>Republic Polytechnic</i>	vacant
<i>Singapore Polytechnic</i>	Ambigai Ponnampalam
<i>Temasek Polytechnic</i>	Tiew Lee Ching

Hello and goodbye

Dear STETS members

Thanks to all for your interest and help with Special Projects in the past year. We have done a lot of planning for our September joint IATFL BESIG conference and hope to have a good turnout. And thanks to all who believed in me enough to hand me the reins of STETS as president. I hope I have served you well for these past few weeks.

And only weeks it had to be, as I will be leaving Singapore in August to take up a position in Egypt. I know the time and effort needed to keep a volunteer organization going is immense and we must all agree that STETS is worth the effort. Please support your new president, Martin Hope, British Council, with

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all the wonderful help and good wishes that you have shown to me and your other presidents.

Phyllis Wachob



Martin Hope, the new President of STETS, and Phyllis Wachob at the May STETS executive committee meeting

I hate to leave you, but...

As many of you will know, I did not stand for re-election as President at the AGM; under the present STETS constitutional rules I cannot continue as a member of the executive committee after I retire from full-time teaching at Temasek at the end of June, when I reach the age of 62. (Everyone keeps telling me that I don't *look* 61, to which I reply that I don't feel 61 either, but I decided it would be unwise to tamper with my birth certificate!)

Now that I no longer have a personal interest in the matter, I'd like just to repeat here something which I said at the AGM. My experience of voluntary societies over the years suggests that those recently retired are a mainstay of most committees - they still have energy, and are blessed with at least a *little* more available time than those who are still working. At a time when the workload in all educational institutions seems to be continuing to increase, I wonder whether STETS might usefully look again at its constitution to see whether such people could be more actively involved in its affairs.

I also wonder whether we could afford to be a little more liberal in the rules concerning associate members; some of them are among our most active members, and I feel it may be desirable to see whether a way could be found to enable such people to sit on the committee and vote at general meetings.

Any changes need to be considered very carefully, of course; but the AGM encouraged the executive committee to consider these questions, and I'm sure they will be doing that over the next few months and reporting back to you.

This last year has been challenging, not least because the change in working hours has required us to look again at our meeting times. I'm not certain we yet know whether we should go for evening meetings with a slightly later start than before, or concentrate on Saturday mornings even though they are no longer 'working time' for anyone. (I'm sure the new committee would welcome your feedback on that.) What I do know is that we've had some excellent sessions and a very good workshop, so that the Society's twin aims of allowing the exchange of relevant materials and information and encouraging participation in talks, seminars and workshops have continued to be carried out effectively.

We must make sure that institutional workload pressures (and others) do not fatally undermine those two valuable functions. There is no decline in interest in STETS; membership numbers reported at this latest AGM were very healthy - and almost identical to those a year earlier. What all of us, as STETS members, need to do is to demonstrate that interest in a practical way by supporting - and contributing to - the Society's activities. As with any voluntary society,

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nothing can happen unless *we* make it happen.

I must not end without thanking all those who have worked with me this last year to ensure that STETS continues to flourish:

- my fellow officers, Phyllis, Sandra, Grace and Hwee Hoon - a particularly warm thank you to Phyllis and Hwee Hoon who are retiring from Exco.
- my fellow members of the Special Projects Committee, who organized last November's Phil Towndrow workshop and are now hard at work with Evan Frendo of IATEFL on the Business English conference in September.
- all our institutional reps who act so effectively in liaising between their members and Exco and the Special Projects Committee. I should especially mention two people who are leaving the committee: Soo Fun of RELC, who is continuing her active association with STETS by becoming one of our auditors next year; and Meng Choo of NUS, whose impressive swan song was the very effective work she did in organizing this year's AGM at the NUS Guild House.
- our indefatigable webmaster, Kooi Cheng, who despite indicating a wish to retire at the 2004 AGM soldiered on (to great effect) for a whole extra year. She really is going now; so far we have not been able to find a replacement among our members, and if necessary STETS may have to pay someone to do the work. I know the new committee would be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to volunteer. Kooi Cheng has developed the website into something really worthwhile, and we must not lose what we have gained.
- last but not least, the chief editor of our journal, Xudong, and all his editorial board. They are doing a great job - but we still need more articles, and that ball is in your court!

Au revoir to you all.

Richard Slessor

Annual STETS Workshop with Phillip Towndrow

A small but select group met for the annual STETS workshop on Friday and Saturday, 26 and 27 November led by Phil Towndrow of NIE on the topic of *Teachers, learners and computers in current language & communication teaching*. The selected computer lab at NIE was a user-friendly classroom with clusters of tables with computers on them and all eight participants settled down after a brief introduction for what was to be a fruitful and rewarding workshop.

However, what happened next was a perfect example of the interaction of teaching and technology that the participants need to become attuned to if they are to embrace computers as part of their teaching. There was equipment failure. But with a minimum of disruption (and foresight on the part of the facilitator), the whole party moved to an adjacent lab and carried on, with minimal disruptions thereafter.

The focus of the workshop was the discussion in small groups of a case study problem and work for a solution. The conclusion of the workshop on Day Two was a presentation by a member of both teams of their lesson plan. One group, JC and polytechnic teachers, embroiled themselves in preparing a reading lesson. The other team, adult or university level teachers, prepared a lesson on how to edit student work on-line. Participants took away ideas of some of the macro issues, micro issues, problems, solutions and a copy of Phil Towndrow

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and Michael Vallance's book, *Using IT in the Language Classroom*.

The mind was not the only thing that was fed as two different locations were used for breaks and lunch. Specialty coffees and teas as well as sinful cakes were served in the Café at the Learning Hub in the NIE Library. Lunch was at the NTU Staff club and was an intimate affair with all participants seated at one table.

Feedback from participants gave unanimously highest marks to the workshop leader for his facilitation skills and other aspects of the workshop received excellent or good feedback. Although there were few participants, the energy generated was highly satisfying.

Phyllis Wachob



*Dr Phillip Towndrow
and STETS members at
the annual STETS
workshop*

STETS Event - Technology in the business classroom

At the British Council, Saturday 15 January 2005 On Saturday 15 January at the British Council, Michael Connor presented a lively talk on technology in the business classroom. The talk was titled *Small technology shift, big learning gains: On-line digital video and the analysis of elocution*.

Michael, an Assistant Professor at Nanyang Business School (NTU), greeted participants by videotaping their arrival as part of a demonstration of how to use the new generation of digital video technology. The reasons behind videotaping students for purposes of developing presentation skills have been well documented and much discussed. Thus there was only a brief discussion of the pedagogical value of the process. However, given new technology that is much cheaper, easier and quicker to process, students can now have a different experience than in the past. Dr Connor demonstrated the ease and speed of giving students access to the video presentation by downloading and processing the material videotaped at the beginning of the presentation. Students can now view their class work within hours on their own computers, thus giving them a different perspective and space within which to reflect and evaluate their work.

With only a few IT glitches, the software and hardware were up to the job. The 17 participants were able to see the step-by-step process as well as view themselves on the screen. The excitement generated about the possibilities was only tempered by the eternal question, "Now, how can I persuade my institution to spend the money?"

Phyllis Wachob

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STETS Event - Learning at Ngee Ann



Ms Jacintha John speaking about the Ngee Ann Polytechnic Learning Model

Two talks were held at Ngee Ann Polytechnic on Wednesday 16 February 2005, 6.30 to 8:30 pm: 1) *The Ngee Ann Learning Model* by Jacintha John and 2) *A study on the status of international students at Ngee Ann Polytechnic and their use of English* by Michael Rebaczonok.

Ms Jacintha John, a Senior Lecturer from the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, spoke about the Ngee Ann Learning Model (NLM). The NLM was launched in July 2001 to provide a balanced and broad-based curriculum for Ngee Ann students so that they are better able to meet the needs of the workplace. Jacintha spoke about the 96 interdisciplinary modules from the categories: Communication, Lifeskills, Media & the Arts, Science & Technology, and Entrepreneurship, and how the students could select the module of their choice in the web enrolment exercise held before the start of each semester.

Mr Michael Rebaczonok, also a Senior Lecturer from the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, conducted a study in the July 2003 semester to determine the degree to which the final year international students of that time had improved their command of English while at the polytechnic. Most of these students were from China, with a smaller number coming chiefly from Myanmar and elsewhere in Southeast or South Asia.

The study consisted of a survey and discussion groups. The results showed that the majority of students did indeed perceive that their English had improved during their three-year course of studies at Ngee Ann, though some voiced their frustrations with the English-speaking environment not just at Ngee Ann, but in the greater Singapore context.

A study of relevant academic results was also under-taken to determine the accuracy of the students' perceptions in respect of their progress with English. These results generally indicated that students often went down by one letter grade from that obtained in their foundational, first-year EFL English module to their second and third year modules common to all NP students. This by no means suggested a drop in their performance, however, but rather a general consistency in performance, given the vastly different nature of the modules involved.

Irene Tan

STETS Event - Accent Models

Dr David Hyatt from the University of Sheffield conducted a workshop *on Models of accent in the ELT classroom: a practical consideration of English language teachers' perceptions of appropriate accent models* on 10 March at Temasek Polytechnic. During the workshop, we had the opportunity to consider which varieties of English accent (native and non-native speaker) we considered acceptable in the ELT classroom. We began by discussing the socio-linguistic influences on our own accents and one of the highlights of

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the workshop was when we listened to a range of accent models and tried to identify the type of accent - a difficult task in some cases! We also rated whether or not we considered each accent to be acceptable in the ELT classroom and why. The discussion in the workshop raised a number of implications related to social judgements of accents, and David left us with some practical recommendations to ponder. With the discussion ranging from Bourdieu to Bainbridge, David kept us engrossed in the key issues and how they connect to the context in Singapore.

Sandra Kemp

IATEFL conference, Cardiff UK

Michael Vallance from NIE attended the 39th IATEFL conference. 5-9th April, 2005 in Cardiff, UK, with STETS providing partial financial support. Michael's conference report can be found on [http://homepage.mac.com/mvallance/select DOWNLOAD FILES](http://homepage.mac.com/mvallance/select_DOWNLOAD_FILES_and_download_IATEFLreport.pdf), and download [IATEFLreport.pdf](#)

Here he gives a summary of his own workshop at the conference.

What does it mean to be literate in the Digital Age? According to Merriam-Webster (<http://www.m-w.com>) 'literate' is an adjective that derives from the Latin word 'litteratus', which means 'marked with letters'. The implication is that a literate person is educated, cultured, able to read and write, versed in literature or creative writing, literary, lucid, polished or having knowledge or competence. The latter two qualities (i.e. having knowledge and competence) is particularly relevant to English language learners in the information-rich 21st Century. For instance, technology and literacy have become so intertwined with the implication being that if a person is lacking in technology-related skills, then he or she cannot really be regarded as being equipped to function successfully in today's society (Towndrow & Vallance, 2004). Given this need to be digitally literate, a number of definitions have recently appeared in the literature;

- Digital literacy is the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers (Gilster, 1997; p.1).
- The ability to understand how information is generated and communicated in all formats together with the ability to create critical frameworks for the retrieval, organisation, evaluation, presentation and use of information (Central European University, 2001)
- ICT literacy is using digital technology, communication tools, and /or networks to access, manage, evaluate, integrate and create information in order to function in a knowledge society (ETS, 2005).

In effect, the literature states that being digitally literate is the ability of the person to seek, evaluate, critique and utilise information in the anticipated formation of knowledge. And this information can be sought from digital repositories such as the World Wide Web, databases, documents, CD-ROMs, DVDs, etc. Being digitally literate should thus not be considered synonymous with technical competency. Having the skills to customise a Word document, copy and paste text, or beautify PowerPoint presentations with graphics does not equate to being digitally literate.

Having defined what is (and what is not) digital literacy, it can be seen that integration of the digital literacy skills is essential for English language learners in today's Digital Age. In other words, for the improvement of language learners' communication skills (whether reading, writing, listening or speaking), the ability to utilise technology for the development of personal knowledge has become a necessary component of using language.

In order to exemplify teaching digital literacy, a K-W-L (Know- Want to know-

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Learned) organiser can be used to develop an outline employing Inspiration software and the World Wide Web. A fully featured, 30-day demonstration of Inspiration (Mac and PC) can be downloaded from <http://www.inspiration.com>. The context of the information to be gathered in this example is the development of an expository essay outline entitled, Do mobile phones cause cancer? In the first stage, the students initially discuss their stance on the issue (a concerned parent, a telecommunications representative, or a teenager). They then open the Inspiration software and brainstorm what they know about the topic. This is termed the K (Know) component of the KWL organiser. Later, they negotiate up to five questions that they consider relevant to the topic. This is termed the W (Want to know) component of the KWL organiser. These questions become the focus of their search for information using resources such as the Web, journals, news articles, etc. Students also need to make use of a Web search engine's Advanced Find option in order to limit the number of pages that will be retrieved. The use of synonyms and relevant phrases are particularly useful.

The students are now ready to manage and evaluate all the information found. Let's assume students have found numerous Websites on the topic. They can use the EDIT- FIND tool to locate key words such as phone and cancer on a Web page, and then read around the flagged phrase. Students can quickly decide whether the information is relevant without necessarily scrolling down the pages and reading much of the text at this stage. The Web page can also be bookmarked. This process can be repeated until, say, five relevant Web pages have been located. The students then have to summarise, in their own words, the issues discussed on the Web pages and consider how these summaries integrate into their outline. Next, they insert the summarised information into Inspiration. This is the L (Learned) component of the KWL organiser. An example is illustrated in Figure 1.

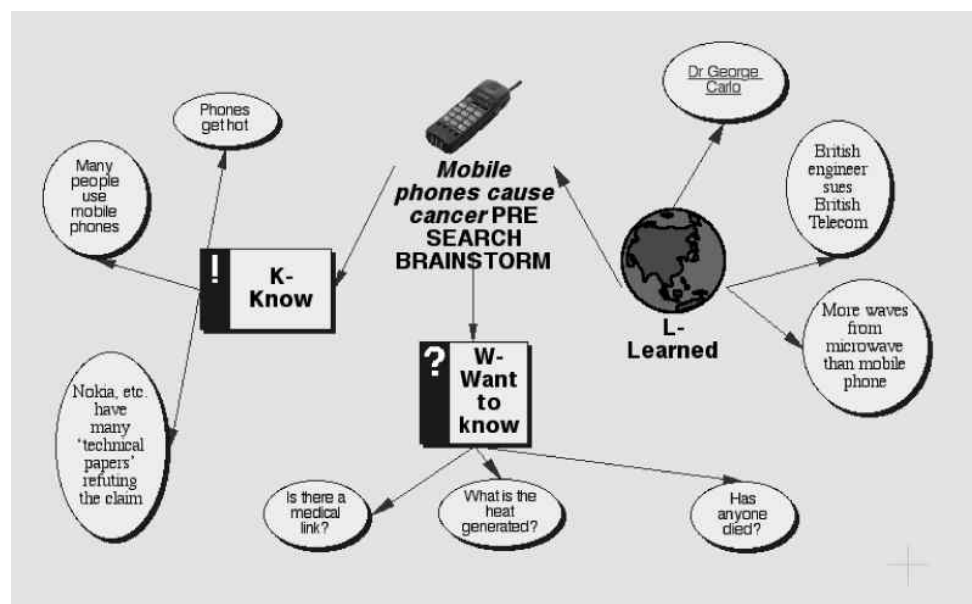


Figure 1. A KWL organizer

The students finally consider how they are going to present their outcome. There are many options which include creating an oral presentation, writing an essay, conducting a role-play, or digitally taping a news item. In summary, throughout this example the students have been using technology to access, manage, evaluate, integrate and create information. In effect, the students are developing digital literacy skills.

The following four examples were developed at the IATEFL workshop. Participants were simply asked to design a task that encompasses one, or more than one, of the key elements of digital literacy above assuming students have

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access to technology.

1. Plan a break. Decide upon a budget. Access Web to locate hotels, tours, etc (as per plan). Evaluate resources. Create a proposal such as a presentation or a marketing brochure.
2. Access a variety of sources such as news, journals, Web, essays, e-mail experts, etc. in order to gain points of view on a particular topic. The emphasis is on choice (by learners). Later, evaluate resources found.
3. Choose a place to sleep for a night. This can be an outing. Learners develop criteria. They can then create a marketing presentation (persuasion) or write a synopsis for a related travel website based upon relevant information found (such as via the Web) and evaluated.
4. Travel. Learners assigned to find reasons why one would want to visit a certain location. Access to information is promoted and then it is evaluated. Or students can create a questionnaire to gather information. This can be a Web form questionnaire.

All the tasks imply some flexibility in the process and the product.

In conclusion, access to incredibly rich resources via transformational technology is empowering our students to communicate in new and powerful ways. They deserve teachers who can help them utilise this potential effectively. To enable this, it is therefore vital that teachers look beyond the technicalities of 'how to use IT' and focus their efforts on the more intellectually challenging issue of developing digital literacy to support English language competency.

1. Digital Literacy is a complex set of skills needed to understand and use information in multiple formats.
2. The development of Digital Literacy Skills is particularly well-suited to language learning contexts where information needs to be located, organised and published.
3. Digital Literacy Skills is not synonymous with advancing computer competency.

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Michael Vallance

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Forthcoming Events

2005 - 2006

The new programme for 2005-2006 is currently being planned.

As soon as details are confirmed STETS members will be advised. Check the STETS website for the latest updates. www.stets.org.sg

STETS/BESIG Business English conference

Plans for the September international conference on Business English at RELC, organized jointly by STETS and IATEFL's Business English SIG, are developing well. (For those unfamiliar with 'BESIG', Evan Frenedo has very kindly provided a short description of its activities which you will find at the end of this newsletter.)

An outline conference programme, with details of all the keynote speakers, is already available at www.besig.org; sixteen presentation proposals on a wide range of interesting topics have now been accepted, from six different countries (perhaps six and a half if one sees the Hong Kong SAR as somewhat separate from the PRC proper!); and the full programme should be available on the website by mid-June. Details will also be sent direct to all STETS members.

The conference promises to be a must-attend event for all STETS members involved with teaching communication in a business or professional context, and as it replaces our usual workshop this year, we hope our member institutions will be supportive as far as fees are concerned.

Call for Papers

The *STETS Language & Communication Review* invites the submission of unpublished articles concerning aspects of the teaching and learning of English proficiency and communication skills in tertiary institutions in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Specifically, articles may discuss the following issues related to teaching and learning of English in tertiary education:

- syllabus and curriculum design
- testing and evaluation
- teacher training, pedagogy
- classroom practices
- computer-assisted language learning
- other issues

We also welcome submissions of the following:

- reports of original research
- review articles
- bibliographic essays
- book reviews
- reviews of workshops (STETS-sponsored or otherwise)

Submission guidelines:

- Length - between 1500 and 6000 words.
- Abstract to be included with your submission.
- A 50-word author biography to be included with your submission.
- Your contact details to be included with your submission.

Articles will be submitted to a blind review by at least two of our Editorial Board

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members and / or subject reviewers. The Editor reserves the right to edit articles for format consistency when this does not alter the substance.

For more details, please refer to the *Contributor's Guidelines* which is available from your STETS representative or at the STETS website www.stets.org.sg. We encourage you to e-mail your articles. However, if you mail your article, please include a soft copy on floppy disk.

Please send your submissions to
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STETS Membership

The annual subscription fee is S\$10.00 which is renewable either at the end of June or December. STETS is a non-profit organization and does not charge GST for its membership and event registration fees.

Two types of membership are available:

Ordinary Membership: for full-time academic staff in tertiary institutions in Singapore.

Associate Membership: for anyone interested both in and outside Singapore.

Just complete the Membership Application Form which is available from your STETS representative or download a copy from www.stets.org.sg and send it to us. As a member, you can enjoy the following perks:

- opportunities to present your papers at IATEFL conferences
- 10% discount at Pansing RELC
- free copies of the L&C Review
- invitations to professional talks
- reduced workshop fees
- AGM lunches
- establishment of professional ties with all tertiary institutions in Singapore and associate members from other institutions and professional societies

Call for Speakers

We would like to ask all our readers to contribute suggestions for possible speakers and/or topics for events. The presenters could be locally-based or from overseas. The more ideas the better!

If you or someone you know, are willing to give a talk or workshop that would benefit STETS members, please contact Sandra Kemp at secretary@stets.org.sg

If you would like to publicize in our Newsletter, your research or your institute's events, that would be interesting to our members, contact Sandra Kemp at secretary@stets.org.sg

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Are you involved in the teaching of Business English?

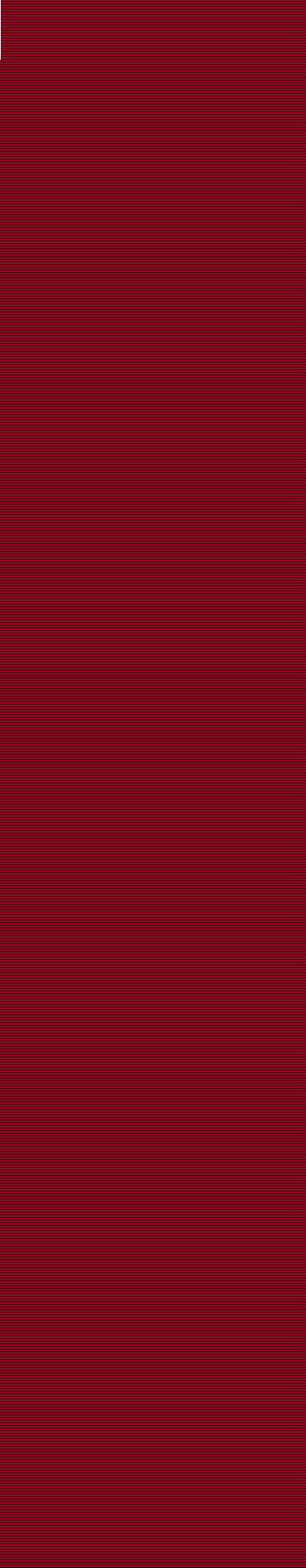
In September this year STETS and IATEFL's BESIG are combining to run a conference entitled "Business English in the 21st century."

What is BESIG?

Aimed at anyone involved in the Business English teaching profession, BESIG provides ways to link members up with other like-minded professionals and exchange views and experience for the benefit of all. The Business English SIG was formed in 1986, and currently has just under 600 members worldwide, which makes it the largest SIG in IATEFL. Members include native and non-native speakers of English, teachers in vocational, higher or tertiary education, in-company trainers, consultants, authors, budding authors, publishers, managers of schools, directors of studies, freelancers, company language department managers, teacher trainers, communication trainers, intercultural trainers, bookshops, you name it. BESIG is a very dynamic group where members play an active role in shaping its future.

There are three main benefits for members:

- **Regular Events.** BESIG organises a number of events each year. The annual conference is held every November, and is attended by around 350 delegates and most of the major publishers. This conference is normally held in Europe - recent venues have included London (2002), Rotterdam (2003), and Vienna (2004). In 2005 the conference is in Monaco from 11-13 November, and is being hosted by the International University of Monaco. Secondly, BESIG organises local events which may be anything from a small workshop to a mini-conference. Previous venues have included Barcelona (2002), Malta (2003) and Dnipropetrovsk (2004). The 2005 event will be run in Singapore from 16-18 September, together with STETS. Finally, BESIG is always well represented at IATEFL events. This year's IATEFL conference in Cardiff (5-9 April) included a pre-conference event on business English and testing, organised in conjunction with IATEFL's TEA SIG, as well as a wide variety of talks and presentations.
- **Publications.** Not all members are able to make it to an event, and for them the newsletter (Business Issues) is probably the main benefit of membership. The newsletter is published three times a year, and has a variety of stimulating articles, both serious and light hearted, as well as reviews, letters, and classified ads. To give an idea, the last edition had articles on syllabus design, culture and discourse strategies, learner centred teaching, US behavioural patterns, tips on web host selection, reports from recent events, as well as regulars such as the research review, CD/Internet page, and book reviews. BESIG is also planning to start a refereed academic journal in the not too distant future.
- **Website (www.besig.org).** BESIG's website has developed into a wonderful resource for anyone involved in business English teaching. It includes lists of events, registration details, useful links, a discussion forum and a mailing list, and is open to members and non-members alike.



And finally

BESIG offers its members unique networking possibilities – there is no other organisation in the world which has so many international members, and which focuses purely on the teaching of business English. For many business English practitioners it has become the organisation to join.

Evan Frendo

For further details see www.besig.org, or contact Evan at evan.frendo@besig.org.

(Adapted from an article originally published in the *EL Gazette*)

