

CATESOL NEWSLETTER

SERVING TEACHERS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE



Letter from the CATESOL President

As we come to the end of 2021, I am excited to begin my term as the new CATESOL President. I want to thank you for being a member of CATESOL and also thank the person I took over from as President, Susan Gaer, for leading CATESOL through two difficult years mostly defined by the COVID-19 pandemic and our response to all of our lives being upended in varying degrees by living and working from home in an effort to stay safe.



I am still amazed that since those fateful days in March 2020, CATESOL has hosted two virtual State Conferences, two virtual Spring Conferences, and a host of virtual Chapter, Interest Group, and Level workshops. By this measure alone, CATESOL is a much different organization than a few years ago. So many people have stepped up to lead this transformation and help CATESOL respond to the needs of our colleagues in the field who have been tirelessly serving students, their colleagues, and communities all across the state. We owe them all a round of thank you!

So, what does the future of CATESOL look like? This is a question that I hope will be addressed by the membership in the coming weeks, months, and years as we shape an organization that can lead the field of English language teaching. And there are many ways to get involved in CATESOL! The easiest way is to connect with other members via the Memberleap message boards which allow for conversation and a sharing of ideas at different teaching levels (K12, Adult Education, (Cont.)

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Community College, College/University, and IEP) and in different interest groups. Sharing your questions, solutions, challenges, and successes with others helps all of us reflect on our practice and improve the work we do with students and those we serve.

In addition, there are activities to assist with that are connected to CATESOL's mission as an association of professionals advancing the quality of English language teaching and learning through professional development, research, standards, and advocacy. It could be working on a conference committee in some capacity, or joining our advocacy team to learn how to advocate for our students, colleagues, and others affected by social, political, legal, economic, and other developments in our state and country. It could also be sharing your knowledge, expertise, and passion via CATESOL communications, whether it is in the CATESOL blog, in a future Newsletter, on CATESOL social media, or in the *CATESOL Journal*.

As a member, you control your involvement in this organization, and we hope that you will consider becoming involved in CATESOL in some way. You can reach out to me via email at catesol@catesol.org - I would love to hear your thoughts about the future of CATESOL and work with you on any questions or concerns about our organization. And thank you again for being a member of CATESOL!

Words from the Editor

Kara Mac Donald

This issue of the newsletter, and the January 55-1 Issue, highlight some of the plenary speakers at the CATESOL Annual 2021 State-wide Conference held virtually in October. The Feature article in this issue is from Jaydene Elvin who gave the second Saturday Plenary, "Chill like a teacher: Activities to Promote Mental Well-being for Teachers and Students", with a contribution related to her session. The Feature article offered in the January 2022 issue is by Ayanna Cooper, who gave the Friday night opening plenary, "Reflect, Re-envision and Reinvest in the Success of Multilingual Learners". Her article also draws on topics from that session. Member Spotlight Contribution from the renowned Stephen Krashen with Nooshan Ashtari on the topic of using comic books in the classroom, drawing on their conference presentation. There is Member Submission I, by Liza Martinez, where she shares her experience and reflections on translanguaging. The Member Submission II is from TOP Coordinators, Marsha Chan and Jaydene Elvin.



This is the last issue in 2021 of the CATESOL Newsletter since the publication went quarterly in January of this year. We have published four issues regularly with a substantial amount of relevant content through membership invited and self-submitted pieces. I look forward to the opportunity to continue as the newsletter editor, as it permits me at means to interact with a variety of members, chapters, and interest groups that I may not normally have interaction. Even though the first issue of 2022 is in January (Issue 55-1) back-to-back with this current issue in December 2021, content is slated for a full issue. The newsletter is CATESOL members. It operates and exists because of membership involvement. Now may not be the moment, but keep in mind member submissions of all types are welcome. So, when you have an idea or something to share, please think of the CATESOL Newsletter. Submissions and questions to Kara Mac Donald at newsletter@catesol.org

New CATESOL Interest Groups (IGs)



Image Credit: The Association for Prevention Teaching and Research (APTR) https://www.aptrweb.org/members/group_select.asp?type=10771

Check out the New CATESOL Interest Groups

Corpus-informed Research and Teaching Interest Group (**CIRT-IG**) - Contacts: Margi Wald, Nicole Brun-Mercer & Lily Lewis

Refugee Concerns Interest Group (**RC-IG**) - Contacts: Judy O'Loughlin & Brenda Custodio

University of Sothern California Interest Group (**USC-IG**) - Contact: Nancy Kwang Johnson & Yi (Holly) Gao

Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer + Interest Gorup (**LGBTQ+-IG**) - Contacts: Dyan Collings Raph & Erin Peter Kourelis



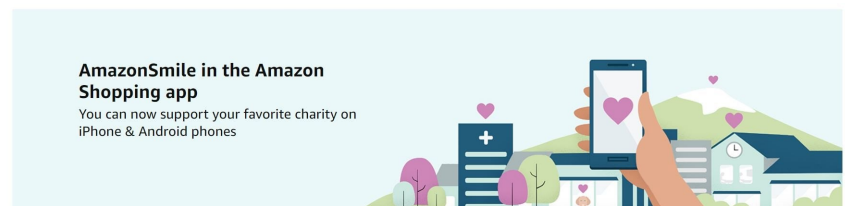
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Feature Article- Chill like a Teacher: Activities to Promote Mental Well-being for Teachers and Students

Jaydene Elvin

Teaching is tough under any circumstance and an accumulation of multiple bad days can lead to long-term stress, feelings of being overwhelmed or teacher burnout. Too often as teachers we neglect our own needs, usually because there's simply not enough time in the day. But that is where we are making the first mistake – to be effectively providing for our students, we need to be taking care of ourselves. So, if you are a teacher who finds very little time to devote to your own mental well-being, hopefully this short article will help you understand a little more about how our brain copes with stress and some strategies that can help us manage it and prevent long-term teacher burnout.

Stress is our mental and physical state when we experience something difficult or threatening. It can manifest itself in several ways – a physical response to an immediate threat (legs shaking, heart racing, etc.), worried or nervous feelings, or perhaps the trigger of the flight, fight or freeze mode. Our cerebral cortex, the rational part of our brain, is responsible for regulating voluntary actions such as reasoning, thinking, and movement. Our frontal lobes evaluate emotion based on experience – they use reason to respond to any emotional triggers. Our response to stress is often determined by the state of our *amygdala* in the moment. The amygdala is the part of our brain that is responsible for emotional processing. It is the part that triggers our fight, flight and/or freeze mode. In normal circumstances, when the amygdala wants to trigger an emotional response to a perceived threat, the frontal lobes will determine whether the danger is real. However, in some extreme cases, the amygdala may take over, disabling our frontal lobes and causing what is known as an amygdala hijack.

Ever had a moment where you seriously overreacted to something, or lashed out at someone and then immediately regretted it? You were probably a victim of what is called the “amygdala hijack” (<https://www.healthline.com/health/stress/amygdala-hijack>). When we feel threatened, our thoughts and emotions can bypass the cortex and take over. The amygdala will respond to stress, activating the flight, flight, or freeze mode and then disables those frontal lobes. When this happens, reason goes out the door and irrational behavior usually steps in.

So, why have I chosen to talk about the amygdala hijack in an article about strategies to promote mental well-being? Well, sometimes we don't recognize how the stresses of the outside world are affecting our in-class performance. The more stressed and overwhelmed we feel, the more likely we are to experience these episodes of an amygdala hijack, and that's something we want to avoid in the classroom. Imagine you are a teacher who also happened to deal with some parental/caregiver stress over the weekend, oh and you barely got any sleep! You go to class on Monday and there you are met with the same normal “challenging” behaviors from a problematic student, but the patience that you would normally have for this student has been depleted from the stresses of their weekend. Chances are, every little thing that student does that day is probably going to bother you, and it's probably not going to be a good day for either of you. The more worn out we are, the more (Cont.)



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Feature Article cont.

likely we are to lash out, or overreact in certain situations that's the amygdala hijack occurring). We've probably all experienced it at least once, and I am here to tell you not to blame yourself for it! We shouldn't blame ourselves for having these reactions, because our brain literally wasn't able to respond to the situation rationally. But if we can be aware of what's going on in the moment, then maybe we can figure out a way to prevent it, especially when it matters most – in class.

Positive mindfulness activities can and should be used to manage stress, prevent the amygdala hijack and ultimate teacher burnout.

Increased emotional intelligence can help prevent many instances of the amygdala hijack and participating in positive mindfulness activities can be a great place to start (<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-happens-during-an-amygdala-hijack-4165944>). Those who are mindful have the ability to be present and aware. They tend not to be overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around them. When you are aware of what's going on, your ability to control your emotions is strengthened, and this is ultimately what we need in order to overcome the amygdala hijack and to handle stressful situations.

So here are a few suggestions to help you in those emergency stressful situations.



1. The 6-second chill out & deep breathing

When a stress response has been triggered, it takes 6 seconds for the chemicals spewing out from the amygdala to dissipate. When you find yourself overwhelmed by stress – give yourself 6 seconds to calm down. You will want to take deep breaths as you do this. If students are with you, have them join in this exercise as well. Ultimately, you want to find something positive to savor for at least six seconds until your emotional reaction subsides.

2. Thinking reactivity scale (Adapted from <https://karendwood.com/>)

When you are overwhelmed by a stress-related emotion (anger, frustration, etc.) try to picture how your reaction might look like on a reactivity scale of 1-10. Let's go back to the example of caregiver stress – your child is refusing to go to sleep, you feel your anger and frustration rising, you are probably at least an 8 on the reactivity scale. This is a good time for you to start picturing how you might look or respond if you were at an emotional reaction level 4. Maybe you are doing some deep breathing, maybe it's an attempt to soothe the crying child. Let your mind visualize yourself reacting to this situation if your emotions weren't so heightened. Once you've brought yourself down to a 4, you can then repeat the process until you have brought yourself down to an emotional level of 1 and handling that situation. The goal of this reactivity scale is to get us clearly thinking so we can deal with the situation appropriately. This scale is also a good one to use with your students. It's helpful to have them identify what number they are at. So, if you can see one of your students is at an 8 on that reactivity scale – you could calmly say to them "hmm looks like you're feeling pretty mad right now, you're probably at an 8 right? What do you think you'd look like if you were at a 4 right now, so we can have a nice class? You can then walk away for a moment to allow them picture what that would look like. You might then return and say, "I can see you're really visualizing that 4 right now, now lets see what you would look like if you were a 1". Again, you move away so that they can get a mental image of that and hopefully are able to calm themselves down and begin to cooperate.

3. Visualization meditation

Visualization meditation can be a great way to help calm the mind and put you in a relaxed state. It's a method where you take a few minutes to picture positive images, symbols, ideas, affirmations, etc. (Cont.)

You can get a lot out of a short and simple 5-minute visualization. You are more likely to turn these positive visualizations into a habit if you keep them short. Visualization methods can follow a couple of different paths. Perhaps it is going to your “happy place”, putting yourself into a situation where you are calm and relaxed, or perhaps your positive visualization is your mental rehearsal of the goal you want to achieve. If you don’t feel like you can come up with your own meditation, then there are plenty freely available online (check out our shared Padlet at the end of the article). The goal is for you to be able to build up to 5 minutes of meditation a day so that your rest can become more effective. Ideally visualization meditation should form part of your daily routine. If you have this as part of your routine, then you will be able to draw upon it in emergency situations, where you need a minute to go to your “happy place”.

Summary

Teachers are living in a “new normal” – don’t forget yourself in all of this! Take the time to ensure that your mental well-being is taken care of. I’ve listed a couple of suggestions in this article, but there are many more things that you can do to prevent teacher-burnout. Remember, we need to be recharging our own batteries daily. Just as phones are not useful to us if they have run out of battery, we too may not be useful to our students if we have run out of steam. Seek opportunities to get in a decent recharge – just as 5 minutes of charge might only add 1% to our phones, likewise we need to find opportunities for full recharges, so that we can face the day to day challenges we face in the classroom. Finally, remember to seek help when things become overwhelming.

Looking for some resources or wanting to share some of your own?! Use the QR code below to access our CATESOL Chill Like a Teacher Padlet



Author Spotlight: Dr. Jaydene Elvin, The Hub for Language Teaching and Learning, Department of Linguistics, California State University, Fresno. <https://thehubcsufresno.wixsite.com/thehubcsufresno>

Member Spotlight Contribution – Making Comics Suitable for Second Language Acquirers

Stephen Krashen & Nooshan Ashtari

In our presentation at CATESOL on comic book reading, we reported on research in English as a first language showing that comic book reading was associated with more pleasure reading in general and led to better literacy development. We also noted that contrary to statements by some critics, today's comic books often contain stories that clearly qualify as "literature," obviously the main reason comics are still very popular among readers of all ages (the present writers included).

A major question is the balance between comprehensibility and interest. Can today's comic books be both interesting and comprehensible for ESL students? Will Donald Duck stories written for third graders be of interest to older students? Should we consider creating "graded" comic books, sophisticated stories written with less daunting language? Will Wonder Woman and Spider-Man have the same impact written at the third-grade level instead of the seventh-grade level?

Another route is to take advantage of the contribution of the first language in making English more comprehensible. One case history gives us reason to think this is possible: Henkin and Krashen (2015). Ramon, a teenage acquirer of ESL with a 6th grade education in Mexico was placed in grade 9 after arriving in the US, with little knowledge of English. At that time he could read only simple kindergarten level books in English.

When living in Mexico, he had watched a TV series in Spanish about a teenage Ninja, "Naruto." In the US he discovered that Naruto was available in manga/comic book form in English. He became a dedicated Naruto reader midway through his first year in the US. His reading improved, and his English test scores improved. In fact, after only one year he nearly scored well enough to be reclassified, and he passed his mainstream classes, taught in English with some modifications. He continued to improve the next year and has expanded his reading to include Rick Riordan novels, such as *The Lightning Thief*.

In essence this was a case of de facto bilingual education, knowledge gained through the first language (familiarity with Naruto) combined with compelling comprehensible input in English. It provides additional support for the power of fiction to contribute to academic success, and could be a model for a pleasant and highly efficient path to English competence.

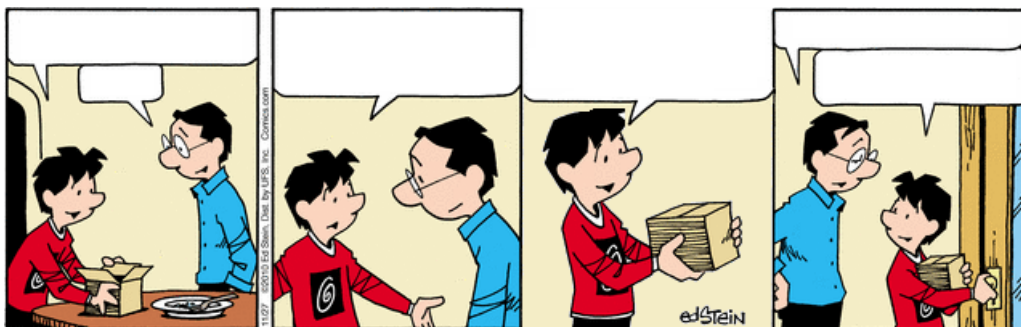


Image Credit: ELS Lounge, <http://www.esl-lounge.com/level4/level-4-upper-intermediate-blanked-out-comic-strip-5.php>

Reference

Henkin, V., & Krashen, S. (2015). The Naruto breakthrough: The home run book experience and English language development. *Language Magazine*.15(1): 32-25, published as "The Home Run book experience." <https://tinyurl.com/y42xf2vb>

The Class

Armed with this new information, I decided that I would use translanguaging in my first level beginning ESL class in Spring 2021. The goal would be to strive for the following: 1) use L1 to introduce, reinforce, and clarify concepts, and 2) create a space for students to express themselves fully. The class was taught through Zoom. It consisted of 13 female Hispanic students whose average age was 30 years old. The class was a four-day, 17-week class. I recorded five classes which lasted 1 hour and 15 minutes each.

Results

Before watching the videos, I was concerned that I had used too much Spanish in class. Once I watched the videos, however, I realized that I had not. I used Spanish in the following situations: 1) for grammatical explanations; 2) for instructions; and 3) to clarify a word. Students would ask questions in Spanish, I would confirm their responses by using English. If a doubt persisted, I would use Spanish. All the students met the course competencies and passed the class with an average of 90%. Nevertheless, students did not speak very much English on their own; it may have been because of timidity and/or the nature of Zoom, which does not encourage vocal participation. It is much easier for students to remain silent and listen to the teacher. Since I will continue to do Zoom classes in the near future, I will have students do more speaking/listening activities as well as PowerPoint presentations in English. It will be interesting to see how students would respond to the use of L1 in a face-to-face ESL class.

Closing Thoughts

Video recording my ESL classes has helped me a great deal. It has enabled me to see what I do in my ESL classes. For the future, I would like to do more video recordings where I see how often, and in what contexts, L1 is used in the ESL classroom. I would also like to survey students at the beginning and end of the semester on their perceptions of the use of L1 in their ESL class. The end goal would be to develop lessons that will tap into my students' language repertoire while increasing their English proficiency.

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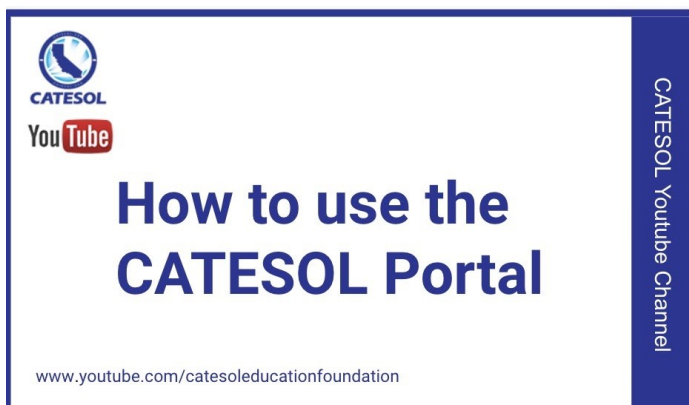
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- Slimbach, R. (2015). The Transcultural Journey, *The Forum on Education Abroad*. "competence of a transcultural kind must exhibit the attitudes and abilities that facilitate open and ethical interaction with people across cultures" (Slimbach, 2015, p. 206).



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How to use the CATESOL Portal

Access short video tips on how to log in, how to use message boards, and how to engage with other CATESOL members.

[How to Use the CATESOL Portal](#)

Marsha Chan

pronunciationdoctor@gmail.com

Member Submission II- TOP-IG Group Members Provide Feedback on their experiences with our TOP Professional Development

Marsha Chan & Jaydene Elvin

Conducting the Survey

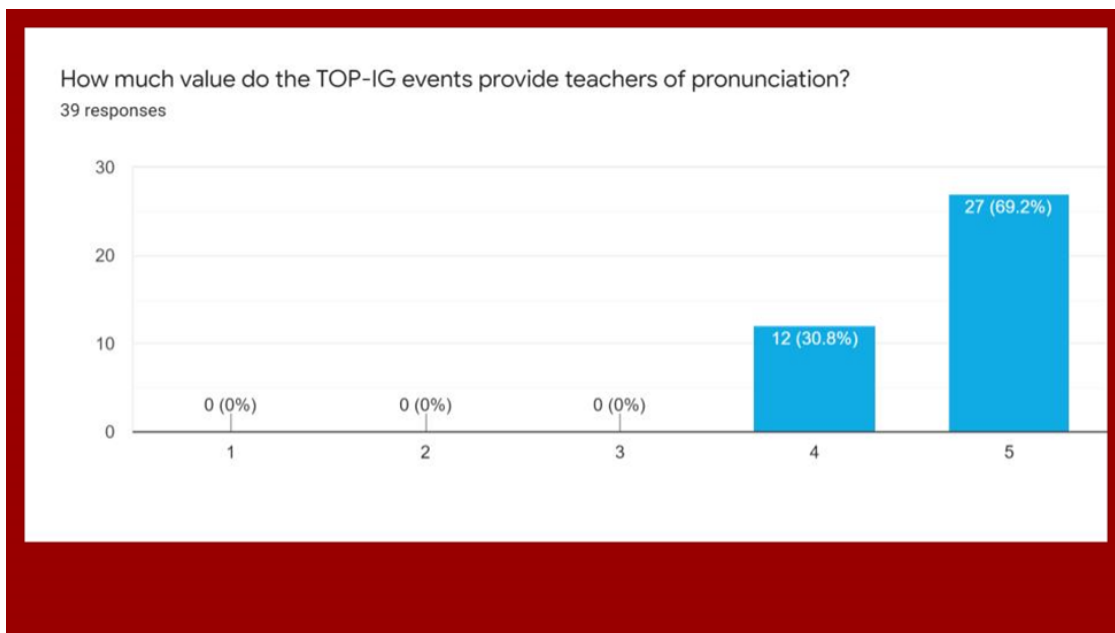
In Fall 2021, 2020-21 TOP Co-coordinators Marsha Chan and Jaydene Elvin, along with Assistant Coordinator Randall Rightmire, polled the Teaching of Pronunciation Interest Group. An online Google survey was announced via the catesoltop message board and our IG Facebook group, and TOP members were encouraged to participate. The survey was designed to gather information regarding how members have responded to the virtual workshops TOP-IG had hosted during 2020-21.

40 respondents submitted their opinions and comments, with 75% of the respondents stating they were CATESOL members at the time of submission. The results were compiled and shared virtually at the CATESOL Annual Conference during the November 5th TOP Business Meeting.

Member Engagement at 2021 Virtual TOP Events

Respondents were asked to share whether or not they attended any of the 15 virtual workshops offered throughout the year. Between 60 and 87.5% of respondents stated that they had not attended these workshops, with some commenting that the reason for this was that they did not see the advertised information about the events, and others commenting that they were busy. Between 7.5 and 27.5% of the respondents stated that they had attended the events, with 5-7.5% of the members stating that they were able to watch the recording of the event. In addition, 2.5-5% of the respondents stated that they both attended the event and watched the recording afterward. When asked, on a scale of 1 to 5 how much value the TOP-IG events provide teachers of pronunciation, 30.8% of the respondents chose 4 (good value) and 69.2% of the respondents selected 5, which corresponds to "great value".

Feedback from respondents who had attended the events suggest that our TOP-IG members really enjoyed the professional development workshops. Some members commented that they liked that the activities "were practical and can be implemen[t]ed in our classroom". Some also commented that they liked "hearing about research that shows what we're doing is working".

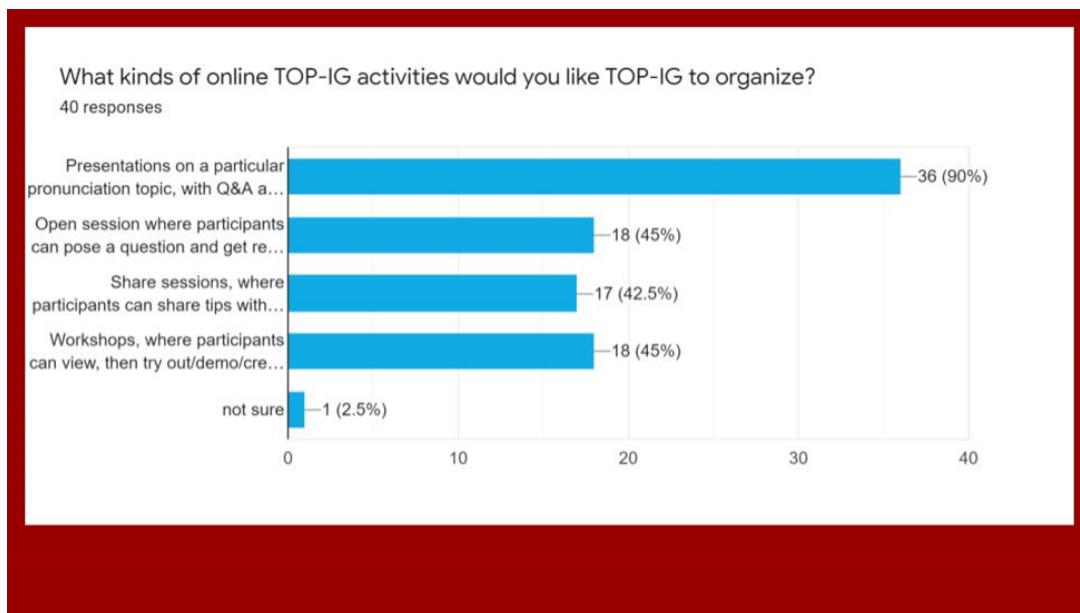


Others commented that they liked the speakers who presented, especially those well-known in the field. Many commented that the fact that the workshops were virtual made it easier for them to attend. They also liked the fact that many were recorded so that they could watch them again at their own convenience.

Looking to the Future

When asked what could be improved in these professional development workshops, most respondents expressed satisfaction with the offerings and asked for these events to continue throughout the year. Two mentioned more advertising to make sure that group members are aware of their existence. Other responses included a desire for panel workshops, sessions targeting a variety of teaching contexts, introduction of updated and fresh learner centered activities, and a consideration of sending slides ahead of time.

The survey asked what kinds of online TOP-IG activities respondents would like TOP-IG to organize. 90% of the respondents would like to see TOP-IG activities that consist of workshops presented by a speaker and followed by Q&A. We then had 45% of the respondents wanting open sessions, where you could pose a question to discuss. Another 45% would like activities where they can view and then try out/demo something new. We also had 42.5% of respondents interested in “share sessions” where those who attend share their own teaching tips on a particular topic.



Finally, recent TOP events have typically been scheduled for 11:00 am Pacific Time on the third Friday of the month and 75% of respondents agreed to keep this day and time. This will likely be the plan moving forward.

Currently, TOP has two social media platforms: CATESOL’s portal, Memberleap, available to all CATESOL members, and [Facebook](#). We are committed to posting announcements and invitations to upcoming pronunciation related events and encourage members to post any that they may come across as well. The Teaching of Pronunciation Interest Group is the most active online Interest Group in Memberleap (100 posts compared to many IGs with zero). Still, both members and leaders desire greater peer-to-peer participation. It seems that although participating in discussions about pronunciation learning and teaching is a good idea, members are reluctant to do the “participating” part.

CATESOL Call for Submissions

Call for Newsletter Submissions

CATESOL Newsletter is now quarterly, published at the beginning of March, June, September and December each year. Invited submissions will be included, and member submissions are highly encouraged. Submission deadlines are the 15th of the month prior to publication (i.e. February 15th, May 15th, August 15th and November 15th). If you have something to share, or if you have someone you would like to recommend to contribute, feel free to email kmacd@rocketmail.com



CATESOL Blog – Call for Submissions

The CATESOL Blog is published monthly and accepts a range of article types for publication.

- Did you recently attend a CATESOL event or webinar and wish to share a reflective piece of what you got out of the event? [Write an article about it.](#)
- Would you like to co-author a book review with the Blog's book review column editor to get acquainted with writing one? [Contact the blog editors to get connected to do so.](#)
- Are you a chapter or interest group coordinator and have an event coming up that you would like membership to know about ahead of time in more detail to attract attendance? [Write up a pre-event summary.](#)
- Have you attended a TESOL event that you would like to share the information with members? [Write a post-event about your take-aways.](#)
- Have an innovative lesson activity or practice you can share to assist members? Write a short practitioner piece.
- If you have something to share, or if you have someone you would like to recommend to contribute, feel free to email the editors **Michelle Skowbo** at meskowbo@gmail.com

Have you been to the CATESOL Blog recently?

Check it out at <https://catesol.org/blog/catesol-blog>

Get a feel for its style and what has been published and get ideas for other areas and topics that membership will benefit from.

