

Introduction

Welcome to *Voices of Experience: How Teachers Manage Student-Centered ESL Classes*. This book presents strategies and tips collected through a survey of 80 practicing ESL professionals as well as a series of conversations with my colleagues, seen through the filter of my 38 years in ESL classrooms. Throughout the book, teachers share their motivations for choosing techniques as they give us a look inside their classrooms. A major emphasis throughout is the thinking that underlies teachers' choices in their classroom management strategies.

The book is arranged in five units, with two or three chapters per unit. Survey responses and other input from conversations with colleagues are included throughout the text in direct quotes and in graphics that represent the charts generated by the survey. The complete survey appears in Appendix 2. Please note that in some cases the information in the graphics has been limited to present only the most pertinent data. Readers wishing to view the complete data can find those charts in Appendix 3.

Voices of Experience was designed and written with both novice teachers or teachers-in-training and more seasoned professionals in mind. These two audiences may use the book in slightly different ways, and some parts may resonate more with one group or the other. In essence, newer or future teachers may use the book to look ahead while veterans use it to look around.

At the end of each unit, Making Connections presents several opportunities for reflection or discussion. Practicing teachers may want to simply reflect on those parts or use them for discussion in brown-bag lunches with their colleagues, or they may use the material to engage in more formal in-service professional development. Students in ESL methods courses or practicum programs may use the material for class

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discussion, response papers, or journal topics. Each Making Connections section includes:

- **Challenging Beliefs: What Teachers Think.** Readers react to a statement using a Likert scale and then can turn to Appendix 1 to see how teachers responded to that statement on the survey. Here readers will find selected comments showing the range of opinions of those surveyed. Practicing teachers may wish to measure their opinions against what others said, while future teachers may use the comments as a springboard for discussion or writing. For example, they may be asked to select the comment that most closely matches their opinion and explain why in a short paper or journal entry.
- **Classroom Connections: What Teachers Do.** Readers find a list of eight to ten questions to connect the topics in the unit with an actual classroom. Practicing teachers may use these questions to think about how they manage their classes or as a framework to guide their observation of classes taught by colleagues or teachers whom they are supervising. Future teachers may use these questions to guide their observations of ESL classes or to reflect on their teaching practicum experiences in a journal, for example.
- **Strategies and Motivations: What Teachers Say.** Readers consider quotes from survey respondents on some of the topics covered in the unit. Some quotes are pithy bits of wisdom, while longer quotes are included as teachers explain their underlying motivations for the choices they make in their classrooms. In short, these quotations show how good teaching is a balance of art and science. Practicing teachers may reflect on these additional glimpses into their colleagues' classrooms, while future teachers may choose one of these ways to interact with the quotes in this section:
 - Choose two of the quotes that you think give good advice and tell why you like the advice. Does this describe what you do or would do in your classroom?

- Choose one or more quotes for reflection. What questions come to mind? Formulate a question or questions about the strategies or motivations that you might ask a practicing teacher.
- Choose two or more quotes for a response. You may choose two that seem similar and reflect on how they are similar or two that seem different and reflect on how both teachers are successful with different strategies and motivations.

I am certainly not the same teacher I was 38 years ago, and I am not even the same teacher I was 38 weeks ago. Reflecting on the input that I received in the course of this project has given me new perspectives on my classroom dynamic. A teaching career is a journey, and we never stop developing. I hope that in some way this book is a valuable tool for each reader's journey.

Janet Giannotti
Arlington, VA, 2015
B.S. Georgetown University
M.A. The University of South Florida
M. Ed. The University of Virginia