

Looking Back with Satisfaction

By the 2003 National Convention Speaker Grant winner

Blanca González

Blanca González is a secondary school English teacher. She has worked in primary, secondary and vocational schools. At present she is teaching ESO and Bachillerato at a comprehensive school. She has participated in a large number of seminars and workshops and collaborated on several European projects. She has also received various prizes for computer applications for learning English.

When trying to describe our own feelings, we tend to be shy and many times find it difficult to choose the right words to express our real inner experiences in a certain situation. This is the point where I find myself now, looking back and reflecting on all the emotions linked to my being a first time speaker at the TESOL convention this year.

It all started when talking with colleagues about class activities. Someone suggested the possibility of me sharing my experiences with other teachers. My first reaction was the typical comment, "Oh come on! No!! This is just fun in class. It's nothing important!" Then, I thought about it a while and began to change my mind. I observed my colleagues and realised that ideas from others often help to bring new activities into the classroom. Within my mind, conflicting ideas competed: *go ahead, do it, share things with others...* and at the same time, I could hear opposing voices: *maybe they will not like it, maybe it is too simplistic, maybe people there are too important ...*

One day a kind of light, a quick thought, an intuition...showed me in a second that what was really holding me back was fear – and it was that fear of "acting", of not doing things right, of not feeling important, that was causing all my anxiety and keeping me from saying yes to a new situation.

I decided to face the new situation and thus to act. I would simply be myself. I had always loved sharing teaching materials and experiences with my colleagues, and this would just be doing it one more time. As a result, I asked for the grant and started imagining myself at the Convention.

I prepared the workshop, which was about the activities I usually do on Fridays, so I just called it "Friday Games". Finally, it was time to travel to Madrid for the Convention. From the very

first minute, from the first talk, I was in a world I knew quite well, a world of teachers ready to listen and learn and take new ideas and activities back to their schools. I felt like I was at home.

The day my workshop was scheduled, the number of teachers ready to enter was amazing. The door was locked, so we all waited outside while more and more kept coming. Finally, we went into the room. I felt a bit nervous, but as soon as I started speaking, I relaxed, knowing that I was with colleagues ready to share and comment on our teaching experiences. In fact, from the minute I started, lots of comments and questions were brought up to clarify how to do the activities and how to use them in the classroom. It was impossible to introduce a new activity without having thoroughly "studied" the previous. It was like a "round table", everyone's ideas coming together in this new situation. Ironically, at the end I realised that I needed even more time to present all I had prepared!

As a first time speaker, I enjoyed the experience and would encourage all of you to not be shy and share your experiences with everybody.