

Early
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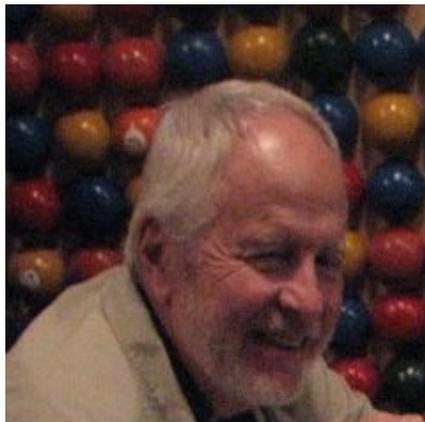
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ESL MiniConference

An Expert in Building Mutual Respect Visiting David Hopkins in Riyadh

In mid February, I hit the skies for a trip to a new ESL teaching experience for the first time in 20 years. I was traveling to Saudi Arabia, to participate at the largest intensive English program in the world, at King Saud University, in Riyadh.



One of the things that I was really looking forward to in this new overseas adventure was the chance to visit with a former colleague, mentor, and boss of mine, David Hopkins, who has been teaching and doing teacher observations at KSU for the past half year.

Dave and I both taught at University of Nevada-Reno's Tokyo program in 1989-90, and I

later followed him to the Ohio University OPELT program at Chubu University, in Kasugai, where he took over as director in the spring of 1990. I spent two years at Chubu as a lecturer on the OPELT ESL curriculum R&D team, and that experience was pivotal in my development as an ESL/EFL cross-cultural professional.

Dave led OPELT from 1990 to 1996, developing it into one of the sturdiest working alliances between American and Japanese educational partners. His pedigree, as someone prepared at the highly esteemed and influential **School for International Training** (SIT) in Brattleboro, Vermont, and with many years of experience as a teacher trainer and cross-cultural leader at assignments across the globe, including Peace Corps training, gave David Hopkins a great deal of credibility in his role as the bridge between Athens, Ohio, and Kasugai, Japan, and his thoughtful, flexible, constructive approach to leadership made an impression on me that continues bringing me dividends today.

Dave Hopkins went from Chubu to Thailand, one of his very favorite places in the world, and there he helped Bruce Veldhuisen develop a powerhouse organization, **TEFL International**, devoted to ESL/EFL teacher training, now with sites at various locations around the world,

but centered in Thailand. Dave wrote all the teacher education programs and projects for TEFL International, and served as their director of academics for over a decade. His work has empowered many individuals, including local Thai teachers as well as international teachers from many different countries, providing them with the experiences, the skills, and the encouragement to carry into their own professional growth.

Several years ago, at another stage in his continual push to develop, himself, through new activities and challenges, Dave Hopkins traveled to Islamabad, Pakistan, as an English Language Senior Fellow, working for the U.S. Department of State as a trainer of English teachers there. He had a powerful influence in a few short months at Islamabad, inspiring many educators in Pakistan to envision new ways of using their profession to strengthen the educational system in their country and serve their society.

I remember receiving an e-mail from Dave, as he was preparing to travel from Thailand to his new position in Pakistan. He expressed to me how excited he was about starting something new. It hit me then, as it has at many points over the past 23 years that I have known Dave, that he is essentially a teacher and learner who has graced the lives of so many students and teachers at different stages in their careers.

A few weeks ago, someone Dave studied with at SIT early in his career was visiting Riyadh and Dave invited me to join them for coffee at a local coffee shop. I don't know how many years it had been since they had seen each other, but it was so neat to see them catching up, sharing information about various classmates and friends from over the years.

At the project where Dave and I are helping in Riyadh, I have seen so many younger teachers approach him for advice and he is always so patient and generous with his time. In a curriculum development project for teaching ESL students with special needs, I found a perfect template for lesson planning in Dave's book, "[Basic Smooth Moves](#)," which I would recommend to anyone who wants to refresh their memories regarding the essential components of a good language lesson. I have also been reading another neat book by Dave, "[Zen TESOL](#)," in which he uses short scenarios to help teachers at any stage in their careers to critically reflect on their teaching experiences.

Everything that he says or writes conveys a clarity of thought and an openness to cross-cultural experience that continually inspires me as a teacher, as a professional, and as a human being. It is such a rare pleasure to be talking face to face with my friend Dave Hopkins these days here in Saudi Arabia.

Article by Robb Scott, Ed.D.

DrRobbScott@gmail.com

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