

Tapped In Member Perspectives: Meet Barbara Dieu

[Barbara Dieu](#) or just Bee as we call her online, teaches EFL at the Franco-Brazilian high school in Sao Paulo.

Together with [Aaron Campbell](#), she leads the Blogstreams Salon Group at Tapped In to discuss web logging and web publishing projects and pedagogy and co-runs [Dekita.org](#), a community of educators promoting peer-to-peer communication in language learning by bringing learners, experts, tutors and mentors together through Web-publishing. Since 1997, she has been involved in [international collaborative projects](#) online. She is also a member of the [Webheads in Action](#), [Cyberlanques](#), Tesol CALL and Braztesol.

Bee's Perspective

When BJB invited me to write this perspective, I tried to bring to mind how I had discovered Tapped In and when I first joined. I must have dug it during one of my exploratory trips across cyberspace. Fortunately, although my brain storage capacity is limited and memory retrieval does not improve as years go by, I found a back up disk containing early Tapped In folders with all the mails properly saved. This is thanks to just one of the many great features Tapped In offers to its members: transcript of text chats are automatically e-mailed and main sessions archived for further reference. It was fun to take a trip back in time, re-read the conversations, recognize familiar names and connect the dots.

Strangely, although the first e-mail confirming my membership is dated March 13th, 2001, my first visit to the platform only occurred seven months later. There are a few monthly newsletters in between announcing the After School Online events so I suspect that for some time, I just lurked and what finally made me come out of my hiding on October 23rd was the announcement of a session on web quests in EFL led by Phil Benz in the Euro Language Forum. I had been trying hard to develop one on my own following the advice given on Tom March's and Bernie Dodge's site but became bogged down in the middle.

I landed at the Reception 50 minutes early to get acquainted with the environment and was warmly received by BJB (another Barbara), who gave me tips on how to interact, use the interface and introduced me to Phil. In no time, we discovered, to our delight, that although we were on different continents and had never heard of each other before, we were talking the same language, working and heading in the same direction. It was on this memorable occasion that also met TonK who had just started his Talenquest in the Netherlands and from then onwards, life was never quite the same. There was always an interesting session to attend, resources to share, incredible people to exchange ideas with, "elective affinities" and cutting edge tools/practice being discussed in a relaxed non-threatening atmosphere.

When you are starting, it is important to be heard and trusted, receive support and encouragement to keep confident and move forward. Under the helpful and caring guidance of BJB, KeikoS, MaggiD, DavidWe at the Help Desk and tutored by experienced members like PhilB, I gradually started meeting more and more people, sharing resources and accepting more responsibilities.

I was invited to give online presentations and moderated the Euro-Language Forum when Phil unexpectedly had to leave. The 2002 Summer Carnival was informative and entertaining and it was then that I first met some of the members of the Webheads in Action, another dynamic and nurturing community of practice whom I later joined and with whom I have been ever since, participating in countless F.U.N (Foolish Unanticipated Nonsense) meetings, cyber experimentation adventures and presentations online.

Discovering Tapped In was a milestone in my learning process and professional development as the practice, experience and contacts established here allowed me to venture much further than I would have managed or dared alone. For teachers and students who often suffer from lack of information and opportunities to interact and progress in their geographical areas or institutions, exchanges in online communities of practice like Tapped In reduce class isolation and fragmentation, encourage communication, collaboration and widen horizons.

Networking with others and teaming up with communities other than my own has also made me develop the awareness of a larger educational context from which I can not only learn but in which I can also help and mentor. As you begin valuing your own voice, you become more open, more autonomous and creative, motivating factors to engage in transformation and acting to make it happen.

Tapped In is a unique community in that it gathers an exceptional number of committed educators from different cultures and venues who come to learn and volunteer to share their expertise. It is exciting to be part of this interaction!