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Sunshine State TESOL Celebrates Advocacy Victory
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TESOL’s mission is to ensure excellence in English language teaching to speakers of other languages.

Names of teachers and students are pseudonyms or are used with permission.

Names of teachers and students are pseudonyms or are used with permission.
Hello and Happy New Year to all from the editorial team at Essential Teacher!

Along with any personal resolutions we might make, the ET team resolves to bring you the most exciting, cutting-edge topics in the field of TESOL. With that goal in mind, we have new columnists and editors to introduce, and new visions to present, as ET continues to evolve to meet the needs of TESOL members.

In the Communities of Practice section, we have two new columnists. Linda New Levine takes over the Home Room column, and Alvino E. Fantini, renowned for his work in intercultural communication, writes the inaugural installment of the Culture/Cross-Culture column. Linda Gerena takes the helm as editor of Out of the Box, and Hanizah Zainuddin will guide Portal as it offers more classroom-based research articles in response to results from the TESOL member survey; she welcomes scholarly articles that will help teachers apply research to classroom practice.

This issue delights us with an insightful array of perspectives from the ESOL classroom.

• **Communities of Practice**: Judie Haynes suggests using vocabulary development as an effective learning strategy for content teachers as well as ESL teachers. Linda New Levine shares the story of Iris, a child with an illness that interferes with learning. Debbie Zacarian writes about forming a collaborative group of administrators to help each other serve the myriad needs of English language learners in the state. Ke Xu reports on the global phenomenon of blogging and its impact on English language teaching. Alvino E. Fantini challenges ESOL teachers to consider our roles as teachers of culture and invites us to ponder new perspectives on this topic. Dorothy Zemach amuses us with examples of how resourceful ESOL teachers have to be and how they react to unexpected situations without blinking an eye.

• **Out of the Box**: Martha Epperson tells the tale of living through a terrifying experience overseas and finding compassion in an unexpected place. San Shwe Baw shares a story about homeschooling his Burmese children in the English language in Thailand. Zhenhui Rao invites us to understand what native-English-speaking teachers need to know when teaching in China. Cindy Gunn explains what she learned from the most dismal classroom experience.

• **Portal**: Joseph Furner discusses the significance of cultural relativity to Mayan mathematics. Judith Rance-Roney leads the way for teachers to use digital storytelling as a novel approach to language and culture learning. Tünde Csepelyi offers a personal glimpse into the world of the English language learner and shares the fears and insecurities that nonnative speakers feel when attending college in an English-speaking environment.

• **References & Resources**: Dennis Bricault reviews a book on using surveys for language learning programs. Tanya Conover reviews a DVD series that offers a narrative saga for English language learners. Fu-An Lin reviews a guide that presents tips for becoming a better language teacher. Vander Viana reviews a terrific multimedia online story maker.

• **Compleat Links**: Be sure to check out these online articles that complement selected articles in the print issue. Michael Morgan discovers that PowerPoint is an effective tool for shy or hesitant English language learners to use in class, and it teaches the teacher as well. Natalia Orlova’s describes how her preservice teachers become more involved in work outside the classroom when they collaborate in authentic projects. Lianjun Zuo provides a history of EFL teaching in China, including an overview of the methodologies used there. Richard Firsten uses his magic to demystify grammar in Grammatically Speaking.

Enjoy your reading, and remember to join us at the TESOL convention in New York, April 2–5. We would love to see you at the ET session, “Helping New Writers Get Published in Essential Teacher,” Friday, April 4, 9:30–11:15 am.

Eileen N. Whelan Ariza  et@tesol.org
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SCHOLARSHIPS & FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE!
In my first president’s message, I want to introduce myself to you and give you some insights on my goals for serving you this year. My primary goal is to increase the dialogue among TESOL members on current issues that affect the students we teach and our professional development as English language educators. My topics of passion are peace making, heritage language support, immigrant rights, and equality in education.

My journey in teaching English to speakers of other languages began more than 30 years ago. Fresh out of a U.S. university, I accepted a teaching position at Tak Nga Middle School, a girls’ Catholic school in the Yau Yat Chuen district of Kowloon, in Hong Kong. As a fifth-generation Chinese American who had grown up outside of a Chinese-speaking community, I was searching for my roots. In addition to teaching English literature and composition at the school, I went to Hong Kong to study Cantonese and learn about Chinese culture.

The experience of teaching in Hong Kong, under the model of British colonialism, shaped my view of education. The educational system was set up like a pyramid, with many students at the bottom and few at the top. Each year students were evaluated, and only those with the highest scores were able to continue schooling; as each year passed, the pool of students who could continue to be educated grew smaller. At the end of secondary school, the few students who remained competed for admission to one of only two universities in Hong Kong at the time. Only those who had the best scores in the Hong Kong School Leaving Certificate Examination were admitted to university, and those who had good scores in English would be hired for office jobs. Those who did not have good scores or had been expelled from the educational system were severely limited in their pursuits and were only able to do manual labor or work in factories. When a Form 2 student, a 12-year-old girl who did not pass school examinations, committed suicide, I came to understand in a very profound way that access to education for these students could be, literally, a matter of life and death.

My experience in Hong Kong shaped my growing interest in teaching English. It bothered me to discover that most students were very motivated to learn English, succeed in their studies, and earn a coveted seat at the university, but would not be admitted to university. It also revealed stark educational inequities that helped me recognize similar inequities in the United States. I became more aware that the same pyramid I had seen under colonialism—with many on the bottom and few at the top—was also present in U.S. schools, which can often be blind to racial or class inequalities. It is often difficult to see unequal educational practices within one’s own culture and society. These insights engendered in me many questions about my teaching. Why couldn’t everyone who studied hard succeed? Was it possible to teach English in a culturally sensitive way? To succeed, my students had to pass the examinations; was it possible to teach not only to the test, but beyond the test?

I have found that keeping four central dialogic features at the center of everything I do—in my curriculum development, research, pedagogical practice, and model of leadership—helps me achieve my goals. Learning in community, problem posing, learning by doing, and posing the question “Knowledge for whom?” create a naturally flexible approach with less emphasis on mastering knowledge and more on discovering knowledge within the context of a student’s history and cultural background.

As I share concerns such as these with you over the course of the next year, I’d like to invite you to share with me your concerns as a TESOL professional as well. What current issues are important to you, and in what ways could TESOL be responsive? Please send me an e-mail so that we can start a dialogue.

Shelley Diane Wong
President, 2008–2009
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When I started teaching in an ESL pullout program in the 1980s, few materials were available for elementary ESL programs. So I adapted textbooks and workbooks from the general education curriculum to meet the linguistic needs of students who received ESL instruction for 30–45 minutes a day, but spent most of their time in the general education classroom.

It became evident to me that classroom teachers needed to learn to adapt their teaching methods and materials to meet the needs of English language learners (ELLs) in their classes. I began to examine ways that I could help them do this. I focused on vocabulary development and modifying content area teaching methods and materials. In this issue, I discuss methods for teaching vocabulary to ELLs that can be used by ESL and content area teachers alike.

Use explicit instruction of vocabulary. I believe all students need direct instruction of vocabulary, but it is especially imperative for ELLs. They need much more exposure to new vocabulary than their native-English-speaking classmates (August & Shanahan, 2006). ELLs need to learn cognates, prefixes, suffixes, and root words to enhance their ability to make sense of new lexicon. Understanding context clues such as embedded definitions, pictures, and charts builds schema that ELLs need in order to comprehend the text.

New vocabulary needs to be explicitly taught, and each new word should be directly linked to an appropriate strategy. ELLs should actively engage in holistic activities to practice new vocabulary because learning words out of context is difficult for these students. Even if they memorize the meanings of the words on a list, they will not be able to use the words in their own writing or verbal production until they really understand the meanings.

Introduce the most essential vocabulary before beginning a new chapter or unit. Don’t overwhelm students with too many words or concepts. Pick what is absolutely essential in each chapter. Pronounce each word for students, and have them repeat after you. Introduce the vocabulary in a familiar and meaningful context and then again in a content-specific setting. For example, in a unit on weather and tornados that I taught, the word front needed to be reviewed in a familiar context and then taught in the context of the unit. Provide experiences that help demonstrate the meaning of the vocabulary words. In my unit, diagrams and photographs were particularly helpful.

Build background knowledge. Explicit links to previously taught text should be emphasized to activate prior knowledge. Review relevant vocabulary that was already introduced, and highlight familiar words that have a new meaning. Access the knowledge that students bring from their native cultures. In learning about tornados, for example, my students talked about some extreme

---

**NEW WORDS**
- tornado
- cyclone
- updraft
- Tornado Alley
- wall clouds
- high pressure
- low pressure

**OLD WORDS WITH NEW MEANINGS**
- funnel
- mass
- pressure
- alley

**WEATHER WORDS TO REVIEW**
- atmosphere
- weather satellite
- cumulous clouds
- cumulonimbus clouds
- thunderstorm
- cold front
- warm front

**EVERYDAY WORDS TO LEARN**
- destruction
- violent
- extreme
- damage

**PEOPLE:** meteorologist, scientist, storm chaser

**PLACES:** United States, Tornado Alley, Midwest, Rocky Mountains, Appalachian Mountains, Gulf of Mexico
weather found in their home countries and used Google in Korean and Japanese to find examples of such weather. They also watched videos of typhoons and a tsunami. Videos from your school library, Internet resources, and carefully selected educational TV programs (e.g., Discovery Channel shows, something from the 60 years of NBC News archives now freely available for teachers) should be used to introduce each unit. Doing so will increase vocabulary and provide ELLs with background knowledge.

Key vocabulary can also be introduced through a fictional story before it is taught from the textbook. For example, I read an excerpt from The Wizard of Oz before teaching the information about tornadoes from the textbook. My students then gathered around the classroom computer to watch a video of a tornado. “Look at the funnel! It’s twisting! It’s going to touch down!” students exclaimed. They had already learned some of the vocabulary from The Wizard of Oz, and I was pleased to hear them use these words as they watched the video.

Use visuals when introducing new words and concepts. Elementary-aged ELLs are usually visual or kinesthetic learners. When a teacher simply lectures, ELLs have very little understanding of the concepts being taught. It is therefore helpful to use realia, pictures, photographs, graphic organizers, maps, and graphs. Write key words on the board, and add gestures to help students interpret meaning. Have students create their own visuals to aid their learning. In the tornado unit, each student was assigned a few content-specific vocabulary words. They had to write simple definitions and draw pictures to show what the words meant.

Provide a variety of activities to practice new vocabulary. Research has shown that learning is more effective when students give input into the vocabulary they need to learn (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000). To give students plenty of practice with words, I recommend providing two word walls. On one wall, I write everyday words that students need to learn and practice. These words are removed when students no longer need them. On the second wall, I write unit- or content-specific vocabulary. This wall is changed to make room for new units. I then ask students to post unfamiliar words from the text. They select key vocabulary by looking at chapter titles, headings, and bolded words.

I also have students make a portable word wall (as shown on page 6), which they keep in their binders so that they have their vocabulary handy when they do homework. New vocabulary should be reviewed every day. Students can work together to write a simple sentence for each word or complete a cloze activity. They can also draw pictures to illustrate vocabulary, make flashcards, or compile their own dictionaries in a notebook.

Promote oral language development through cooperative learning groups. ELLs need ample opportunities to speak English and authentic reasons to use academic language. Working in small groups is especially beneficial because ELLs learn to negotiate the meanings of vocabulary words with their classmates. When students work on the previously mentioned vocabulary activities in pairs or small groups, they can better understand and discuss the key concepts of the content area unit.

References

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their high verbal memory and recall, and their ability to understand and manipulate the syntax and structure of languages.

As I watched Iris, I realized I was watching a child with high interpersonal, not linguistic, intelligence. Gardner (1983) identifies children with interpersonal intelligence as those who are sensitive to others’ moods, feelings, temperaments, and motivations. They empathize easily with others and are effective group members. Because of their interpersonal skills, these children learn best through discussions and debates.

I guessed that Iris, a gifted interpersonal learner, would acquire English because of her empathic nature and keen desire to communicate. She quickly began to speak in single words and phrases, and she was an eager communicator. However, she did not display the kind of school language that the kindergarten teacher valued: alphabet, numbers, shapes and colors, phonics and word recognition. No, Iris’s language was geared toward making friends, taking care of others, and helping the teacher. But few gold stars were awarded in her class for those skills. As the year progressed, the bright smile began to dim, and I was shocked one day to realize that it was because Iris’s teeth were turning black! She also seemed tired during our morning ESL classes and a little less eager to respond and participate. I hesitated to talk to her mother about it at the next parent conference.

“It’s really none of my business, I thought.

Iris’s mother, a sweet-faced woman, listened patiently as the classroom teacher and I explained Iris’s learning difficulties and successes. She asked no questions and offered no information about Iris or her health. I spoke to the bilingual interpreter.

“Why was the mother silent during that conference?” I asked.

“Well, it’s not because she doesn’t value education. But people from her country expect the teachers to be in charge of school. They don’t think it’s any of their business.”

Over the next 2 years, while Christian learned to read and make friends on the playground, Iris’s reading skills faltered and she fell behind the other English language learners. We, her teachers, tried various instructional interventions, including small-group instruction, extended guided reading periods, whole-word instruction, phonics, and the communicative language activities she loved.

The result was that Iris began to write. By the third grade, she was a voluminous writer with a clear, strong voice that often brought tears to my eyes. Her caring and empathic nature and her interpersonal intelligence had finally found a voice in the written word. The other children loved to hear Iris read her stories, and her teachers were intrigued by them.

“Did she really write this?” one asked.

“All by herself,” I responded.

I would have loved to take the credit, but it wasn’t my instruction that had brought about this change. Iris had done it all.

In spite of her writing success, I wondered what had happened to the vitality that Iris had brought with her to school a few years earlier. Although her teeth were now perfectly white again, she still seemed lethargic—an old woman in a little girl’s body.

By the fifth grade, Iris’s teacher referred her to the special education committee because she was still not performing well on reading tests. In preparation for the meeting that would determine her “learning disability,” I visited the nurse’s office. Something nagged at me about this child, and I thought I could get information that might help me understand her problems. What I discovered in Iris’s folder confused and shocked me. I learned that she had a chronic medical problem requiring intramuscular injections every month to combat a vitamin B12 deficiency.

Iris’s body could not absorb the vitamins she received in her food, which had led to pernicious anemia. I knew nothing about this disorder, so I began to do research. Vitamin B12 deficiencies are characterized by a variety of symptoms that I had seen in Iris: weakness, tiredness, and weight loss. The symptoms that most appalled me, however, were the ones that I had not known about: a loss of normal brain function, forgetfulness, difficulty thinking and concentrating, and depression.

None of Iris’s teachers had known about her illness. Would it have made a difference? I’d like to think that it would have. We could have recognized that Iris was gifted but ill. We could have made more accommodations to her educational plan. Our attempts to help her might have been more effective.

Back then, I thought it was “none of my business.”

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Collaborating Across Districts to Build a Professional Leadership Community

In February, Heesun moved from South Korea to Massachusetts. Her parents had planned the move to coincide with the time that Heesun completed the sixth grade. Two days after her sixth-grade classes ended, she and her parents moved to the United States so that her father could transfer from one location of his company to another.

They arrived at the beginning of March and rented a home in a small town. When Heesun’s parents enrolled her in the local public school, she was placed in the fifth grade. The district made this placement decision based on the grade that Heesun would have been enrolled in had she been attending school in the United States.

Two months after they arrived, Heesun’s father was transferred to another part of Massachusetts. The family moved from one rental home to another, and Heesun enrolled in a new school. This school placed her in the seventh grade based on the belief that it was appropriate to place Heesun in the grade that she would have been enrolled in had she remained in Korea.

After a few months, Heesun’s family bought a home in an adjacent town and she enrolled in a third school. The new school placed Heesun in the fifth grade. They believed that placing her in the grade below her same-age peers would provide her with the “extra time” that she needed to learn English. Thus, in the short span of 5 months, Heesun had attended the sixth, fifth, and seventh grades.

Robert James, administrator of the academic program at the third and final school, worried that Heesun’s grade placement in the three districts had been arbitrary. He wondered if there was a better way for districts to work collaboratively to create a common vision and practice. He was not alone in his desire to work with others.

In my area of western Massachusetts, administrators of English language education programs rarely meet with administrators from different communities. We tend to work on our own. Many colleagues told me that they often feel isolated and alone in their work. Forums for meeting and collaborating have traditionally occurred at state association meetings, such as those of the Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages and the Massachusetts Association of Bilingual Educators. However, many believed that the meetings were too far to travel from western Massachusetts and/or that their districts lacked the necessary funding to support attendance. Those who have been able to attend told me that the annual meetings, though inspirational and recharging, didn’t provide enough of a sustained opportunity to collaborate.

With support from the Hampshire Educational Collaborative, some colleagues and I created a Professional Leadership Community in English Language Education. Our idea was to gather administrators of English language education programs to share ideas, learn together, and support one another in our work. We invited teacher leaders and administrators from public, charter, and private schools. We expected that we would host about 20 participants; however, more than 60 people representing over 30 school districts attended the first meeting.

During the first meeting, participants sat in groups of eight at round tables. We introduced the idea of collaborating to build a professional leadership and learning community in English language education by asking each table’s participants to respond to the following questions and report their findings to the whole group:

1. What are some of the key challenges that you are experiencing in trying to meet the needs of the English language learners (ELLs) in your district?
2. What are some of the challenges that you experienced and solved/resolved regarding the ELLs and their educational achievement in your district?
3. What activities do you hope that this professional leadership group will accomplish?
4. How, when, and in what format would you envision these activities occurring?

The participants were from districts with varying numbers of ELLs—some had thousands, and some had very few. However, their responses to the questions were similar, and a few key challenges resonated with almost every participant:

- many mainstream teachers who lack training in teaching ELLs
- limited number of bilingual teachers/translators
- limited instructional time for teaching English
- difficulty identifying ELLs with special education needs
- difficulty meeting the educational needs of older students with limited literacy experiences

The participants stated that their greatest desire was to learn about and from each other, especially about how
Let’s Blog!

If someone asked me to list a few buzzwords from today’s media, the first word I would come up with would most likely be blog, and for good reason.

According to a recent report by the China Internet Network Information Center, by August 31, 2006, China’s total blogs had reached nearly 34 million, a 3,000% increase since 2002, and the country had more than 17 million bloggers. In this group, 53% were teenagers and young adults aged 16–25, and 37% were college and secondary school students. More surprising is South Korea, which reported 12.9 million bloggers, which accounts for more than 25% of its total population. Japan Today also claims over 3 million bloggers in Japan. By October 2005, according to Blog Herald, over 100 million blogs were posted all over the world.

What does this sweeping phenomenon mean to English language teaching (ELT) professionals? Before I answer that question, let’s first answer this question: Why do people blog? Penrod (2007, p. 3) lists five basic reasons:

1. Blogs are incredibly easy to publish because of technological advances.
2. Blogs mix pleasure with information to create an information reformation.
3. Blogs are a malleable writing genre.
4. Blogs allow writers to generate new personas and construct new worlds.
5. Blogs empower those who are often marginalized in society.

I fully agree with her and would also like to add the flowing three reasons:

1. **Blogging promotes collaborative learning.** By allowing readers to leave comments and feedback on blogs that they visit, blogging enables bloggers to read each other’s postings and comment on each other’s work, thus encouraging collaborative learning. Blogging is, therefore, about more than just getting published; it is about getting connected, forming an online community, sharing and interacting with other bloggers with similar interests, and having conversations with fellow bloggers who engage in a joint effort to explore the unknown field and achieve common goals.

2. **Blogging helps student writers increase their sense of audience.** Students who know they have an audience other than their teacher write more credibly, accurately, and carefully. And because blogs allow readers to respond and provide feedback to the authors, bloggers can effectively modify their use of language (e.g., choice of words, grammar, syntax, organizational structure, rhetoric style) so that it will be appropriate for various readers in the larger audience.

3. **Blogging helps teachers understand student writers and their learning processes.** Blogging provides easy access and a better perspective for teachers to observe and approach students, to better understand them, and to find out about whom they are and what they need. Blogging along with students can put teachers and students on an equal footing so that they feel more comfortable in expressing views and opinions. Teachers can learn how students feel and thus determine better solutions to their writing problems.

Having discussed the promise of blogging, let’s examine the first question: What does this sweeping phenomenon mean to ELT professionals?

I believe it means that student bloggers are no longer individual learners separated from each other or limited by their geographic location or their home city or region’s levels of economic, social, and cultural development. Rather, they become members of an online writing community—communicating and interacting with each other across the borders of different countries and different cultures, peer editing and commenting on each other’s work, appreciating and encouraging each other, learning from and helping each other.

It means that students have more autonomy in determining and taking control of their own learning processes as well as more options in choosing what to learn, when and where to learn, how to learn, and how fast to learn.

During the past year, Heesun has transitioned from being a beginning learner of English to an intermediate learner. At the same time, our Professional Leadership Community has engaged in a deeper dialogue about how we can support one another to create a better learning experience for our students and a more satisfactory way of connecting with each other.
It means that writing teachers need to recognize the legitimacy of the new genre of writing that is student blogging and to be tolerant of student writers’ blog language, which may look substandard, informal, inaccurate, or not scholarly.

It means that there is a more pressing need for writing teachers to master necessary computer skills for blogging so that we can blog along with our students and not lag behind them in our knowledge of computer technology.

It means that writing teachers may need to shift attention from the traditional focus on print-based instruction to computer-mediated and Web-based instruction, from print to pixel (as some call it), from conventional curriculum for classroom instruction (or even from traditional online courses in distance education) to a much broader spectrum of curricula for lifetime learning.

It means that there is a need for a broader range of cooperation and collaboration among writing teachers and researchers across nationalities, ethnicities, and cultures in reshaping their concepts and values of education, redefining their goals and objectives, reevaluating their pedagogical and methodological approaches, and redesigning or modifying curriculum.

What are the major challenges blogging has posed to ELT professionals? The greatest challenge, I believe, is figuring out how to best integrate blogging into ELT classroom practice. This may include figuring out how to design learning activities so that students can maximize their learning experience and fully incorporate their creativity and initiatives into the classroom.

A second challenge is making sure students get adequate responses from peer readers so that they feel their work is valuable, their initial excitement doesn’t wane, and their enthusiasm endures. Some students need to be taught how to respond to other people’s blogs, which includes how to respect other people’s work and how to avoid confining oneself to the editing of mechanics.

A third challenge is ensuring a safe blogging environment. At the beginning stage, I prefer to limit the student blogs’ readership to their fellow students in the class. For further advice in this area, I strongly recommend Richardson’s (2006) Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms, which offers many practical teaching tips.

Once you have considered all of the above, you are ready to go. Now, let’s blog!

References


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See also “ESL Students See the Point of PowerPoint,” http://www.tesol.org/et/.

CULTURE/CROSS-CULTURE

Expanding the Goal of ESOL

by Alvino E. Fantini

As the new millennium unfolds, the effects of globalization are increasingly obvious. Today, more people around the world have direct and indirect contact than ever before, creating new opportunities and challenges. Although transactions are conducted in many languages, English is pervasive. This situation raises new issues for ESOL educators, who are especially well positioned to prepare students for opportunities as well as challenges. But are we ESOL educators assuming a proper role? And as a profession, what should our response to these issues be?

Despite many important advances in our field over the years, intercultural concerns remain primarily within special interest groups. Yet a more effective response to these concerns must involve collective efforts. As Sercu (2006) suggests, we may need to acquire a new professional identity. For this to happen, however, we need to reexamine our goal and our role as language educators.

If our goal is to prepare students for positive intercultural participation through effective communication, students need not only to make themselves understood, but also to be accepted behaviorally and interactionally, especially because acceptance is more often strained by offending behaviors than by incorrect grammar. This insight, in fact, prompted the development of the field of intercultural communication more than 40 years ago. Today, we need to rethink how we design and implement language courses, given their potential to affect millions of people worldwide.

Curiously, intercultural educators who explore perceptions, behaviors, and interactional strategies mostly ignore the specific language of encounters. And language teachers generally overlook behavioral and interactional aspects; after all, we call ourselves language teachers, not teachers of intercultural competence. Yet the latter is precisely what is needed to produce competent English language learners.

Intercultural abilities are identified by many names: global competence, transcultural communication, and global intelligence, among others. No consensus exists among interculturalists about the terms or their meanings, but a survey of the literature substantiates intercultural (communicative) competence (ICC) as the most widely used and most comprehensive term.

ICC is a complex of abilities that are necessary to perform effectively and
appositively when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself. Whereas effective reflects a view of one’s own performance in the target language-culture (LC2; i.e., an etic or outsider’s view), appropriate reflects how native speakers perceive such performance (i.e., an emic or insider’s view). Our task as ESOL educators is to help students recognize their etic stance while attempting to uncover the emic viewpoint. The aim is not that students will achieve native-like fluency, but that they will develop some degree of ability in communicating and interacting in the style of LC2 interlocutors.

After surveying the literature, I propose a construct of ICC that has multiple and interrelated components (described in more detail below): a cluster of characteristics, three areas, four dimensions, target language proficiency, and developmental levels. Not all of these components, however, are equally promoted through classroom work alone; direct experience with the LC2 greatly enhances their development. This observation led the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration and the American Council on International Intercultural Education to strongly endorse academic mobility and other intercultural experiences for all college students. Nonetheless, EFL classes initiate processes that often lead to intercultural experiences, and ESL classes provide venues where students can process their experiences that occur outside the classroom. Both situations assume, of course, appropriate course designs and strategies.

Characteristics of ICC most commonly cited in the literature are flexibility, humor, patience, openness, interest, curiosity, empathy, tolerance for ambiguity, and suspending judgments.

The three interrelated ICC areas are the ability to establish and maintain relationships, the ability to communicate with minimal loss or distortion, and the ability to cooperate to accomplish tasks of mutual interest or need. Each area is embedded within the others; no one area alone is adequate for ICC.

Consider also the four dimensions of ICC: knowledge, (positive) attitudes (or affect), skills, and awareness. All four allude to both target culture (LC2) and one’s native culture (LC1); this is especially true of awareness. Awareness is enhanced through reflection and introspection by comparing and contrasting the LC1 and the LC2. It differs from knowledge, focusing on the self vis-à-vis everything else in the world—things, people, thoughts—and ultimately elucidates what is most relevant to one’s value and identity. Whereas knowledge can be forgotten, awareness is irreversible.

Language proficiency is central to ICC (although not equal to it) and, of course, central to our task as ESOL educators. Communicative ability in the target language enhances all other ICC aspects in quantitative and qualitative ways: Grappling with another language causes people to confront how they perceive, conceptualize, and express themselves, and it promotes new communication strategies on someone else’s terms. This challenge aids in transcending and transforming one’s habitual view of the world.

Conversely, lack of a second language, even minimally, constrains people to think about the world and act within it only in their native system. Lack of a second language, then, deprives people of a valuable aspect of intercultural experience (suggesting why ESOL teachers must also be students of another tongue).

Developing ICC is clearly a challenge—for educators and learners alike—but its attainment makes room for exciting possibilities. It offers a chance to transcend the limitations of one’s own worldview. “If you want to know about water,” it has been said, “don’t ask a goldfish.” Intercultural contact is a provocative educational experience precisely because it permits people to learn about others and themselves. On the other hand, a lack of ICC can result in negative outcomes such as the misunderstandings, conflict, ethnic strife, and genocide that result from failed interactions across cultures.

Today, everyone needs ICC, and we as language educators play a major role in this effort. Achieving this, however, requires a paradigm shift—and an expansion of our professional vision. The next articles in this series will focus on course redesign, new implementation techniques, and expanded evaluative procedures that will help move us toward this vision.

Reference

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FROM A TO Z

Plan B

by Dorothy Zemach

From the airport, I called the workshop organizer again.

“I’m now in Las Vegas,” I said, “and my luggage isn’t with me. Do you think you could get me a copy of Shopaholic Takes Manhattan [Kinsella, 2002] and 24 tube socks?”

I could tell Jo Pamment, chair of the Michigan ESL Professional Advisory Committee, was a veteran teacher, because she didn’t miss a beat.

“Yes, I can do that for you.”

She didn’t ask why I needed them, or even why I was in Las Vegas—which would have been a reasonable question given that my flight had been booked from Eugene, Oregon, through San Francisco and Chicago to Lansing, Michigan.

But when a mechanical failure grounded my flight out of Eugene, I
had to revise my original plans. If I’d waited for the airline to rebook the flight, I wouldn’t have made it out of Eugene that day and would therefore have missed the workshop I was supposed to be giving at the other end of the country the following day. So when I saw a line of people boarding a plane, I didn’t hesitate. I plunked my credit card down on the counter and asked if I could buy a ticket. As the clerk ran my card, I asked where the flight was going. Well, Las Vegas was at least on the way, and I figured I’d deal with the next connection when I got there.

I finally made it into the Lansing airport a little after midnight. My luggage was about a day behind, so I did the workshop in my comfy (if not terribly attractive) travel dress and running shoes. Fortunately, I had been carrying many of my materials with me. Ms. Pamment had rustled up my lanyards for unused conference rooms. When she found one, she jimmy-ed it open with her credit card. This special skill so impressed her students that they happily went into class.

• When Lida Baker, a teacher and freelance materials writer, realized that she had gone into labor during her morning grammar class, she didn’t think, “I’d better dash to the hospital.” No, she thought, “After all, the class is almost over . . . .” She gritted her teeth, said nothing, and finished teaching. Then she drove herself to the hospital. At least she canceled her afternoon class!

And so on. Probably every teacher reading this article has had something unexpected come up and taught through it anyway. You took the wrong book to class? So you borrow a student’s book and teach from that. The power cord’s not working and you can’t deliver your PowerPoint presentation? So you write the information on the board instead. You’re showing a DVD and suddenly the volume stops working? So you have students make up their own dialogue and find that it’s better than the original anyway. You prepared extensively for Thursday’s class—and have only just now realized that it’s actually Wednesday? So you make up a lesson (and a surprisingly good one) on the fly.

Why do we do this? Why leap on a plane to the wrong destination, or mime our way through a lesson with no voice, or ignore labor pains? We’re not surgeons or firefighters or ambulance drivers. No one’s life depends on our being there. And let’s be honest, most of our students probably would not mind a canceled lesson every now and then. But we persevere because we believe our work to be important. We believe in the inherent value of what we’re doing, to the extent that we take risks, battle adversity, and pull out our Plan Bs without a second thought.

There is a danger, of course—it’s possible to take your job too seriously and forget to have an outside life (something that I believe is necessary for emotional balance) or even to injure yourself through stress or neglect. I still remember my husband calling me from the hospital, where he was taken after his motorcycle accident, to ask me if I could drive him to his yoga class because he couldn’t drive himself with his shattered elbow. I blush to say that I did drive him and he did teach the class, but we’re older now and can see how stupid that was (at least, I can). However, as long as you don’t endanger your physical or mental health, you can rejoice in having chosen a profession that inspires you to face whatever challenges arise.

By the way, if you want to know how I teach writing skills with Shopaholic Takes Manhattan and 24 tube socks, I invite you to my next workshop or presentation on writing. I promise you, I’ll do everything in my power to be there.

Reference

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When I first arrived in Thailand in 1995, my greatest wish was to send my two daughters (aged 4 and 7) to a well-known international school in Bangkok. However, due to the exorbitant school fees, my wife and I opted to teach our kids ourselves at home. Actually, it was my wife who took responsibility for teaching them, having had some personal experience with teacher training while working in Burma as a university lecturer. Our first goal was to prepare them for the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary examinations. The following account describes how the girls acquired their English proficiency.

Guided Reading
Our older daughter had about 2 1/2 years of primary education in Burma, and the younger one had no schooling at all, being underage at that time. To help my wife teach English effectively to our older daughter, I bought many beautifully illustrated storybooks containing folk tales, in addition to the English textbook we used for her level. I noticed that our daughter kept pressing her mother for more stories, and my wife finally indulged the girl in whatever story she wanted to listen to by first reading it aloud in English and then translating it into Burmese. This method continued for many months before I decided that something had to be done to make our daughter less reliant on my wife and more self-reliant in terms of her own learning skills.

Helping the Student Become a More Independent Reader
I continued to buy more storybooks with eye-catching illustrations and interesting content, and I asked my wife to read them to our daughter with the request that the translation stop when the story was nearing climax or a point of great interest. That method appeared pointless in my wife’s view at first, because she noticed that the moment she stopped telling the story, a quarrel between the two of them would begin. I did not have to wait very long before I saw my strategy paying off. Though impatient at being kept dangling, my daughter began to struggle with the remaining parts of the stories by herself, using whatever skills and vocabulary she might have acquired previously from her mother’s supportive readings.

Thus, having sown the seed of an interest in reading in my daughter’s mind, I did nothing more than collect books suitable for her level while my wife continued teaching her grammatical structures from the textbooks.

Bidding Farewell to Formal Teaching
The process of teaching and learning continued in this pattern for slightly over a year; our daughter enjoyed independent reading, and my wife helped her do more structure and drill exercises. In an effort to experiment with the reading process, I asked my wife to stop all explicit teaching of English. The girl’s happiness at her newfound freedom knew no limits; she was well aware that she would have more time for reading stories without needing to bother about the textbooks. Her study room thus became inundated with various kinds of graded books during her year of extensive reading. Ghost stories and detective stories were her...
Children in Thailand—In English

favorites, though she read other stories with different themes as well.

It was at that point that I began to discover something I had never expected: The new English reader began to write short stories without being asked. Checking her writings confirmed my suspicion that reading is the most important requirement for an EFL student to master the language; her choice of vocabulary, proper use of idiomatic expressions, good sentence structure, and organization and correct usage of grammar all pointed to the important role reading plays in EFL learning.

Toward Oral Fluency

Reading had become such a deep-rooted habit in my daughter that she even began to read some of the unabridged versions of the storybooks she found in my room. Not long after, I began borrowing books (original, unabridged versions) from the university library, taking the utmost care with the choice of books. Undaunted, the girl devoured all the books voraciously.

While her reading and writing skills were making headway, I exploited my friendship with some foreign teachers from the Department of English to give her opportunities to speak in English. To this end, I used a very simple ruse. Because my kids had to stay cooped up in the house during the week, I knew that they wanted to go out with me whenever I left home to do errands during weekends. I agreed to take them out with the proviso that they must talk to my friends in English whenever I left home to do errands during weekends. I agreed to take them out with the proviso that they must talk to my friends in English when they wanted to go out with me. I knew that they wanted to go out with me whenever I left home to do errands during weekends. I agreed to take them out with the proviso that they must talk to my friends in English when they wanted to go out with me.

Human Teaching Aids

Seeing that my older daughter had done so much reading and was able to relate all the stories she had read in English, my friends asked me whether they could use her as a human teaching aid when they did their oral presentations in their classes. With my consent, they gave her abridged storybooks that they assigned for EFL students’ extensive reading and later took her to their classrooms to participate in oral activities with the nonnative-English-speaking students. Interestingly enough, the students were more active and expansive upon seeing a girl much younger than them participating in the discussion about the story they all had read.

Strategy to Improve Listening/Speaking Skills

My younger daughter followed more or less the same learning patterns as her sister had. Actually, she was in a much better position than her sister had been because she could fall back on her sister in times of need. To improve their listening and speaking skills, the kids were allowed to watch videotapes that were appropriate for children. Indeed, those audiovisual resources were the only means by which my daughters were exposed to native speakers of English. With the special aim of providing my younger daughter with more oral practice, my wife and I asked the two sisters to use English as the only medium of communication between them. A remuneration of 5 baht a day for their performance worked like a charm.
Remedy for an Unexpected Change

By the time the girls were 9 and 12, I was surprised to witness a change in their learning styles. For some unknown reason, the girls began to write less and less and finally stopped writing at all. Most of their time was occupied by reading. It might have been due to lack of audience and incentive to keep their inspiration alive. My remedy was to declare a reward of 10 baht for every piece of writing, an objective they took seriously. Soon they were motivated to write again. They wrote short stories, essays, diary entries, and letters to imaginary people.

To give their imaginations free rein, I never assigned any special topics or told them how to write. However, I bought them a few books containing sample essays and letters to help them maintain formal standards. My earlier method of correction was to underline the parts that needed some kind of rewriting, but I changed tactics later to provide more explanation after their rewriting. The new method involved making a copy of the writing, saving it to their disk, and doing the correction myself. This way, they could compare their original writing with the corrected one and learn from their mistakes. I also raised the reward money to 20 baht per writing because the quality of writing had improved to my satisfaction.

Justification

My daughters are now 16 and 19, and they have had their first coauthored storybook published in the United States. One may wonder what makes them successful language learners. In the first place, they have had the most relaxing learning atmosphere because neither their mother nor I believe in force-feeding. The study of other subjects also does not have any intimidating effects on them because their teacher is none other than their mother. This sense of security boosts their self-confidence, leading them to become more independent learners.

In the second place, the way the kids have developed their English is not without principles, as it might appear. At least 4 of the 12 principles of language learning formulated by Brown (1994) are found to be in complete or partial agreement with the way the girls have struggled toward bettering their English. The most obvious is the principle of the anticipation of reward: “Human beings are universally driven to act, or behave, by the anticipation of some sort of reward—tangible or intangible, short term or long term—that will ensue as a result of the behaviour” (p. 19).

Another equally evident principle is strategic investment: “Successful mastery of the second language will be due to a large extent to a learner’s own personal ‘investment’ of time, effort, and attention to the second language in the form of an individualized battery of strategies for comprehending and producing the language” (Brown, 1994, p. 20). Obviously, my daughters have invested a great deal of their time and effort in improving their receptive and productive skills, depending very much on their own strategies.

The third principle that can be related to the girls’ achievement in the various stages of their learning has helped them become more confident, which, in turn, has helped them become successful learners.

Finally, Brown’s (1994) principle of risk taking has been present in my daughters’ learning behavior: “Successful language learners, in their realistic appraisal of themselves as vulnerable beings yet capable of accomplishing tasks, must be willing to become ‘gamblers’ in the game of languages, to attempt to produce and to interpret language that is a bit beyond their absolute certainty” (p. 24). This principle is evident in the challenges my daughters have taken as learners to move from easy to more difficult reading and in their attempts to express themselves in writing without being asked.

Clearly, reward, investment, confidence, and risk taking proved successful for these two Burmese young ladies as they learned English as a foreign language.

Reference


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OUT OF THE BOX

No Words, No Voice, No Language—Just Compassion

By Martha Epperson

On September 12, 2006, just outside the U.S. Embassy in Damascus, four Syrian terrorists threw hand grenades, rammed a truck with explosives into an embassy gate, and fired AK-47s at Syrian guards and civilians. I was inside the embassy, watching a fashion show on the TV in the consular waiting room when the sirens sounded.

As a public school teacher, I had become immune to the sound of sirens. At the time, I thought it was a glitch or, at worst, an inconveniently timed fire drill. It was neither. Announcements shortly screamed: EMBASSY UNDER ATTACK! EMBASSY UNDER ATTACK! DUCK AND COVER! DUCK AND COVER! EMBASSY UNDER ATTACK! I didn’t understand a word of it, even though it was said in clear English. The words seemed out of context, and as such, they were simply isolated words without meaning. Attack. Embassy. Under. I couldn’t connect them.

Concerned about the truck near our section, Syrian guards rushed in and pushed us out and away. Not realizing why, I wanted to shout, “I’m an American! Let me stay!” But I discovered I had no words, no voice. Instead, I found myself out on the street. What had been a quiet, tree-laden block 20 minutes earlier was remarkably different. The sound of gunfire filled the air, and I saw men with guns racing everywhere. It was only then that I understood what the announcer’s words had meant.

Adrift and Alone

I began to run. I ran from the gunfire, the sound of grenades exploding, the truck straddling the sidewalk behind me. I became aware of how different I must have looked. My long hair flying behind me. My bare arms. My western clothes. I took the cardigan tied around my neck and fought with the sleeves in mid air while my sandaled feet raced along the cobblestones.

I arrived at an intersection and paused. I’d been in the country for 12 days and had only learned my survival routes. I had no idea where to go or whom to trust. My Arabic skills were social niceties at best. I was a foreigner whose government’s embassy was under attack, and I realized it would take only a mere glance to recognize that.

Some Syrian women were running near me. They headed toward a small kiosk on a corner, and I followed them. The shopkeeper let us come behind the counter, and I crouched down so that I could not be seen from the street. I sat on a small stool and leaned my head against the side of the cool, metal counter.

The angry sounds continued. BOOM! PAT-PAT-PAT-PAT! My heart sank as I realized that the vast majority of the people I’d met in Syria were inside that building. And with that thought came the realization that right then, at that moment, someone was dying—attacker or friend. This thought overwhelmed me, and my body began to shake. It started with my legs, trembling uncontrollably, and moved to my arms and hands. One of the women was wearing a white headscarf; she sat next to me and began to pray.
An older woman covered in navy blue garb pulled me close to her and began to stroke my hair gently.

**The Kindness of Strangers**

The shopkeeper decided to close his kiosk. The older woman smiled at me, took me by the hand, and gestured for me to follow her. Back on the street, we could still hear the gunfire, and we began to run again, the four of us—the older woman, the woman with the white headscarf, another Syrian woman who was pregnant, and me.

A woman and her two sons were peering outside of their courtyard. When they saw us, they immediately opened the gate and ushered us into their home. She offered us tea, water, and the use of her phone. The others began to talk excitedly in Arabic, but I understood nothing. They began to phone their families, but I had no one to call. My phone had been taken from me inside the embassy as a security precaution. Without it, I had no numbers to reach anyone. I had no language, no family, no friends, and no government. Always the consummate planner, I tried to consider what I could do, but I could fathom nothing. They began to phone their families, but I had no one to call. My phone had been taken from me inside the embassy as a security precaution. Without it, I had no numbers to reach anyone. I had no language, no family, no friends, and no government. Always the consummate planner, I tried to consider what I could do, but I could fathom nothing. I had no resources. I was grateful to be off the street, but I had never felt more alone in my life.

BOOM! I became agitated again. I wanted to move to the back of the house, and I stood and walked into the dining room. The owner came to me and repeated, “Safe. Safe. Security. Security.” They were the few English words she knew. But I couldn’t stop shaking, and my eyes began to tear up. So she took my hand, held it, and began to cry as well. Her kindness and compassion overwhelmed me and gave me strength; I returned to the front room with the others.

Eventually there were only the sounds of police sirens. Al Jazeera was on TV. Rumors began pouring in about whether people inside the embassy had been killed. The pregnant woman’s husband arrived and offered to drive us to our homes. I decided to go to a friend’s apartment. They let me out at a side street near her neighborhood and wished me peace. I can still picture the compassion in their eyes.

**The Comfort of a Familiar Face**

Walking through the streets, I felt as if everyone was staring at me. American. American. American. I wished that I could melt and that the ground would absorb me. I reached my friend’s apartment and rapped on the door.

Timidly the answer came, “Who is it?”

“It’s me! Martha!”

The sound of the lock quickly turning and my friend’s open arms brought to the surface the tears and relief that had been held back for most of the day. It was over.

**A Difficult Transition Back Home**

After the attack, I decided it was best for me to go back to the United States. I returned to my previous position as the ESOL program coordinator and teacher in a small school district. I was fortunate in that my position had not been filled and I was able to pick up right where I’d left things.

If only things had been so simple. I’d barely been in Syria 17 days, but the transition back to the United States was far more difficult than I had anticipated. The attack itself lasted maybe 20 minutes, yet the aftereffects lingered for months. Loud noises frightened me. Police scared me. If sleep came at all, it often came with nightmares. Most days I was simply exhausted.

My U.S. culture teaches me to look for the silver lining—a tough sell in this case. But when pressed, I can say this: I now have a profoundly deeper respect for immigrants and refugees in the United States than I had thought possible. When I isolate the events of the attack, I can see glimpses into the everyday occurrences in my students’ lives. And I’ve learned how much of a pedagogical tool this vision is. “Scholars . . . argue that the ability to relate to others is a critical component of responsible teachers” (Foster, 1995, p. 576). I suppose the attack could be considered an intensive workshop on teacher empathy.

When the embassy sirens first began, I was more annoyed than scared. But one month later in the United States, when my school had
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its own unannounced fire drill, I found myself rushing from my office and virtually sprinting through the halls. It wasn’t until I saw the children lining up outside that I realized it was only a drill.

Understanding What Students Have Been Through

Drills and sirens are an important and necessary part of U.S. schools’ culture. But since my experience in Syria, I understand that refugee and immigrant students may connect those whistles to something specific. They are not arbitrary noises; they have meaning. So these students should be made aware of these drills to prevent undue anxiety and fear.

Anxiety is certainly something ESOL teachers know about. We know the Affective Filter hypothesis. We know “the research indicates that learners frequently experience ‘language anxiety,’ a type of situation-specific anxiety associated with attempts to learn an L2 [second language] and communicate in it” (Ellis, 1994, p. 480). But what of my experience? I didn’t understand the English words shouted inside the embassy. And when I tried to speak, I found no voice. If this is true in my first language, what about my students for whom English is their second or third language, regardless of their proficiency level? My situation was extreme, but not dissimilar to what many ESOL students attempt to deal with most days.

So now, when my students balk at my questions or simply blink at my directions, I remember the isolation and frustration that come from that language void. I must be patient and give them time to pull their thoughts together. I know that with adequate wait time and assistance, they can usually find the words they need.

In the field of ESOL, the importance of nonverbal cues is common knowledge. But I’m aware of that now more than ever. On the day of the attack, I also needed other signals. The guards pushing us out. The sounds of weapons. The men with guns. Only then was I able to process those words—Embassy under attack!

Recognizing this, I now strive to have some physical and visual component when teaching a lesson. With beginners, I’ve always used these strategies. But now even a writing class becomes a kinesthetic, illustrated activity. When I teach subordinating conjunctions, students become words and punctuation, and they must rearrange themselves to form sentences. Under these circumstances, I am astounded at how much faster they grasp the lesson’s objectives.

But what made an impression upon me more than anything else is simply the difficulty of being a foreigner. The stares. The quick glances. The assumptions of your beliefs and background because you claim a certain culture. I was not scared to be different—I was scared to be a specific nationality and that was foreign to me. I have lived, traveled, and loved being abroad. But now when I watch my female Muslim students fidget with their headscarves or hear certain students deny their nationality, I understand why, and my heart goes out to them.

When they do this, I try to remember the Syrian women who ignored my passport and accent. The women who ignored the way I looked and the way I dressed. The women who ignored my cultural gaffes and lack of language. The women who sheltered me. The women whom I did not know but never asked for anything in return. The women who simply recognized me as a human being and had compassion for my situation.

I remember them, and then I smile at my students and gesture for them to follow me.

References


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Dealing with upsetting students is not usually an issue that I have to consider when training teachers, whether novice or experienced, in a TESOL master’s program. However, as I discovered in a recent class at the American University of Sharjah, in the United Arab Emirates, a disruptive, disgruntled student can change the climate of the class and impact the learning and teaching process for teacher and students alike.

I have been teaching since 1988 in a variety of cultures and classroom situations. I have only met one other student, a girl I taught more than 10 years ago, who, like the student in the MA class, caused my classroom to change from a positive learning and teaching environment to a place where the other students and I were not eager to be. Although there was a happy ending with the first student, I cannot say the same is true for this recent situation. However, through in-depth reflection, I have discovered something positive in this mostly negative experience.

The Beginning: A Choppy Start

Three weeks into the semester, I was informed that a new student would be joining my Methods and Materials Design class. Normally, students are not accepted into classes after the first week of the semester, but this student had found out from her employer that if she did not upgrade her qualifications, she would lose her job as an English teacher. She knew about our MA program and asked for special admittance based on her circumstances.

When the student’s situation was explained to me, I wanted to help her, but I had some reservations. She already had a great deal of work to make up because she had missed the first 2 weeks of class. My students and I had bonded and established a rapport and an excellent classroom climate during those first two classes. Most of the students, a mix of men and women with teaching experience ranging from 1 to 15 years, had not been students for a long time. I felt that it was important to make our class a comfortable, nonthreatening learning environment where they could feel free to take risks.

It takes time to build an atmosphere of trust with one’s teacher and classmates, but I felt that after two classes together, we had done just that. As soon as I knew that the new student had been accepted, I told the other students that she would be joining us. The students, like me, were surprised, but they accepted the idea of a new student. However, the new student did not come to class in Week 3, as expected.

Five minutes before the start of class in Week 4, someone I had never seen was standing in my office door. She announced that she would be starting my class that night. There was no apology for the interruption or her late arrival, no introduction or friendly hello. I explained that I had expected her the previous week and that this evening’s class would not be the best class for her to start with because the other students were doing their first peer teaching assignments. I felt that her sudden and unexpected arrival would be a disruption to them.

As I look back and reflect on that initial meeting, I know it was the beginning of the end for that student and me. One of her complaints was that I cared about the other students more than I did her, and in that first meeting, I was indeed thinking of the other students first. It was not my intention to make the new student feel unwelcome, but upon reflection, it probably appeared that way to her.

She promptly went to the director of the MA program and said she did not want to take my class. It was agreed that she could take another class, but as it turned out, her options were limited and she had to take my class. She started in Week 5, arrived late, and sat outside the semicircle in which the other students were sitting. I did my best to include her in discussion and get her involved in class, but in that first class she barely spoke and refused to join the classroom activity.

I was not successful at solving the problem. Indeed, at the time, I had difficulty articulating the problem.
The Middle: Barely Afloat

Conditions did not improve much after that. The student eventually sat in the semicircle, but her presence all but paralyzed class interaction. She came to every class late, and for most classes it was obvious she had not done the readings or otherwise prepared for class. She handed in every assignment late. When she participated in class discussion, she was often sarcastic and negative. Several of the other students asked me not to put them in groups with her, and one told me that she felt afraid to say anything in class because she did not know how to respond to the negative comments from this other student.

The change in the class climate was felt by all, and by Week 10 it was obvious that the class’s former energy, enthusiasm, and risk taking were gone. I was well aware that my class had changed and a problem was brewing, but I could not say exactly what it was. As Shkedi (2000) points out, “the teaching process is seen as a continuum of practical problems that require a simultaneous blend of deliberation and action” (p. 95). I was doing a great deal of deliberating, but not taking enough action.

I never asked the disruptive student to come see me to talk about the impact I felt she was having on the class, nor did I tell her about the other students’ complaints. Although she had not been part of the class for the first 4 weeks, she could see as well as I could that the class had become a cadre of cautious students protecting themselves from her verbal attacks and, sadly, a teacher unable to get the students back to their former eagerness to learn.

The End: Hitting Rock Bottom

At my university, the student evaluations given at the end of the term are anonymous; however, the following comments probably were made by the disruptive student. On a form that is usually designed to help teachers improve, eight constructive comments about my teaching were followed by this:

I felt the instructor has a shallow and superficial knowledge of the subject. Though she appears to be friendly she is actually very biased. I cannot say that she is fair and just. Nor is she an expert in methodology. I learnt nothing. Her explanation and perception of materials develop-
successf ul at solving the problem. Indeed, at the time, I had difficulty articulating the problem.

So I turned to reflection on action, a deep examination of events after the fact. Loughran (2002) suggests that truly engaging with reflection requires “developing a range of ways of seeing a problem” (p. 35) in order to move away from rationalization and toward reflection. He notes that “experience alone does not lead to learning; reflection on experience is essential” (p. 35). Examining the student’s evaluation comment, looking past the bitterness and negativity, helped me learn from this experience and become more effective for future students.

As Nunan and Lamb (1996) note, “problems very often emerge as a result of confusion over rules, roles and expectations” (p. 122). Reviewing the student’s comment, it is obvious that she did not clearly understand her role in the class and my expectations for the students. One reason was, of course, her extremely late enrollment. The other students understood from the first class that I value and promote student autonomy. I expect students to work things out for themselves and relate the material to their lives and teaching situations. I stress that autonomous learning, for example, may be suitable for Western societies, but will face many problems in Eastern cultures” (Halbach, 2002, p. 243).

Other students asked me for guidance, and because we had established a mutually respectful teacher–student relationship, they seemed able to accept my views on learner autonomy and did not feel threatened or neglected if I did not give them the “right” answer. I stress the importance of students taking on much of the responsibility for their learning and often answer questions with “What do you think?” rather than launching into a detailed explanation, which could be seen by some as not being an “expert” or knowledgeable enough.

The experience with this disruptive student has taught me that, as a Western woman teaching teachers in a multicultural class in the Middle East, I need to take a good look at the Western ideas I bring to the classroom. I cannot change what happened in this class, but I can learn from it. I think the most important thing I could have done was share my observations and concerns with the new student. I could have been more of a reflection-in-action teacher, rather than letting the situation get to the point where the other students and I missed out on what could have been a fantastic learning opportunity. After much reflection, I realize that this negative experience has turned into something positive, which has proved to be the best kind of professional development for me.

References


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Reflecting on Native-English-Speaking Teachers in China

By Zhenhui Rao

A native speaker of Chinese, I have been working as a co-teacher with native-English-speaking (NES) teachers in a Chinese university for the past 5 years. I find most of the NES teachers’ instructional methods innovative and stimulating, but they also face resistance in some areas. My collection of student feedback regarding NES teachers’ EFL teaching has revealed three problems: insensitivity to students’ linguistic problems, mismatch between teaching and learning styles, and unfamiliarity with the local cultural and educational system.

Insensitivity to Students’ Linguistic Problems

In China, the most serious obstacle to Chinese students’ success in NES teachers’ classes is the teachers’ insensitivity to the students’ linguistic needs. Some students stated that NES teachers lack insight into typical problems that Chinese students face in the process of learning English. The students also said that NES teachers are unable to anticipate Chinese students’ language difficulties because these teachers have not gone through the complex process of learning Chinese as a foreign language. Further, students complained that NES teachers do not know specifically what Chinese students need in English class, so sometimes the native English speakers cannot find the most effective ways to teach. Students also feel that NES teachers are ignorant of the students’ heritage language and unaware of how the students’ mother tongue and the target language differ.

Mismatch Between Teaching and Learning Styles

A mismatch in the teaching and learning styles is apparent in several ways. First, some students feel uncomfortable with the NES teachers’ global or top-down method of teaching English reading and listening. In most reading or listening classes, NES teachers only emphasize the overall meaning of a passage. They often ask students to use holistic strategies such as guessing or making inferences to search for the main idea, but seldom pay attention to the analysis of linguistic details. It is impossible to infer meaning without possessing background knowledge of the topic.

Chinese students also identified the “open style” of learning as an incongruent instructional technique. Since the beginning of their education, Chinese students have been accustomed to receiving an accurate answer to each question. For a number of reasons, this style cannot always be expected from an NES teacher. Chinese students often receive multiple correct answers whenever they ask an NES teacher a question, which leaves them frustrated and unable to learn the concept.

Closely related to open style is the intuitive-random style that NES teachers often adopt in their classroom teaching. Many Chinese students feel that this style is helpful in creating a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, but it conflicts with their traditional way of learning.

The final teaching style that the students feel uneasy with is the hands-on approach. Some students mentioned that NES teachers are prone to organize various types of games, role-plays, and debates. Although they feel pleasant and relaxed when involved in these communicative interactions, students also feel that NES teachers go to an extreme in organizing these teaching activities.

Unfamiliarity With the Local Culture and Educational System

Many Chinese students find it unacceptable for NES teachers to behave in a casual manner in class. In Chinese culture, a teacher is a respected person who should behave solemnly and seriously toward students, especially in class. Some students also reported that NES teachers are not familiar with the Chinese educational system and fail to match their instruction with the school’s expectations or the students’ needs. Such failure to follow the curriculum exactly makes the students particularly worried about their upcoming exams. Although the exams are locally offered, the content and form is similar to that of the textbooks. Therefore, teachers should match their classroom instruction with the textbook material.
Suggestion for Improving NES Teachers’ EFL Teaching

As you can see, several problems are present in NES teachers’ EFL teaching performance. To help them overcome these obstacles, I offer suggestions to improve EFL teaching in China. I have divided these suggestions into three different yet interconnected groups of individuals: teaching colleagues, teacher educators, and NES teachers planning to work overseas.

Suggestions for Teaching Colleagues

First of all, helping NES teachers improve EFL teaching should include assistance from teaching colleagues from the host country. Once NES teachers have started working, local teachers should involve NES teachers in an orientation program that includes (a) a description of the curriculum and a determination of how NES teachers’ courses correspond to it, (b) the types and times of English examinations that students take, (c) the role of the textbooks in the curriculum (e.g., Is it necessary to cover them completely? Are exams based on textbook content?), and (d) the types of methodology that are most effective and to which students are accustomed.

Obviously, a direct way for NES teachers to see how classes are taught is for colleagues to invite them to observe classes. Many opportunities exist for NES teachers and host teachers to see how they can complement each other. Whereas NES teachers possess native language authenticity, familiarity, and new methodological insight (Govardhan, Nayar, & Sheorey, 1999), host teachers have advantages, according to Medgyes (1994), in “providing a good model” (p. 55), “teaching language learning strategies” (p. 55), “supplying information about English language” (p. 57), “anticipating and preventing language difficulties” (p. 61), “showing empathy” (p. 63), and “benefitting from the mother tongue” (p. 65). Medgyes further points out that, given a favorable mix, various forms of collaboration are possible both in and outside the classroom; for example, NES and host teachers can use each other as language consultants or teach in tandem.

An additional boon to mutual understanding would be for host teachers to offer NES teachers language lessons and help them gain some basic understanding about the differences and interferences between the Chinese language and the English language. The more NES teachers learn about the host language, the more effectively they will be able to teach (e.g., to predict students’ difficulties as in contrastive analysis), move about independently in the country, and fit into the culture.

Suggestions for Teacher Educators

In Western-based TESOL programs, the main focus is usually on teaching ESL in Western public schools and colleges (Carrier, 2003), and strong ethnocentrism in TESOL teacher education occurs (Liu, 1998). Because some NES teachers are trained to teach EFL, the TESOL programs for this group of trainees should focus on EFL teaching in non-Western settings. Liu suggests that teacher educators involve trainees in ways to ensure that the program reflects their teaching concerns and context.

Several approaches could be taken to ensure practical EFL teaching. First, teacher trainees should have an opportunity to explore

why students in a particular country want to learn English; what the policy of the government of the country regarding English is; what constraints on the teacher’s innovativeness might exist; and what social, cultural, and academic adjustments the prospective teachers will have to fit into the existing setup. (Govardhan et al., 1999, p. 124)
Second, teacher educators must provide courses that help enhance teacher trainees’ geographical and anthropological literacy about other countries. EFL teaching is ubiquitous throughout the world, and each country has its own particular social and working conditions. To help local students learn English effectively, the teacher trainees should learn to recognize and respect the values of the host communities as well as their culture, educational systems, living conditions, and work ethics.

Third, an introductory cross-cultural orientation should be offered to provide teacher trainees with “the ability to assess the propriety, feasibility, applicability, and practicality of any one or all of the methods against a certain set of political, sociocultural, and pedagogic situations that they are going to be working in” (Govardhan et al., 1999, p. 123).

Finally, prospective EFL teachers should also be trained in areas ancillary but essential to classroom teaching, such as the differences between teaching EFL and ESL, curriculum and material development, testing and evaluation, EFL administration, management of resource and learning support, and use of information technology.

**Suggestions for NES Teachers**

As linguistic and cultural ambassadors, NES teachers play a unique and important role in helping EFL students master the English language. However, the problems listed previously demonstrate that NES teachers’ classroom teaching often faces resistance or even rejection. There are several ways to try to avoid such resistance.

First, NES teachers should be sensitive to the local customs and habits of host countries. They should never be made to feel that they are there to change and uplift the lives of host countries. Cultural patterns of behavior are so fixed by the time a person reaches the age of 16 or 17 that a foreign language teacher shouldn’t hope to strongly influence students in 2 or 3 hours a week when the rest of the time spent living out of class reinforces the traditional cultural beliefs and way of life. On the other hand, NES teacher should realize that their personal talents will find outlets in guiding changes that may progressively emerge.

Second, NES teachers should be open to and accepting of the general and academic culture of their host institution. They cannot assume that their methodology is better than that of their host colleagues, that their training is more advanced, or that they are more privileged because they are native speakers.

The final implication is related to narrowing the gap between teaching and learning styles. As evidenced by the aforementioned student comments and confirmed by Rao (2002), an identifiable teaching–learning conflict exists between NES teachers and Chinese students. Bridging the gap between teaching and learning styles has, therefore, become a crucial step for NES teachers to improve their EFL classroom teaching. Here are some recommendations for NES teachers that can complement EFL students’ learning styles and strategies in the English classroom:

- Diagnose learning styles, and develop self-aware EFL learners.
- Adapt teaching styles to create congruence of both the teacher’s and the learner’s styles through a variety of activities.
- Foster guided style-stretching, and encourage changes in student behavior.
- Provide activities with different groupings of students.
- Include different learning styles in lesson plans (for more details, see Rao, 2002).

**References**


Many students of Mayan heritage from Mexico, Guatemala, and Central America currently live in the United States, and Lake Worth, Florida, boasts one of the largest Mayan populations outside of Mexico and Guatemala. At Highland Elementary School in Lake Worth, as in many South Florida schools, upwards of 93% of the students are English language learners (ELLs) who also speak Q’anjob’al, an indigenous Mayan language. It is important for these schools to not only recognize and validate the heritage of their Mayan population, but also to effectively teach mathematics in such a way as to reach all students, particularly those with limited English proficiency, while establishing interdisciplinary and cultural connections. Math educators can make their subject more meaningful to ELLs if they make cultural connections between the content and the students’ heritage.

The Value of Culture in the Mathematics Curriculum

Effectively teaching mathematics to all students, particularly those with limited English proficiency, requires making interdisciplinary and cultural connections. Mathematical notations may not share cultural uniformity, and for children from diverse backgrounds these differences may present obstacles to learning (Furner, Doan-Holbein, & Scullion-Jackson, 2000; Moore, 1994). Exploring the historical and cultural variants in mathematics can help all students develop experiences and background knowledge. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) suggests best practices and a curriculum that emphasizes the importance of relating mathematics to prior knowledge, background, real-life situations, manipulatives, and technology use.

Studying the cultural and historical contexts of ancient civilizations can be an intriguing way to introduce students to the evolution and logic of today’s mathematics (Díaz-Rico & Weed, 1995; Farmer & Powers, 2005; Zaslavsky, 2002). Students can benefit greatly by learning about their ancestors’ math, other cultural symbols, and even how zero was represented. This article explores the Mayan mathematics system and provides suggestions for bridging the cultural gap in schools by infusing TESOL strategies and historical and cultural connections into the math curriculum.

The Mayan System

While people in Europe were struggling with the Roman numeral system because its symbols lacked both representation for zero and a calculated correlation with the numbers they represented, the Mayans in Mesoamerica were developing a system that scholars today find sophisticated, beautiful, and logical (Gilbert, 2006; Hand Clow, 2007). The Mayans invented a counting system that represented very large numbers by using only three symbols: a dot, a bar, and a shell symbol for zero (see Mayan Number System). It is a system that shares characteristics (e.g., place value) with the modern base-10, Hindu-Arabic system; however, the place values are arranged vertically, and a base-20, vigesimal system is used for calculating the shift in value (e.g., each shift represented a multiple of 20 instead of 10; see Converting From Base-10 to Base-20 and Vice Versa).

Mayan languages and culture, like those of the American Indians, incorporate descriptive examples of practical experience and knowledge. Their system of teaching mathematics was based on the use of concrete, semiconcrete, and representational materials. By integrating Mayan traditional and practical experiences into the more formal content approach of “school” math, teachers can help learners appreciate and frame math problems in the context of everyday Mayan life. By using materials that originate from students’ daily experiences and cultural heritage, teachers can introduce students to real-world problem solving.

In addition to providing a model for an abstract concept, teachers at the elementary level can use this type of implicit ethnomathematical and cultural link to advance multicultural attitudes in the classroom and help students of Mayan descent feel pride in their own culture. The more real-life math is presented, the more meaningful it is to students and the more likely it is that they will grasp abstract math.

Mayan students’ learning styles may affect a teacher’s choice of
materials and instructional strategies used in class. It is well known that many aspects of Mayan culture were transmitted orally and visually through stories, rituals, art, and practical examples. Because developing auditory learning, observation skills, and memory by means of storytelling, oratory, and experiential learning is still part of the informal education of many Mayan youngsters today, these modalities should receive serious consideration for use in enhancing comprehension and motivation in math classes.

A Sheltered Mayan Math Lesson

Students can discuss and share ideas about the Mayan culture’s contribution to the development of mathematics. In one instance, mainstream students and ELLs were particularly fascinated with the Mayan Calendar Round brought in by one of the students in the class. Jesus, whose parents were from Campeche, Mexico, presented a replica of a clay Mayan calendar and other cultural items from his parents’ native country. The teacher explained to the students that the number 20 was the basis of the Mayan counting system in the same way that 10 is the basis of the Arabic number system, and that even the Mayan calendar had 20-day months.

Following the whole-class sharing session, the students worked in pairs at computer stations, where they visited Web sites and completed a webquest. The students noted from one site that Mayan symbols for numbers were written vertically as opposed to horizontally.

After the webquest, the students
worked in groups of four, using dried mais (corn) and popsicle sticks to make base-20 sticks. They had already learned that corn was a staple of the Mayan economy, so the connection between mais and counting materials appealed to them. The base-20 materials were used to solve math problems and then placed in the math center, where the students could revisit them for future activities.

This interdisciplinary lesson incorporated literature, technology, manipulatives, and multicultural experiences with mathematical concepts while connecting to the heritage of many of the students in the class. All students, particularly those who are reluctant mathematicians or who have limited language proficiency, can benefit from the high-interest and risk-free nature of such learning experiences. Various resources can be used to modify and enhance the lesson to meet diverse populations of students (Furner et al., 2000).

Many schools and math teachers in the United States are confronted with the challenge of meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. The NCTM standards and the literature on diverse learners suggest that all students may benefit from strategies that promote cultural and historical connections and the use of technologies and manipulatives that focus on the active engagement of students through exploration and communications. Bridging the cultural gap in mathematics instruction will profit all students as they become more understanding, appreciative, and tolerant of one another and each other’s cultures.

References


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It is true that I am a recent convert to the world of digital storytelling (DS), but now converted, I can’t envision teaching a class without including at least one digital story—heartily agreeing with Ohler (2007): “I have one word for anyone who wants to tell a story, and that word is ‘welcome’” (p. ix).

**What Is a Digital Story?**

A digital story is a 2- to 5-minute movie-like digital production that learners create using one of several readily available software programs. The story may recount an experience that a learner had, but it could also be the telling of an imaginary story or a story told through the eyes of another character. Learners write a story, turn it into a shorter script, and then record it in their own voice. They can illustrate the story with digital images (e.g., photographs) and enhance it with music that they have picked out. The creator can add text onto the images, and the images can be manipulated to appear as if there is movement, much like a movie. For English language learners, producing a digital story engages them in creating, using, and perfecting all of their emerging language skills in remarkable synergy.

Recently, I used DS as the culminating project of a short-term elective course on culture that I teach in a college-based intensive English institute. The goal of the course was to practice reading, writing, and speaking using the theme “What Is an American?” I asked the students to tell the story of one significant encounter with an American that shaped their understanding of U.S. culture as seen through their own cultural lens.

Like others who have integrated DS into the curriculum, I am amazed at the power that it holds for language acquisition and practice and for the critical thinking that it fosters. But the best part is that learners become entranced by the power of their own voices and their own images. One quiet student in my class yelled out soon after listening to her voice tell her own story: “I love this class!”

**Digital Stories and Language Acquisition**

Digital stories are most effective for language learning when they are embedded in a language-rich curriculum that provides varied and abundant opportunities for learners to acquire new vocabulary and structures. Indeed, there is a danger in the use of this fascinating technology: Teachers must remember that the production of a digital story itself is not the goal but only one of several vehicles through which students can practice language and showcase what they can do with it.

However, embedded in the DS process is deep language acquisition and meaningful practice. During the production of the story, learners must write a complete narrative, rewrite/reform the message of the narrative into a short script, speak (record) the script using accurate English, listen to the recording, judge whether or not it can be understood, and re-record the script to perfect it. Later, they choose images or video clips that are understood across cultures and audiences. The essence of the digital story is, of course, the quality of the storytelling itself. Students need to learn the form of the narrative and how to tell a good story that engages the audience.

I have found that the process of putting together the story is not linear; students continue to revise the script, edit images, change music, and re-record their voice, giving them the opportunity to practice language more and more at each stage. For example, my students re-recorded their voices upwards of five times, asking my help in pronouncing words and repeating sentences so that their spoken English would be nearly perfect. When I analyzed the finished projects, I had a good sense of what the students could do with writing, listening, and speaking. As Ohler (2007) writes, “the actual digital story is the tip of the iceberg, below which are a number of artifacts for the assessment of literacy. . . . A digital story project can literally be a portfo-
The digital technology for DS is available for purchase, but many of the teachers I know have come to the conclusion that simple and free is better than costly and complex, especially when working with English language learners or elementary students. Movie Maker is included with Windows, and iMovie is included on Mac systems. Another program, Photo Story 3, is available as a free download from Microsoft, so I simply asked the tech specialist at my school to download it onto all the computers in the lab where we would create our stories. This is arguably the simplest program of the bunch.

The digital stories that you create can appear very professional when finished. Within Photo Story, you can download images, manipulate movement within the image, and change the appearance of the images using, for example, sepia and watercolor effects. You can add titles or captions to the pictures, and you can type in script prompts that you will later turn into your voiceover as you record the narrative. For slide-to-slide transitions, you have a small library of graphic effects. Finally, the program also allows you to either create a digitized music composition to accompany your voiced script or add your favorite music from CDs or freeclassroommusic.com to enhance the overall glitz. My learners were able to master most of the elements of Photo Story after about an hour of practice.

The finished stories can be downloaded to a disk or sent via e-mail to friends and family, but one of the established tenets of the DS process is the public presentation of the stories. These works of art are created to be showcased and celebrated.

“What Is an American?” Digital Story Project

In my culture class, I experimented with digital stories as a way for students to explore their own feelings toward U.S. culture through the retelling of a critical incident. Critical incidents are personal events that hold significance for the individual; these events do not need to be momentous, but can tell the story of a small, everyday interaction that is remembered as significant or leads to questioning of culture. Whether learners intend to be lifelong residents or soon
The students also read my journal accounts of cultural misunderstandings that I experienced when I taught in China.

The students’ initial “What Is an American?” project assignment was to think of an event that happened during their stay in the United States—a critical incident that was puzzling or troubling—and to write about it in journal form. After they wrote, we conducted a story circle, sitting around listening to one another’s tales and providing feedback about what we felt was the essence of the story. Sunwha, for example, told her story of how troubled she was that her landlady had brought her son and his family up into Sunwha’s apartment unannounced one evening and that they did not remove their shoes as they walked through the rooms. She told of staying up very late to rewash all the floors so that they would be spotless when her family awoke.

From there, the students began to transform journal entries and oral stories into storyboards—graphic organizers for inserting image sketches, text, music ideas, and script. (For an example, see Porter, 2004, p. 122.) After the students shared their storyboards and revised them, we went to the computer lab, where they spent half an hour searching for images that they could use to enhance the narrative. Some students also brought in disks of photographs they had taken in recent months. It is also possible to scan in drawings or import video clips when using some programs. By searching on Korean Google, Sunwha found a Web site that contained sketched figures illustrating emotions, which fit perfectly with the message she was trying to portray. In her digital story, her voice spoke:

One tradition of the Korean culture is for people to take off shoes when they go into their houses.

I moved to America. People do not take off shoes. One day, my landlady and her family came up to my room. They didn’t take off shoes. What a day! What a dirty shoes on my floor! I can’t imagine that there are dirty germs on my room.

The End of the Story

At project completion, each student had captured a slice of life in the United States that was a keepsake memory, but more than that, they had acquired and practiced a great deal of language and examined U.S. culture in a new way. They had begun to understand the power that storytelling holds for sharing across cultures. As is traditional with DS, we ended the course with a presentation of projects by inviting family and friends to view the digital stories. Sunwha’s friends watched the conclusion of her digital story:

After they were gone, I cleaned up my floor, scrubbing, brushing. Finally, I’m done with my work and I enjoy it.

Look at my shiny floor.

Ooh-la-la.

References


Elvia has been living in the United States for 4 years. She pursued higher education in computer science in El Salvador, her native country, but she never graduated. She worked in an office as a computer technician before she immigrated with her family to the United States. Here, however, she babysits her nephews, helping out her brother with daycare expenses. Her American Dream is to work in an office as a computer technician, just as she did in her country. To do so, she needs an associate's degree in computer programming from an accredited school.

Jose had lived all his life on a farm in Mexico before he moved to the United States. Here, he works for a landscape company. After working for the same company for 10 years, he feels ready to open his own business. For that, he needs to learn business management.

Both Elvia and Jose believe that they cannot attend a U.S. school because their English is not proficient. “I could not graduate in my native country in my native language,” they say, “How could I do that in English now?” They also do not have the funds to pursue higher education, as echoed by this remark: “School is for rich people, and I am not one of them.”

Many people like Elvia and Jose have vague ideas about the U.S. college system. It is a dream that seems too far to reach for many immigrants. I know, because I was one of them. I immigrated to the United States as an adult, speaking no English at all. Although I had taught in a high school in Hungary, I could only choose between babysitting and working in fast food restaurants in the United States due to my lack of English skills. But like Elvia and Jose, I had an American Dream: to pursue a teaching career in the field for which I had been trained in my native country.

After overcoming obstacles for 7 years after my arrival in this country, I was hired as an instructor at the community college I once attended to teach and develop the curriculum for a course titled College Success Skills for Nonnative-English-Speaking Students. In this article, I describe how I developed this transition course. Specifically, I highlight several important factors that provide a framework for curriculum development aimed at helping adult English learners learn, as efficiently and effectively as possible, the expectations and skills needed for college-level academic work.

### The Students’ Needs

What had I needed to know before I enrolled in an academic program? Terms such as major, minor, advisor, credits, and financial aid were strange concepts. Also, was my English good enough? How many classes did I need to take? How many could I handle? Was I a good match for U.S. classmates? The starting point in developing the curriculum for this college success class was my own frustration and experiences.

### Organization of the Course

The class parallels regular academic classes; we meet twice a week for an hour and 15 minutes. But the amount of instructional hours per week is insufficient to meet my students’ needs. There is so much to discuss! The time is not adequate to explore, for example, learning styles or the characteristics of a successful student. I allow extra time after class ends so that students can address pressing issues. We call that extra time Tünde-minutes. I have never had a student complain about staying longer.

### Instructional Content and Practices

I believe in hands-on language teaching and learning (Nunan, 2003). Thus, this is not a lecture class; it is a lively learning environment. Accordingly, field trips, guest speakers, and concrete activities are incorporated. Also, my theoretical teaching framework comes from Noddings’s (1984) ethic of care, which emphasizes (a) creating a safe classroom environment in which the students are unafraid to open up and discuss issues and (b) establishing a learning community in which students feel that they belong (Wenger, 1998). Further, the class is informative, chal-
lenging, and serves learners with different levels of English proficiency. It is energetic and energizing, academic, and flexible. If unexpected issues come up, we need the flexibility to cover them.

**Activities**

**Writing**

ESL programs rarely address writing. So this class incorporates frequent writing assignments to improve fluency and expression. I recommend doing the following:

- Carefully select topics based on discussions of what second language writers have read or personal and familiar experiences they have had.
- Keep journal entries short—not more than one page.
- Grade journal responses for thoughtfulness, not accuracy.

Naturally, students approach journal assignments with fear. “I have never written anything in English,” I often hear. So I give students vocabulary lists containing 10 academic words, which then become the basis of the weekly quizzes. The words, derived from in-class activities, are continuously recycled throughout the semester. On a quiz, there are always 10 words chosen from the entire list, which accumulates over the length of the course. Thus, the students must keep practicing vocabulary from the beginning because they cannot predict which 10 I will pick. The words chosen for the test must be incorporated in a sentence, which ensures that the students understand the word in an academic setting.

I also encourage students to reflect on their learning in their journals. Journal writing provides not only writing practice but also opportunities for students to do critical reflection and keep a written dialogue with me. These journal entries help me obtain insights from students. By the end of the semester, in their final journal, I often read comments such as this:

> I learnt different words what I never learned before and I can use now in my vocabulary. Words that I need in the future in my college life.

**Classroom Observation**

“Will I survive in an academic—non-ESL—class?” To acclimatize new learners to the college classroom, I schedule visits to different classes throughout the term. These visits are well-planned: The host instructors expect my students to attend their classes, and I give them a rubric of instructional items to look for during their observation. The students take notes and, after the observation, write a report based on the experience. These visits address my students’ affective factors as they experience college classes firsthand, which helps them gain a better understanding of the expectations in such an environment. The responses are overwhelmingly positive, as echoed by the following journal excerpt:

> I can see now that I have a place in college. If those students can do it, I can do it, too.

**Field Trips**

Field trips on the campus are a significant part of the curriculum. It is not enough to talk about the services and programs that are available; we need to experience them. A favorite destination is the library, where a librarian provides tours for groups. My students often say, “I have never been to the library before.” Another great experience is to spend a class period in a computer lab. With a guest instructor, the students experiment with basic computer skills. After one class, the students gain enough confidence to return to a computer lab and practice. By the end of the semester, most students type their journal entries:

> I thought these hands were for milking cows. And now I am using a computer.

**Other Activities**

The students and I explore many other topics in this class, including health, stress, depression, how to stay motivated, note-taking skills, plagia-
rism, reading, writing, speaking and listening strategies, the kinds of college testing and their strategies, diversity on campus, developing rapport with instructors, and working with U.S. students. I invite former students who have made a successful transition to college courses to share their personal experiences with the students in this course. These activities provide authentic experiences and facilitate an environment in which students can achieve their goals.

**Setting Goals and Objectives**

The primary goal of the college transition course is to help adult learners build their confidence and self-esteem to attain academic success in a second language. Several objectives were identified as important for satisfying students’ needs:

- developing the academic skills necessary for success
- setting both personal and academic goals
- becoming familiar with the various college support systems
- understanding the U.S. college system
- enrolling in academic ESL classes

Students leave the class with a detailed educational plan that identifies their major, how many credits the major requires, a financial plan to support their education, and a timeline from the current semester to the date when they hope to receive their certificate or associate’s degree. Upon finishing the course, one student wrote the following:

> I thought I didn’t have any interest about my future education, but I was wrong. I was trying to deny my biggest dream since I was a kid: attending college. I haven’t thought about my plans for the future as seriously as I’m doing today, and it’s because of this class.

**Assessment**

Students are accountable for their academic achievement. The vocabulary quizzes are only one example of the assessment. Three times during the semester, students reflect on their learning in a self-evaluation format (Richards & Lockhart, 1996) and determine how many classes they missed as well as how much effort they put into this class. My written response completes the evaluation.

**Administrative Support**

My college has now been offering this class for more than 3 years. The Adult Basic Education coordinator is responsible for recruiting students, and the ESL coordinator takes care of the transitioning students’ academic needs. The course coordinates with academic services, such as the library, the career center, the writing center, and the Financial Aid Office. We all look forward to attending the first U.S. college graduation ceremony of one of my former students.

**Implications for Course Evaluation and Improvement**

Reevaluation of class objectives, textbooks, teaching style, and activities is assumed throughout the semester. Because every semester brings a new group of students, the curriculum changes according to the new needs. Also, I constantly seek new opportunities for my students (e.g., internships, scholarships, college programs) and discuss them in my course. This curriculum is never “set”; it must change with and adapt to the students. Finally, here is a reflection on the experience in a student’s own words:

> If you ask me what kind of benefit can you get from this class, I would like to answer with this: this class just not impels you to give all your best, it helps you to trust in yourself, believe that you can learn if you give all your effort.

**References**


Tünde Csepelyi is an ESL instructor at Truckee Meadows Community College, in Reno, Nevada, in the United States, and a PhD student at the University of Nevada, Reno.
**Becoming a Language Teacher: A Practical Guide to Second Language Learning and Teaching**


The title of this book may suggest a target audience of beginning teachers who are on their way to becoming language teachers. For practitioners in the field, however, *Becoming a Language Teacher* can also serve as a valuable resource that provides short reviews, comparisons of theories, and helpful stimuli for continuous reflection. At the end of each chapter, Horwitz offers questions to reflect on and projects for teachers to undertake. The reflection questions, which often center on the reader’s own experience as a student in a language environment, are effective in inducing empathy toward students.

The chapters are divided into three parts. Part I, “What Do Language Teachers Think About?”, synthesizes characteristics of learners and teaching settings, second language acquisition (SLA) theories, and teaching methodologies. The SLA chapter summarizes influential theories in an accessible writing style and compares different theories that explain issues of learner success, error correction, and factors that contribute to the different learning results among children and adults.

The methods chapter covers classics such as the audiolingual method, the trendy task-based instruction, and many others in between. For novice teachers, chapters in Part I introduce essential concepts in language teaching and create a foundation for new teachers to find their way. Experienced teachers will appreciate the chapters as quick refreshers that include informative updates.

Part II, “How Do You Teach a Language?”, focuses on the teaching of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and academic English in content classes. In addition to presenting concepts and research findings pertinent to each skill area, Horwitz incorporates such concepts and findings into guidelines and ideas for assessment and classroom activities that often focus on integrated skills.

Part III, “How Do I Know What to Teach?”, introduces information about standards in language curricula along with more assessment practices in the first chapter and a second chapter on lesson planning. Horwitz’s intention in presenting standards and assessments before lesson planning is reasonably apparent—you often have to consider the former when engaged in lesson planning. However, the need to include such considerations in planning is not made clear, and you may find yourself making the connection on your own.

Filled with practical advice from a veteran in language teaching and teacher education, and written from a humorous, first-person perspective, *Becoming a Language Teacher* is an especially accessible guide for novice teachers on their way to becoming principled yet eclectic professionals. For novice and experienced teachers alike, this book is certainly a useful addition to one’s personal library of reference books.

**Connect With English**


Hope, joy, fear, perseverance, anger, betrayal, bitterness, forgiveness, love, acceptance. These familiar emotions run deep in the hearts and minds of people from all cultures. To be able to talk about such realities with others and realize you are not alone in your human experience encourages introspection as well as connection to a larger community.

When language serves as a means of personal expression and a catalyst for deepening relationships, it becomes much more than an object to dissect and memorize. Language becomes a vehicle of transformation, taking speakers and listeners on a journey of growth and discovery. This is the goal of *Connect With English*.

This DVD series was produced by WGBH Boston with McGraw-Hill to help students learn English. Each 15-minute episode portrays the fictional experiences of Rebecca Casey, a young aspiring singer and songwriter from Boston. Natural, authentic dialogue adds to the believability of a story that realistically portrays universal issues such as
Seussville Story Maker


When teaching EFL to beginners, one has to focus on some basic structures (e.g., How are you?). The challenge is to help students practice the basics in an authentic and communicative manner.

It may be awkward to ask students to greet their peers because most of them have probably already met, whether outside or inside the classroom. A possible solution to this problem, especially when dealing with young students, is the use of online story makers. While creating the stories, students can have the characters introduce themselves and practice other new phrases and structures in a more natural way.

One story maker that is worth a visit is Seussville Story Maker, which is based on Dr. Seuss’s Horton Hears a Who! If students are familiar with this story, they will immediately recognize the characters as inhabitants of Whoville. The story maker can be used as a warm-up or a follow-up after reading the book itself. However, even without reading the book, students will likely still enjoy using the story maker.

Students must follow several steps to create their story. First, they need to type in their names as the creators of the story. Second, they have to give it a title. Third, they need to choose a background to serve as the visual backdrop of the story. Fourth, they have to select two characters to interact in a dialogue. Fifth, students need to select the music that will accompany the story. Finally, they have to type in the dialogue. This six-step procedure must be followed for each of the story’s three scenes.

Students may face some challenges during story creation. First, the prompt for a title comes at the beginning of the story. It can be difficult for students to think of a title if they don’t yet know what they will write. One solution to this problem is to have teachers give a title to the story students are about to create. This will surely guide students’ production, but will help beginning-level students write the dialogue. Second, it is not possible to listen to the music options before selecting one. Students will only know what kind of music they have selected when they watch the final version of the story. Finally, it may be difficult to hold students’ attention until the third scene is created, but it is worth a try.

Even with these potential problems, Seussville Story Maker is fun. Sounds from the very first screen to the last one capture students’ attention, and the site layout heightens students’ interest. Writing their names at the start of the story is a way of empowering students, and because the animation is captivating and enticing, students will be proud of their finished product.

Tanya L. Conover teaches adult ESOL for Prince William County Schools, in Virginia, in the United States.
Using Surveys in Language Programs


Written with ESL program administrators and researchers in mind, Using Surveys in Language Programs provides a refreshingly accessible approach to the nuts and bolts of constructing, implementing, and analyzing survey-based research instruments.

This handbook appeals to a wide audience, from program administrators wishing to gauge student satisfaction to teachers and graduate students engaged in classroom-based research. It takes the reader through various steps of research involving surveys, with a chapter dedicated to each stage in survey design, implementation, and analysis.

Chapter 1 examines the crucial planning phase. Brown presents an overview of several types of survey tools and formats as well as non-survey instruments and nontechnical definitions of key concepts.

Chapter 2 considers survey design, including the types of questions that may be included as well as different formats for questions and responses. Brown weighs the benefits and complexities of these designs and provides authentic examples of each type. The closing sections contain practical tips for writing effective survey questions. Brown offers not only “guidelines for producing a polished questionnaire”—order the questions rationally, write clear directions, conduct a pilot study—but also several counterexamples of poorly constructed and potentially embarrassing questions, including those containing loaded words (obviously), culturally sensitive topics (e.g., teaching swear words), leading questions (“You don’t think teachers should _____, do you?”), and bias and stereotypes.

Chapter 3 covers the next stage, gathering and compiling survey data. Brown mentions several fundamental statistical concepts and discusses the various ways in which surveys and interviews can be implemented, again looking at the advantages, disadvantages, and potential pitfalls of each. He also gives attention to the logistics of administering surveys via mail and to large groups, and offers low- and high-tech methods for compiling and classifying data.

Chapter 4 is the longest and most technical. Brown touches on topics as varied as descriptive statistics, analytical concepts, statistical tests, and key constructs that ensure reliability and validity. Although this chapter begins with some familiar and easy-to-digest concepts in nontechnical language, it becomes a bit cumbersome when the discussion turns to more advanced, albeit useful, topics such as the “Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient” and the “Bonferroni Adjustment.” You are also faced with a fair amount of sample data and some daunting formulas, but Brown reminds you that computer spreadsheets are available to do much of the mathematical heavy lifting. This chapter certainly requires a careful re-read to digest everything, but it will be time well spent.

Chapter 5 examines qualitative data gathering and analysis. Brown draws parallels between quantitative and qualitative surveys in his discussion of triangulation, theoretical constructs, and issues of coder reliability.

The closing chapter is dedicated to reporting results, with sample outlines and mention of style sheets.

Throughout the text, Brown revisits two authentic “rotating examples” that illustrate the key concepts in each chapter and analyzes problems that arise in each case.

Using Surveys in Language Programs is a valuable addition to the library of any ESL program administrator or researcher. It is concise, logically organized, and written in accessible, nontechnical language with numerous examples from Brown’s vast experience as a researcher in applied linguistics.

Dennis Bricault is associate professor of Spanish and director of ESL programs at North Park University, in the United States.
READ
DISCUSS
WRITE
QUESTION
THINK
DEBATE
ANALYZE
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LEARN

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Advocacy issues in the field of TESOL often play out at the regional, state, and local levels. In 2007, Sunshine State TESOL (SSTESOL), TESOL’s affiliate in the state of Florida, became heavily involved in a battle over a proposal in the state legislature to change the training requirements for Florida teachers and, after much effort, achieved an important victory.

Under a federal consent decree issued in 1990, all teachers in Florida who work with English language learners (ELLs) are required to obtain a specific number of in-service training hours, depending on the content that they teach. Teachers working in language arts (e.g., English, reading, ESL) are required to obtain an ESOL endorsement based on 300 in-service hours; other content area teachers must obtain 60 in-service hours. But some reading teachers in rural areas with few ELLs complained about this requirement. As a result of their complaints, a bill was introduced in the Florida legislature that would reduce their required in-service training from 300 to 60 hours. The drastic reduction in hours would be an immense disservise to educators and ELLs throughout the United States.

“The bill hit us like a ton of bricks when it came out,” said Eric Dwyer of Florida International University. “We had not been doing our homework and were not prepared [to respond].”

SSTESOL is a moderately sized affiliate with approximately 460 members spread throughout the state and chapters in many of Florida’s major cities. To facilitate advocacy, SSTESOL collaborates with other organizations, and it has an advocacy position on its board and an e-list on which subscribers discuss professional issues and public policy.

**Initial Efforts**

When SSTESOL heard about the bill, several members of the advocacy e-list tried to stop it. “Our initial goal was to stop the bill in committee,” said Rosa Castro Feinberg, a retired faculty member from Florida International University and one of the leaders of the campaign. “We targeted the members of the committee in the Florida House of Representatives that would first vote on the bill.”

Affiliate members prepared information packets and sent them to the legislators serving on the key committee. In addition, members of the e-list were urged to contact their legislators by e-mail. Despite these efforts, however, the advocates could not get a hearing.

“We came to the conclusion that . . . unless we knew a specific staff member, we had no assurances that the members of the Florida legislature were going to receive our messages,” Castro Feinberg said. Although they eventually got messages to all the representatives in the Florida House, the bill quickly passed committee and then the full House.

**Allies and Key Contacts**

When a companion bill was introduced in the Florida Senate, the SSTESOL advocates redoubled their efforts. They reached out to the few representatives who had voted against the bill in the House, and these legislators provided advice about the bill’s progress. The advocates also discovered that someone knew a former language teacher who was well connected to the Speaker of the House in Tallahassee. The former language teacher quickly became their ally and agreed to carry their message to the Speaker. The advocates also contacted Multicultural Education, Training, and Advocacy (META) the public interest law firm that had brought the original class-action lawsuit resulting in the federal consent decree. The organization sent a letter to the Florida Department of Education indicating that the proposed bill would violate the consent decree and could result in another lawsuit. Despite these additional efforts, however, the companion bill passed the Senate, and SSTESOL learned that the bill was en route to the governor’s desk for signature.

**National Support**

Refusing to allow these setbacks to stop them, the SSTESOL advocates pushed forward with their campaign. “We really felt we had to go for a veto,” said Dwyer. “We were pessimistic . . . but ethically we felt that we had to persist.”

With little time left, the advocates asked local and state organizations as well as national groups to send letters to the governor urging him to veto the bill. SSTESOL found support not only from education associations such as TESOL, but also from civil rights organizations such as the League of United Latin American Citizens, the National Council of La Raza, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In all, the advocates collected 21 letters of support.

**Media Coverage**

Although their initial efforts to garner media attention to their cause had failed, the SSTESOL advocates decided to orchestrate a second media push. Using the Media Guide in the TESOL U.S. Advocacy Action Center (http://capwiz.com/tesol), they targeted key reporters in major cities. When a major Miami newspaper picked up the story, they used it to build momentum. They also used the letters of support and the coverage in national education media to attract many local reporters’ attention. “We very much appreciated

(continued on page 42)
Spotlight on TESOL Communities:
Elementary Education Interest Section

At every TESOL convention, the Elementary Education Interest Section (EEIS) schedules an academic session specifically targeted to K–8 educators. We have learned about second language research with young learners, collaborative partnerships for all our students, and discerning if a student has a learning disability or language difference. This year our academic session is titled “Connecting to Culture to Enhance Student Learning,” and it is scheduled for Saturday morning. Session leaders will offer ideas for using culture to help students become part of the learning community despite recent efforts in the United States to focus education purely on assessment.

One of the EEIS-hosted highlights at TESOL conventions is the Author Session. In 2007, children’s book author and illustrator Gerald McDermott, whose interest and research in global legends and myths has taken him around the world, gave a presentation that reflected his pursuits. With the help of the staff at TESOL, the EEIS has arranged to have prominent children’s book author and illustrator Yangsook Choi speak on Friday afternoon of the 2008 convention. Her award-winning books, including The Name Jar and Peach Heaven, offer engaging, insightful intercultural perspectives with beautiful illustrations.

An important component of the EEIS activities at the annual TESOL conventions is the EEIS hospitality booth in the exhibit hall, which uses the universal power and appeal of elementary student art to draw in visitors. Each year a call is put out to teachers to bring convention-themed poster-size paintings or drawings that can be hung in the booth. Although the convention themes tend to be serious statements, student interpretations continuously surprise with their often unconventional, colorful, and charming representations that cut right to the essence.

Using art to stimulate thinking and clarify meaning has long been a vital element in good classroom teaching. Understanding the convention theme’s vocabulary and ideas, and applying them in oral and written activities naturally fits into language arts classes, and the broader concepts can provide interesting forays into the domains of science, math, art, and music, to say nothing of the realm of social studies and the global implications of theme exploration. (This year’s theme, Worlds of TESOL: Building Communities of Practice, Inquiry, and Creativity, is especially multifaceted and inclusive.) The possibilities for enriching educational experiences are endless. Think about participating in next year’s call for booth art, but in the meantime consider that everyone benefits when more visuals are integrated into the classroom.

For more information on the EEIS sessions at the 2008 TESOL Convention and Exhibit in New York, check your Program Book when you arrive on site. For general information on the EEIS, please visit http://www.tesol.org : Communities : Interest Sections : Elementary Education.
ESSENTIAL TEACHER

Penny McKay Awarded the MLA’s Kenneth W. Mildenberger Prize for Assessing Young Language Learners

Penny McKay, a long-time TESOL member and recent TESOL board member, received the 27th annual Kenneth W. Mildenberger Prize in December 2007 for her book Assessing Young Language Learners, published by Cambridge University Press. Sponsored by the Modern Language Association, the Mildenberger Prize is awarded annually for an outstanding work in the fields of language, culture, literacy, or literature with strong applications to the teaching of languages other than English. Congratulations to Penny for achieving this special recognition!

Managing E-List Participation

Members are able to manage their participation on e-lists as they wish; list managers or staff no longer manage these lists. To remove yourself from a list, go to http://www.tesol.org and log in (your username is your ID number; your password is your last name unless you’ve changed it). Click on My Communities in the Member Toolbox in the upper left corner of the page.

My Communities is where members manage their e-lists, e-newsletters, and subscriptions to other free services. Click on or off whichever list you wish to add or delete, and then save the changes.

Announcing the TESOL Professional Development Travel Grant for Practicing ESL/EFL Teachers

TESOL’s Awards Committee is announcing a new travel grant created in collaboration with and generously supported by Betty Azar. This award offers US$1,500 per grant to practicing ESL/EFL teachers and teacher trainers who need financial support to attend the annual TESOL convention. A minimum of 10 grants per year will be funded. These grants will be available beginning with the 2009 convention. Further details can be found on the awards Web site: http://www.tesol.org/awards.

Turning Point

As the issue caught fire within the Hispanic community, it caught the attention of an important group: the Hispanic Legislative Caucus of the Florida State Legislature. The caucus immediately sent a letter to the governor urging him to veto the bill. “This was rather remarkable,” Dwyer pointed out, “as several members of the Hispanic Legislative Caucus supported the initial bill.” When the bill finally reached the governor, he vetoed it, citing the negative impact the bill would have had on the education of ELLs. The governor specifically mentioned the Hispanic Legislative Caucus’s unanimous support of the veto.

Building on Success

The knowledge, experience, and resources that the SSTESOL advocates had developed became a foundation for SSTESOL’s future advocacy efforts. They enhanced their e-mail list and used the Web-based interface to collect and archive information and resources. SSTESOL expanded its membership and developed talking points for pending issues.

With this new foundation, SSTESOL advocates took on related issues. While working against the teacher training bill, they had discovered the state of professional development for Florida teachers, especially regarding in-service training. “We discovered that while some districts had laudable professional development, others didn’t do it very well, and we might not have known that had we not gone through this experience,” stated Dwyer. As a result, SSTESOL has become more engaged in state regulations for professional development.

More important are the many valuable lessons that SSTESOL has learned from this experience. “We can’t do this alone—there are simply not enough of us,” said Castro Feinberg. “We must network with other groups—we absolutely must. We know we have to be vigilant. There won’t be a moment from now on where at least one of us isn’t monitoring legislation for its impact upon ELLs.” Added Dwyer, “We’ll be much more ready than we were before.”

Editor’s note: Although the original bill was defeated by the governor’s veto, a new bill has been introduced in the 2008 session of the Florida legislature. SSTESOL is once again fighting the measure.
Helping English Language Learners Succeed in Middle and High Schools
(Faridah Pawan and Ginger Sietman, Editors)

This volume in the Collaborative Partnerships Between ESL and Classroom Teachers Series (Debra Suarez, series editor) responds to the nationwide call to provide a teaching force equipped with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively teach the diversifying U.S. student population. The series is designed for both ESL teachers and classroom teachers, for both language education specialists and subject matter specialists. It is ideal for use in pre- and in-service teacher education programs. Expert authors present models of classroom-based and school-based collaborative partnerships from middle and high schools across the United States, building a knowledge base for teachers and educators. Each chapter includes prereading questions, a literature review, and a case study that readers may analyze and apply to their own settings.

Developing a New Curriculum for Adult Learners
(Michael Carroll, Editor)

Curriculum innovations succeed or fail according to the extent to which teachers, and to some extent students, feel that they are meaningfully involved in the process of change. The innovations described in this book have all resulted in improvements in the quality of language education and in opportunities for the students. The chapters cross a variety of educational contexts in countries around the world, including Brazil, the United Arab Emirates, Japan, and the United States. Some programs were built where no program existed before, whereas others arose because developers looked critically at existing programs and decided to rebuild from the base up. The unifying theme through all the chapters is the effectiveness of people with a strong vision who communicate successfully with various stakeholders.

To order, see the Book Catalog at http://www.tesol.org.
TESOL 2008 Annual Convention & Exhibit
April 2–5, 2008, Hilton New York Hotel
and Sheraton New York Hotel & Towers
New York, New York, USA

The 42nd Annual TESOL Convention
and Exhibit to Be Held in New York - The Advance
Program for the TESOL annual convention was mailed at the end of
November 2007, and convention registration and hotel reservations
began on December 3. Still need to make your plans to attend in New York? The TESOL home page has links to register
for the convention and to make your hotel reservations. Just look for the Convention 2008 heading at
http://www.tesol.org/. Do you have questions about your registration? Do you want to confirm that your registration
was received? In the United States and Canada, please call Laser Registration at 866-999-3032 or fax your informa-
tion to 866-614-5463. Convention attendees from outside North America should call 514-228-3074 or fax their inform-
tion to 514-228-3151. Please use the numbers provided here. Faxing your registration forms to the TESOL Central
Office in Alexandria, Virginia, USA, will delay your registration.

Visit the TESOL Center During the Convention - Make the TESOL Center (located on the prome-
nade outside the Hilton Grand Ballroom) your first stop during the convention to view new publications, meet authors,
and check out the Web site to see upcoming programs and samples of interest section and caucus newsletters. Talk to
knowledgeable staff who can answer questions and provide information about what TESOL is doing for you. Staff can
also give you a tour of the Web site and show you how to manage your own profile.

New Member Orientation - The New Member Orientation features a panel presentation with the TESOL
president, executive director, membership committee chair, other members of the board of directors, and membership
manager. The orientation focuses on resources available to new members so that they can maximize their first year as
TESOL members. Additional details are provided on site in the Program Book.

Job MarketPlace (JMP) - The JMP has two components: an online job-posting/interview-scheduling module
run through TESOL’s online Career Center (http://careers.tesol.org) and an on-site location at the annual convention.
Job seekers may search job postings and schedule interviews online before the convention and then interview with
recruiters on site. Interview booths and a meet-and-greet area will be located in the Metropolitan Ballroom of the
Sheraton Hotel.

Graduate Student Forum - The Graduate Student Forum is a student-run miniconference sponsored by
Purdue University. This forum invites graduate students in TESOL teacher preparation programs to present papers,
demonstrations, and posters. It also allows graduate students to formally participate in the TESOL convention without
having to meet the early deadlines for submitting proposals or compete with experienced professionals for time on the
convention program. For more information, please visit http://www.tesol.org/.

Doctoral Forum - TESOL invites students to participate in the Doctoral Forum, an informative event that brings
together doctoral students and established TESOL scholars to discuss issues pertinent to the students’ research. This
forum enables students to get feedback about current issues pertaining to their dissertation research from their peers
as well as from seasoned ESOL professionals (mentors). This event is an informal gathering where doctoral students
can talk casually about their research. For more information, please visit http://www.tesol.org/.
2008 TESOL Academy
The 2008 TESOL Academy will be held at Roosevelt University, in Chicago, Illinois, in the United States, June 20–21. The academy will feature seven 10-hour workshops, with particular emphasis on the professional development needs of K–12 ESL educators. For more information, visit http://www.tesol.org/academies or e-mail edprograms@tesol.org.

2008 Online Courses and Seminars
Learn about online professional development opportunities through TESOL, including the Principles and Practices of Online Teaching Certificate Program and TESOL virtual seminars. TESOL virtual seminars focus on key issues in ESL and EFL. Bring together colleagues at your school or organization for a live webcast (or, when it fits your schedule, use the virtual seminar’s playback feature). Virtual seminar participants can also take part in an online discussion. For more information, e-mail edprograms@tesol.org.

2008 Symposia
TESOL will host two symposia in 2008. The TESOL Symposium on Keeping Language Diversity Alive, hosted with the help of the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA), will take place July 9 in Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia. On November 8, the TESOL Symposium on Learner Autonomy, coordinated with TESOL-SPAIN, will take place at the University of Sevilla in Sevilla, Spain.

Results of the Elections for the 2008–2009 Board of Directors and Nominating Committee

President-Elect, 2008–2009:
Mark S. Algren

Board of Directors, 2008–2011:
Ester de Jong
Jane Hoelker
Suzanne Panferov
Yilin Sun

Nominating Committee Members:
Paula Schlusberg
Diane Boothe
Leslie Barratt
Betty Ansin Smallwood
Yvonne Freeman
Joe McVeigh
Dorothy Zemach
Fabiola Ehlers-Zavala

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TESOL offers the following payment options (all payments are accepted in U.S. dollars drawn on U.S. banks). For those countries where credit cards are not an option, please note that TESOL offers wire transfers and payments through Western Union.

METHODS OF PAYMENT

Online: For fastest processing, join online at http://www.tesol.org/join.

By Phone: Apply by calling +1 240-243-2243 (888-547-3369 toll-free in the United States and Canada).

Mail: Send your completed form with credit card information or check to TESOL, P.O. Box 79283, Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21279-0283.

Fax: Fax your completed form with credit card information to +1 703-836-6447 or +1 703-836-7864.

Western Union® Quick Pay: Visit http://www.tesol.org/join and select Payment Options for details on submitting Western Union® Quick Pay.

Purchase Orders: Purchase orders are not accepted.

FORMS OF PAYMENT

Checks: TESOL accepts personal or corporate checks or money orders drawn in U.S. funds on U.S. banks.

Credit Cards: TESOL accepts Visa, MasterCard (including check cards), and American Express.

Wire Transfers: Visit http://www.tesol.org/join and select Payment Options for details on submitting wire transfers.
The TESOL Resource Center: Mile-High City Contest
The TESOL Resource Center (TRC) is an online platform where TESOL members can find and share a variety of resources posted by their fellow TESOL professionals. The TRC resources include lesson plans, activities, assessment tools, and practical tips as well as papers, presentations, and multimedia resources.

The TRC has recently announced its second contest: the Mile-High City Contest. If you submit resources to the TRC, you could qualify to win two free nights’ lodging at the 2009 TESOL Convention and Exhibit in Denver, Colorado, and more. To learn more about the TRC and its contest, please visit http://www.tesol.org/resource-center or contact resourcecenter@tesol.org. You can also check the 2008 Online Itinerary Planner at http://www.tesol.org/2008Convention: Itinerary Planner for times and locations for the TRC Corner and TRC-related sessions at the convention.

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