GOOD LUCK, CHINA!

by Ke Xu

Redesigning ESOL Courses to Address Cultural and Intercultural Aspects

by Alvino E. Fantini

Improving Academic English at Outdoor Nature Centers

by Debra W. Hawke

Worlds of TESOL Come Together at New York Convention
TESOL Journal Editor Search Call for Applications

Deadline August 1, 2008

The TESOL Serial Publications Committee and the TESOL Journal Editor Search Team invite applications and nominations for the position of editor of TESOL Journal (TJ). The editor serves for 3 years, beginning in January 2009, and must be a TESOL member in good standing throughout his or her term. The deadline for applications is August 1, 2008.

TJ will be an online publication that provides a forum for second and foreign language educators at all levels to engage with the ways that research and theorizing can inform, shape, and ground teaching practices and perspectives. This journal should provide the space for an active and vibrant professional dialogue about research- and theory-based practices as well as practice-oriented theorizing and research.

The editor of TJ will implement journal policy within the mission and financial parameters established by the TESOL Board of Directors. The editor is responsible for acquiring and publishing material that meets the needs and interests of the TESOL membership. TESOL will provide the editor with a managing editor, who will manage copyediting and production, and an editorial assistant, who will work at the editor’s field office. For this volunteer position, the editor receives an honorarium of USS$4000 per year along with reimbursement of some expenses to attend the TESOL Annual Convention and Exhibit. The association and the editor’s institution will also support an editorial field office at the editor’s institution.

The search process has three phases:

- **Phase 1**: Applicants submit a letter of application, curriculum vitae, and the names, titles, and contact information (including e-mail) of three referees who are able to evaluate the applicant’s editorial abilities. The application deadline is August 1, 2008, though earlier applications are strongly encouraged. All applications must be submitted via e-mail to Constant Leung, Search Team Chair, at constant.leung@kcl.ac.uk. For further guidelines, including a full job description, go to TESOL’s Web site www.tesol.org/tjcall.
- **Phase 2**: Short-listed applicants respond to a questionnaire concerning their editorial experience.
- **Phase 3**: The Search Team interviews finalists, who will complete brief editorial tasks.

TESOL seeks individuals with a broad perspective on the profession, proven organizational abilities, and a deep understanding of the possible intersections of TESOL research and classroom practice. Applicants should ensure that they have adequate time to handle the work of the journal without compromising their responsibilities in their salaried positions. The Search Team is particularly interested in receiving applications from TESOL members in good standing who

- have a recognized teaching and publication record
- have an established record of editorial work
- have basic proficiency with word-processing applications (e.g., MS Word) and the Internet
- are committed to the further development of the mission of the association and the publication
- can reconceptualize aspects of the publication in response to membership survey information, and
- can demonstrate potential for institutional support.

For more information, please contact Constant Leung at constant.leung@kcl.ac.uk.

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Worlds of TESOL Come Together at New York Convention
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With suitcases unpacked and workshop handouts filed for later use, we are winding down from the incredible TESOL convention in New York. An unprecedented 7,200 people had preregistered to attend the convention, and many more showed up for on-site registration. Our own session, “Helping New Writers Get Published in *Essential Teacher*,” had a great turnout and was delightful for us as we heard funny stories, entertaining anecdotes, and the trials and tribulations of the process of writing for publication. Four of the presenters in this session were novice writers who have had their articles presented in Out of the Box. I appreciate their involvement with ET and thank them for sharing their experiences.

I hope you enjoy the June issue; it is written with you in mind:

- **Communities of Practice**: Judie Haynes laments the conditions that ESOL teachers often face and takes a look at changes that have been made over time. Linda New Levine describes how the dangers of discordance between ESOL and classroom teachers can limit a child’s access to needed services. Debbie Zacarian tells us about the difficulty she had in finding a translator for Li, a Chinese student from Vietnam who did not speak Vietnamese. Her story reminds us that we cannot make assumptions about students’ language and culture based on preconceived notions. Because the upcoming Olympics in Beijing have spurred the fever of studying English, Ke Xu discusses recent English language teaching reform in China. Alvino E. Fantini continues to recommend that teachers reexamine their courses for cultural and intercultural content, which often results in course redesign. Exemplifying the use of metaphor, Dorothy Zemach cleverly compares foreign language learning with learning to play music.

- **Out of the Box**: Sherrie Sacharow writes about the frightening experience she had dealing with an enraged student in the classroom. Eun-Young Kim shares her point of view on being a nonnative speaker chosen for the job of director of an ESL program. Feng-Ling Margaret Johnson and Jessica A. Peterson point out the nuances in conversational turn-taking in professional meetings, a skill that English language learners are not usually taught in the classroom. After overhearing a diverse group of students discussing white lies, Sandra Hancock decided to investigate how the issue of whether to tell the complete truth relates to communicative competence.

- **Portal**: Diane Rodriguez examines the impact that teacher education programs might have on Latina teachers who are preparing to teach bilingual special education. Elise Geither takes an in-depth look at the role that tutors play in support of nonnative-English-speaking university students when writing in English. Debra W. Hawke helps English language learners make meaningful language connections in science by using an outdoor nature center. Daniela Munca writes about using blogs as an instructional medium for delivering authentic information to language learners.

- **References & Resources**: Marianne Brems describes a relevant, well-designed program of oral communication that meets the academic needs of students. Mary Jane Curry reviews a series of books that offer comprehensive language activities based on everyday tasks such as grocery shopping, going to school, and eating in a restaurant. Tamara Kirson describes a Web site that gives students an opportunity to use language authentically in creating comic strips. Berna Mutlu reviews a software package that allows users to build graphical representations of concepts.

- **Compleat Links**: Lianjun Zuo outlines how EFL methodology in China has changed in the decades since the end of the Cultural Revolution. Christiane Martinez Corsi relates how stressful it can be for business people to learn English while also performing competently in business interactions. Sevtap Karaoglu offers a compelling article on motivation and its effect on language acquisition. Debra J. Occhi, who teaches content courses in English to Japanese college students, describes how to modify native-level English texts. In Grammatically Speaking, Richard Firsten clarifies *different from* and *different than*, discusses the past tense of *hang* and other issues, and challenges us with another of his brain teasers.

Eileen N. Whelan Ariza  et@tesol.org
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In my more than 16 years as a member of TESOL, I have seen the association transform from a U.S.-focused education organization to a vibrant global community with more than 14,000 members in 150 countries. TESOL’s sphere of influence as a professional association also impacts the 101 affiliates throughout the world that provide services for an additional 47,000 English language teaching professionals. An exciting and welcome part of my role as president is to connect with those TESOL affiliates and their members. I had my first opportunity to do this last September at the 21st Panama TESOL Convention in Panama City; the theme of the conference was “Language: An Integrating Factor.”

My speech at the inaugural plenary, titled “ Integrating Learning and Doing: Dialogic Approaches to TESOL,” elicited some interesting questions by attendees who furthered my intellectual curiosity regarding my research. Inquiry arose about the role of drills and dialogue, overlap between dialogic and communicative approaches to TESOL, and the difference between Krashen’s “I + 1” and Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development and implications for curriculum development.

My visit to Panama reinforced for me why I value my affiliation and relationship with TESOL so much. Being able to connect with TESOL professionals from other parts of the world enriches my perspective and helps me appreciate the cultural heritage and diversity that members bring to this association. I learned much on my visit to Panama TESOL, including the following:

- Outreach efforts to teachers are under way: Lizzie García de Paredes, president-elect of Panama TESOL, made my visit especially memorable by sharing with me the efforts of the Panamanian leadership to reach out to teachers in the public schools who have traditionally not been afforded many educational and professional opportunities.

- Grants from the Ministry of Education and the U.S. Embassy of Panama: Davina Cole, president of Panama TESOL, announced proudly that they had obtained grants to have 100 public school teachers attend the conference. The grants paid for half of the registration fees for these teachers. At the conference one of the first teachers I met explained that she had taken two buses and ridden all night to come to the conference. She was an elementary school teacher and taught high school as a volunteer in the evenings because, as she said, “The need for English is so great.”

- Use of technology to share information: Panama TESOL has just created an online, interactive newsletter for its members.

- Cultural diversity of Panama: Four major Amerindian groups populate Panama: Kuna (from Kuna Yala, previously known as San Blas), Ngobe-Buglé (previously known as Guaymí), Emberá-Wounaan (previously known as Chocóes), and Teribe and Bri-Bri. The majority of the population is mestizo, or a racial mixture of Amerindian, African, and European. Panama is an extremely diverse country with a rich history of workers who came from the Anglophone Caribbean to build the Panama Canal and railway and were joined by Chinese immigrant laborers. Some of the Panama TESOL leaders are of Afro-Caribbean heritage, and the English-speaking heritage is often reflected in their names, such as Carlos Prescott and Davina Cole.

I was considerably impressed by the Panama TESOL leadership’s commitment to its students and communities, and by its respect for the cultural heritage of its members. The affiliate is working arduously to bring education and technology to its members to help them continue to meet the strong demand for English language teaching in Panama.

Thank you, Davina Cole, Lizzie García de Paredes, Melva Lowe de Goodin, and all of my colleagues at Panama TESOL. I enjoyed spending time with you, learning about your world, and I hope that our paths cross again. Meeting the dynamic leadership and members of worldwide affiliates is an honor for me as an English language educator and as TESOL president. I look forward to connecting with many other TESOL affiliates over the course of my presidency.
I have seen amazing growth in the TESOL field since I began teaching 27 years ago. Implementation of research that informs teaching methods, national ESL standards for Grades pre-K–12, and state testing for English language proficiency—all of these support and evaluate the positive growth of students. We as ESL educators continue to advocate for fair and accurate measures of students’ adequate yearly progress, and great changes have taken place in terms of expectations for English language learners (ELLs) as well as the content they are taught. Each step that we have taken has enhanced the field of TESOL.

However, some things never change, especially in elementary schools. We are still plagued with substandard teaching conditions. Over the years, my fellow elementary school ESL teachers and I have held classes in storage rooms, hallways, converted closets, and under stairwells. We have struggled to instruct students in noisy cafeterias, libraries, or very small and crowded classrooms. To me, these instructional spaces are representative of how our programs are regarded by our school districts. We may have materials because they are paid for with federal money, but teachers’ salaries and “classrooms” come from the common budget, the money that has been raised to educate all of the students in a school community. Local school districts have not kept pace with the increase in their ELL populations, just as they have not kept abreast of the changes in federal mandates.

Take a look around your school setting. What unconscious message is your school district sending? Do ESL students get a fair share of the “pie”? Or are we, their teachers, permanently relegated to the hallways and closets because our populations are silent? Are our resources stretched because our schools won’t hire a sufficient number of ESL teachers? Let’s take a peek into Mrs. S’s ESL class as she leads her seven kindergarteners into the partitioned-off space in a classroom designated as hers.

The students are crowded around a cracked table that no one else wanted, sitting in chairs so high that the students’ legs don’t fit under the table. Their work gets mixed together and becomes disorganized as they try to illustrate a story that Mrs. S told. Classroom management becomes a concern because space is a serious issue. Worst of all, it is difficult for Mrs. S to allow her students to get excited about language and express themselves as kindergartners would naturally do because another class is being taught on the other side of the partition. In that class, sixth-grade newcomers strain to hear what their teacher is saying but are continuously distracted by the kindergarten’s noise and activities.

The irony of this scenario is that it takes place in a suburban district that has just built a $15 million addition to Mrs. S’s school. Many of the district’s school programs, although obviously not ESL, were moved into luxurious new accommodations and substantially upgraded.

Another substandard condition that many ESL teachers face is having to teach in too many locations. They are often required to travel to two or more schools. Pat, an itinerant ESL teacher from western New Jersey, travels to four schools and teaches a total of 20 students in grades K–12. She organizes her

I have held classes in storage rooms, hallways, converted closets, and under stairwells.
ESL program in the trunk of her car. In each building, she teaches all of the ESL students during one or two class periods. Accordingly, some of her classes have second and fifth graders in the same group, with each demonstrating different developmental and cognitive needs.

When she arrives at her destination, Pat teaches in whatever space she can find, in a different location everday. Her materials are spread throughout the schools that she visits or are kept in the trunk of her car. Like most itinerant teachers, Pat is unable to function as a consistent source of support and information to classroom teachers and to parents because there is no time. She frequently ends her day backtracking to one of her schools to conference with a parent, a classroom teacher, or the Child Study Team.

Ironically, it appears that the more organized you are and the better you do your job, the more you are expected to do. Imagine a job at which you work hard to help students succeed, and when they do, your school district is reluctant to increase support even as your population grows. What started out as small-group instruction many years ago became groups of eight or more. What’s one more student in a class of nine? So what if you have a stray fourth grader in a group of second graders. We are simply teaching too many students in groups that are too large and, in some cases, cognitively unbalanced.

It is our job to teach ELLs to take risks with language. We also know that we must provide a certain atmosphere of trust and privacy that encourages this risk-taking. We know so many theories and best practices that can help our students thrive, but to apply them in our classes, we need to have our own instructional space with a reasonable number of students assigned to our classes. We can’t be stretched to accommodate three or more schools if we are to help students become full participants in the school community.

Federal regulations require that ESL students make adequate yearly progress, yet class size is not regulated, similar grade levels are not grouped in the same class, and the size and location of our teaching space are unregulated. Our students and their families often cannot advocate for themselves, and our lone voices have not effected the necessary changes.

Ultimately, we may have done a good job promoting our students in state and national arenas, but we still have work to do in our own backyards.

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**HOME ROOM**

**Mark’s First Year in School**

by Linda New Levine

Mark entered school in November, a fragile-looking boy with a larger-than-average head and enormous brown eyes. He clung to his mother’s hand, a lady he had met 2 days before he arrived in New York City from his former home—an orphanage in South Vietnam. Mark’s adopted mother, Mrs. J, felt it was best that he begin school immediately and start to learn English. He was placed in first grade because of his age: 6 years and 5 months.

Once placed in a group of first graders, however, it became obvious that Mark wasn’t a first grader by this school’s standards. He was much smaller than the rest of the children. He had little large or small muscle control and couldn’t use a crayon or scissors well. Even more troubling, he couldn’t stay awake for more than 2 hours after school started in the morning.

His teacher, Mrs. M, was young, energetic, and well respected. Although it concerned her that Mark couldn’t stay awake in class, she was even more disturbed by his conduct when he was awake; he often howled, dry eyed, at the top of his voice and could not be quieted. The idea of transferring Mark to a half-day kindergarten class was not seriously considered because both of his new parents worked outside the home.

By December, Mark was able to stay awake the entire day and had stopped howling. Indeed, he became very quiet. No one even heard him speak Vietnamese anymore.

I was the itinerant ESL teacher in Mark’s school, dividing my time among seven schools in the district, and I had taught there for 5 years. There were no other ESL professionals in the area. Mark joined my class that first year as one of five children for a daily half hour of English instruction. Little did I know how much I would learn during Mark’s first year in school.

The parent conference reports for the year tell the story. Mrs. M, the teacher, reported that Mark’s language development had grown “astoundingly,” whereas I assessed his development as “good.” Mrs. M reported that Mark’s letter formation was “controlled” and he had “mastered” vertical addition problems.

But my examination of Mark’s work folder showed incorrect letter formation in his own name and vertical addition problems with 50% errors and reversed numerals. Mrs. M wrote that Mark was speaking “in complete sentences” in June; I reported that Mark’s productive language lagged behind his comprehension. I
recommended continuation of ESL for the following year and was surprised to see that Mrs. M recommended retention in her classroom.

In the fall, Mark remained in first grade with Mrs. M and in ESL with me. While I worked on language development, Mrs. M started a reading readiness program that stressed sound–symbol relationships, listening for sounds in various positions, identifying sounds, and spelling by sound, with blending, rhyming, and sequencing. This approach worried me. I knew Mark could not yet hear or pronounce certain sounds in English. “But,” I thought, “maybe this program will help him.”

By November, I learned that Mrs. M intended to place Mark in a basal reading group that met at the same time as my ESL class. The principal supported her decision, and Mark was removed from ESL. Prior to this happening, I had thought that Mrs. M and I had a good collegial relationship. Too late, I learned that I had ignored many of the warning signs to the contrary. The parent conferences were scheduled without consulting me, and I wasn’t asked about retention or about the development of Mark’s reading program. Stubbornly, I resolved to follow Mark’s development closely.

The April reports indicated that Mark’s progress in reading was not good. Mrs. M detailed many difficulties with Mark’s oral language, including his inability to hear and match sounds, his lack of reading comprehension, and his limited recall. After consulting the school’s reading specialist, Mrs. M had Mark repeat the first primer level in the reading series and wrote, “It is a lack of facility with our language that will keep Mark from progressing.” Indeed, Mark’s standardized test score in language was a 0.3 grade equivalency. The year-end report stated that Mark’s language skills would improve “with time and extra help,” but Mark would need a “special language program” the following year. Apparently, it never occurred to Mrs. M that Mark’s removal from a “special language program” had precipitated his subsequent failures.

The end of the year found Mark’s parents requesting IQ testing and a referral to testing for learning disabilities. By the following fall, Mark was placed in a second-grade classroom, still working toward mastery of the first primer level, and was enrolled in a program for students with learning disabilities.

And what did I learn from Mark’s first year of school?

As an itinerant teacher, I had very little time to communicate with classroom teachers. This limitation prevented me from being a collegial partner in the education of my students and led to many assumptions on my part. I assumed that the teachers knew how to instruct ESL students in reading. I assumed that they would consult with me if ESL students were having problems. I assumed they respected me as a colleague in the school community. I was mistaken.

Mark’s case taught me that I needed to communicate frequently with classroom teachers, asking for their advice about educational program components and for their help when befuddled by problem behavior or a lack of progress. I needed to learn many approaches to teaching reading and experiment with them so that I could discover which ones were most helpful to my students. I needed to share my successes with my colleagues, talk about techniques I had tried, and observe their teaching strategies to increase my repertoire of skills. I needed to become a collegial, collaborative colleague with teachers in my schools. Maybe then they would work with me in the same way, and together we could improve teaching and learning for all our students.

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The parent conferences were scheduled without consulting me, and I wasn’t asked about retention or about the development of Mark’s reading program.
Finding the Right Interpreter Is Harder Than You Might Think

by Debbie Zacarian

“It was so special to know that Li would soon be able to communicate with someone. I could not contain my excitement as I introduced them to each other.”

“Please come to a graduation party for Li!” It had been 7 years since Li had arrived from a refugee camp in Thailand, and now she was graduating with a double major in biology and chemistry. Li was among the first group of English language learners with whom I worked. When people ask me, “How did you learn about the prior experiences of your students?” I usually respond, “My first experience working with an English language learner continues to be the most powerful one.”

When Li began high school in the United States, she spoke no English. She had flown directly to western Massachusetts from Thailand. When she arrived, her sponsors thought that it would be best if she began school immediately, so they brought her to begin school the next day. I distinctly remember looking out of the main office window and seeing Li walking between the two sponsors, who were parishioners of one the community’s churches. Their children had graduated from the local school system, and they had clear ideas about who they wanted Li’s teachers to be and the courses they wanted her to take.

Li walked between her sponsors as they approached my office. She was dressed in a white sailor dress with blue piping, a striking contrast to her identity as a newcomer. The first memory that I have of Li is seeing her face as tears slowly rolled down her cheeks and over her shaking body. I also remember my inability to calm her fears.

During her first 2 weeks of school, Li’s behavior vacillated between low-erating her eyes toward the floor and staring blankly at me while tears flowed down her trembling face. It was an incredibly painful time for her and an equally frustrating time for me. Thankfully, a long week after she began school, Oahn, a bilingual tutor who spoke Vietnamese and English, was hired to help Li.

I remember how thrilled I was to meet Oahn. I had great expectations about the possibilities of what she would do to help Li learn and become more acclimated in school. I knew Oahn would provide the bridge that we needed to be able to communicate. The day she arrived, I could not wait to introduce her to Li. It was so special to know that Li would soon be able to communicate with someone. I could not contain my excitement as I introduced them to each other. It was thrilling to hear the sounds of their conversational exchange!

I walked Oahn and Li to the school library, where we sat down to talk. I took out the list of questions that I had prepared. Each question would help me learn about Li’s past and build a relationship with her. As I was preparing to ask the first question, Oahn looked directly into my eyes and moved her chair closer to mine. In a soft voice, she whispered that Li did not speak Vietnamese. What?! How was this possible? I was sure that Li had fled Vietnam, lived in a refugee camp in Thailand, and been sponsored to come to our town directly from the refugee camp. According to Oahn, Li had grown up in a Chinese community in Vietnam, where she spoke, read, and wrote in Mandarin. “Not all Vietnamese people speak Vietnamese,” Oahn informed me.

This moment marked the first of many incorrect assumptions I have made over the years, like the time I read an application from a bilingual Spanish-English teacher and was so excited to meet her. When the applicant came for the interview, however, I learned that she was Korean American, had grown up in a largely Hispanic section of New York, had majored in Spanish, and had lived abroad to perfect her Spanish profi-
by Ke Xu

MULTILINGUAL MOMENTUM

Good Luck, China!

By the time you read this column, the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games will be only weeks away. Undoubtedly, Beijing is ready for this grand occasion with all construction projects completed, workers trained, and schedules set. What is really eye-opening to the world, though, is how the event has spurred the fever of studying English in the city. From the mayor to police officers, cab drivers, even housewives and little kids, Beijingers feel proud to be able to speak English, which they consider an important means to communicate with the world.

Ke Xu (KX): What are the most significant steps your province/city took during the past decade in reforming ELT curriculum and methodology?

He Feng (HF): Two things. One is Jiangsu’s collaboration with Oxford University Press in developing the 25-book school textbook series for Grade 3–12 students. The series, approved by the Ministry of Education (MOE), is now used by over 20 million students in more than 10 provinces across China. As a chief editor of the set, I am glad that this collaboration was a success that marks the beginning of a new era of our curriculum development. The other is the implementation of MOE’s new School English Curriculum Standards, which call for fundamental changes in how English is taught in China.

Cao Rongsu (CR): In 2005, high schools in Nanjing began to use Jiangsu’s textbooks, which incorporate a communicative perspective with more listening and speaking materials and activities. Since 2001, Nanjing has sent more than 100 public school English teachers to Australia for training. This trend has helped broaden their vision and improve English language proficiency and competence.

Zhu Dalong (ZD): Apart from the above-mentioned achievements, Nanjing has also improved its ranking in national college entrance English examinations.

Securing bilingual and bicultural speakers can help us minimize our misassumptions and better understand the needs of our students.

Beijingers feel proud to be able to speak English, which they consider an important means to communicate with the world.

I can still remember my “surprise” when she spoke in Spanish. When I secured a Mandarin-English speaker to work with Li, I learned invaluable information about her prior schooling and family background. What struck me the most was that her parents had been sponsored to go to the west coast of Canada and she and her brother had been sponsored to come to western Massachusetts. I am still saddened when I think of how her family had been separated.

When I arrived at Li’s graduation party, I was greeted by many of my colleagues who had also taught her, and she was so happy to see all of us. She told us how much we had all meant to her. I have found that my first experience, working with Li, continues to have great meaning for me. The assumptions that we as teachers can make about our students and their lives are endless. Seeking ways to actively learn about their backgrounds is at the core of what we do. Securing bilingual and bicultural speakers can help us minimize our misassumptions and better understand the needs of our students. In turn, our students receive more effective instruction and become valued members of their school community.

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KX: What are the greatest challenges to your province/city in its ELT curriculum and methodology reform? How are you responding to these challenges?

HF: The greatest challenge is putting theories into practice. It takes time for Chinese school teachers to accept Western theories that they often find distant from the reality they face every day. Another challenge is to improve teachers’ language proficiency and teaching competence. A third challenge is to turn the current test-driven teaching model into the quality-oriented teaching model. To respond to these challenges, Jiangsu reinforced teacher development at provincial, city, district, and school levels; offered trainings at all levels to keep teachers abreast of the latest trends in their field; organized showcases of best practices and research papers; sent more than 700 teachers abroad each year for training; and invited experts to Jiangsu to train our teachers. The reform of high school and college entrance tests is also well under way.

CR: The biggest challenge for us is to turn the test-driven teaching model to the one that promotes students’ all-around development. Teachers’ understanding of the new curriculum’s underlying theories and concepts and their ability to adapt and integrate these theories into classroom practice are crucial to the success of this transition.

ZD: The greatest challenge, I believe, is the shift from the teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered approach. It is essential to activate teachers’ creativity to the maximum.

KX: What do you perceive as the major difference in ELT theory and practice between China and Western countries?

HF: The teaching context, I think. China has a typical EFL context characterized by the lack of authentic materials, professionally trained teachers, resources, and equipment; by teachers’ lack of proficiency in oral English and their reluctance to adopt a communicative approach; and by students’ lack of genuine purpose and opportunities to communicate in English and, therefore, lack of motivation to learn English, which has no social function in China. Constraints also include a narrow curriculum, large classes with tight schedules, a test-driven teaching model and school culture, and traditional teaching philosophy and methods. Most of the teaching and learning theories and methods introduced to China are based on SLA [second language acquisition] theories, which our teachers find irrelevant to their own teaching context. Therefore, we have been seeking a path of our own that fully reflects our local conditions and satisfies our own needs.

CR: TESOL can also provide more practical, classroom-tested tasks, techniques, approaches, methods, and curricula that address current theoretical research.

ZD: Especially those addressing practical issues such as how to handle large classes (50–70 students) and improve teaching efficiency.

Although it is encouraging to see millions of people learning English, steering a giant boat like this is no easy job. Quoting Deng Xiaoping’s famous line, “Black or white, whoever catches mice is a good cat,” I believe only the Chinese themselves will find out what works best in their own contexts. I wish the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games much success and English language learners in China good luck!

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See also “A Recent History of Teaching EFL in China,” http://www.tesol.org/et/.
Redesigning ESOL Courses to Address Cultural and Intercultural Aspects

by Alvino E. Fantini

In my March 2008 column, I suggested expanding the goals of ESOL to include developing students’ intercultural competence in order to prepare them better for today’s world. This means teaching not only English, but also appropriate interactive styles and other aspects of small-c culture. To do this, however, teachers must reexamine their courses for cultural and intercultural content.

Although attention to such content is already commonplace in many courses, further review and analysis of cultural content and whether or not cross-cultural abilities are addressed can be productive and often lead to course redesign. In turn, redesign often leads to expanded teaching activities and changes in assessment of student performance. In this column, I present a model to aid in reviewing and redesigning language courses.

Although most language teachers are familiar with principles of curriculum design, they don’t always utilize these principles for periodic review of ongoing courses. Such review is especially needed when courses follow a given textbook, because the underlying design of texts is often unclear. Rethinking course redesign becomes especially important once the goal is expanded to include intercultural competence.

A framework called the gemstone model can aid in the redesign process (Fantini, 2000–2001, p. 101). Rather than simply listing curricular components, this model configures them around a circle, suggesting that curricular review and analysis are ongoing and reiterative processes. From the initial needs assessment to assessment, the model illustrates how decisions made at any stage influence subsequent components and continue to affect the overall design as teachers periodically review content in preparation for later courses.

A significant aspect of this model is that it graphically links components, emphasizing the importance of their interconnectivity. This is paramount because course quality depends on how well individual components are suited to the overall teaching context and how well they are integrated and reinforce each other. For example, goals and objectives must flow from the needs assessment and educational precepts, course design and implementation must address the goals and objectives, and assessment must ascertain the extent to which students are meeting objectives.

Curriculum design typically includes several components: needs assessment, identification of goals and objectives, syllabus or course design, implementation, identification of resources, and assessment. The gemstone model adds two other components: educational precepts and long-term assessment.

Educational precepts are factors that affect course design and execution (e.g., attitudes regarding teacher–student roles and responsibilities, notions concerning teaching and learning, preferences for inductive or deductive approaches, methodological choices). Expanding the course focus to address intercultural communication is an excellent example of a precept that has significant implications that cannot be ignored in later stages. Educational precepts constitute an even more important component, given the cross-cultural nature of every ESOL classroom, where teachers and students often represent different cultural backgrounds. Moreover, long-term assessment, normally carried out by departments or institutions some time after completion of the course, generates important information about the impact on students, which can affect future course design.

Clarity in the initial components guides the formulation of appropriate goals and objectives. A goal (e.g., developing intercultural competence) differs from an objective in that it is long-term, abstract, and not directly measurable; however, it sets the general direction for the course. Objectives, on the other hand, are short-term and attainable within the course. They are also observable and measurable, so their attainment is periodically monitored and assessed. Objectives that support inter-
cultural competence, for example, would include (in addition to increasing English proficiency) developing appropriate communicative behaviors and interactive strategies. Whatever the objectives, however, their clarity always bears distinct implications for the syllabus plan to be designed.

Because there are often multiple objectives, they may be conveniently grouped within four dimensions that comprise intercultural competence: knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness (KASA; Fantini, 1999, p. 184).

This paradigm reminds us that more than knowledge of another language/culture is required. Knowledge about North American or Japanese language/culture, for example, is insufficient to produce competence. How we feel toward target culture members is also important, evoking the attitudinal/affective dimension. Speaking Japanese correctly, for example, although important and desirable, also requires the ability to greet and bow appropriately—the skills dimension. And central to this paradigm is awareness of oneself, one’s own culture, and the target culture. Awareness is fostered by development in the other three areas and, in turn, aids and fosters their development. In the end, however, the four dimensions are interrelated and indispensable for intercultural competence.

Establishment of these dimensions of intercultural competence has many pedagogical implications, especially in proceeding to subsequent stages in the course-redesign cycle—syllabus development and identification of additional teaching activities that provide students with real or simulated experiences in the target culture.

Clearly defined cultural and intercultural objectives facilitate developing the syllabus or course plan that follows. As a result, lesson plans can be written for each class session with sub-objectives that address cultural and intercultural activities. Intercultural exploration is usually accomplished through reflection, introspection, and comparing and contrasting the target culture with the students’ native culture. In addition to citing the sub-objectives, lesson plans also identify the how, leading to the implementation stage. Of course, both setting objectives and implementing them require anticipating the resources that will be needed to carry out the plan. I will focus on these areas in later columns.

Intercultural competence involves a complex set of abilities. To develop these abilities, ESOL courses must go beyond language. The gemstone model may help educators remember that developing intercultural competence involves not only teaching language, but also incorporating interactive and communicative strategies.

Furthermore, course objectives are best specified within the four KASA dimensions. By focusing on the performance of functions such as greetings, requests, commands, and refusals, students will gain exposure to the small-c cultural aspects of everyday life. And by ensuring that classroom activities are conducted in interactive, participatory, and communicative ways, students will have opportunities to develop the competence they need for English-speaking contexts.

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FROM A TO Z

Using Metaphors to Examine Language Learning and Teaching

by Dorothy Zemach

When I was in college, my music theory professor was fond of telling us, “Music is the universal language.” That struck us undergraduates as very funny.

When one of us said something unclear, someone would ask, “Why don’t you try saying that in Universal Language?” Or if we heard a particularly inept musical performance, we’d sigh and say, “Oh, dear, if you can’t speak Universal Language, what is left for you?” Of course, even then we knew what the
Metaphors are not just poetic devices convincing since the 1980s that linguistic George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson and linguist George Lakoff have been arguing convincingly since the 1980s that metaphors are not just poetic devices that one studies in high school English classes, but rather are fundamental to human thought. In their 2003 afterword to Metaphors We Live By (1980), they point out that “how we think metaphorically matters. It can determine questions of war and peace, economic policy, and legal decisions, as well as the mundane choices of everyday life” (p. 243). Calling the metaphor “unavoidable, ubiquitous, and mostly unconscious,” they claim that “we live our lives on the basis of inferences we derive via metaphor” (pp. 272–273). In other words, whether we view learning as growth, a journey, a struggle, or a change determines how we actually learn.

For an extended look at how we teach and learn, then, I recommend an extended metaphor, or analogy. The value of drawing an extended analogy is that it helps you see more clearly. Ironically, it’s often easier to see something through the lens of something else. Remember the popularity of the book All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten (Fulghum, 1988)? It didn’t actually teach people anything new. Rather, it examined aspects of life that were already widely accepted by its readers (e.g., violence is bad, death is inevitable, friendship is valuable) and, using the analogy of the rules one learns in kindergarten, presented the concepts in a fresh way so that people could contemplate them anew: “Don’t hit people. . . . Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup—they all die. So do we. . . . When you go out in the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together” (pp. 6–7).

We teachers work hard at what we do, and we get tired. We’re supposed to plan lessons, create worksheets, develop curricula, grade papers, keep up with the research, chase down absent students, attend meetings, choose textbooks, publish papers, review our peers’ classes, present at conferences—oh, and deliver engaging lessons, too. And when we get tired, we tell ourselves to focus, concentrate, and try harder. But perhaps what we really need to do is step back, focus differently, and look at the whole picture. This is where I think metaphors can help. They allow us to see the forest again when we’re bumping into the trees. That perspective can be both enlightening and energizing.

Our students work hard, too. They attend classes, carry out language tasks, do homework, write papers, prepare and deliver presentations, study grammar, and read textbooks. We consider a class to be successful when students are engaged every minute. More student talk! Less teacher talk! Task-based learning in the student-centered classroom! No wonder we have to ask the wandering students to concentrate, focus, and stay on task. However, just like their teachers, maybe what students really need sometimes is to step back and consider what it is that they are actually doing, how they are doing it, and what its value is.

Analogies like the one I’ve drawn to music can be drawn from nearly any field. Think about what you know well—gardening, snowboarding, raising children, driving a car, making pottery, riding horses, surfing, knitting, being a good friend. Create a simple list of truths from one field that you can apply to your teaching (or your own language learning). Then encourage your students to do the same. Present your realizations to your students, and give them the opportunity to do the same—as a journal assignment, a 15-minute in-class writing to share, a small-group discussion, or an individual presentation to the class. Collect analogies from one class of students to present to the next group.

Whether you conduct your students in a symphony of revelation, join your voice to their chorus of realizations, or add the pedal point of experience to their melodies of discovery, I’m sure you and your students can create beautiful music together.

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**References**


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The day following the slaughter at Virginia Tech, in the United States, I was in an ordinary ESOL class. My mind was absorbed by the task at hand, erasing the blackboard in my typical, interior-corridor classroom in an older building on our campus. It has no windows, but has a door to the adjacent classroom, located behind a clutch of student desks that are crowded into the corner.

I happened to be looking at my hand on the eraser when the sound came. BAM!
The unexpected clamor sent shockwaves through my body, and I felt momentarily lightheaded; my heart pounded, and my movements felt like slow motion. I turned my head and a female student stood there, her arms high, almost above her head. She stared at me and was mumbling something, although I heard no intelligible sound. I looked about in bewilderment, and the student was laughing, affectingly pointing to a large hardcover book on the floor at my feet.

Confronted by Anger
Slowly my consciousness realized that this student had entered the room and dropped the text to get my attention, to deliberately startle me. But more frightening to me, in retrospect, is that I believe she did it to let me know how easily she could mount an attack.

She had been demonstratively unhappy in each class session; she wanted recognition that she was a linguist, a scholar. Perhaps that potential was within her, but she was also a student in a low/intermediate American English grammar class. Every lesson was fraught with episodes in which she would speak extemporaneously for 2 or 3 minutes. Much of what she said was garbled, and she tried unsuccessfully to approximate correct English pronunciation. Her spoken delivery was unintelligible to me and I suspect to her classmates also. I had begun limiting her of late, and she had bristled.

In her hand was the red-ink-scored quiz that was the bone of contention. I had assigned students to use a thesaurus for word variety, but she had not brought a thesaurus to class for the quiz. The hardcover book on the floor was huge, having more than a thousand pages.

I blinked stupidly. My throat was closing up, and I needed a drink. I could not understand what she was saying, and I simply backed her out into the hallway where there was a water fountain. Head bent and drinking, my hearing ability returned and I recognized that she was next to me, speaking in a shrill voice. I stood trying to gather my wits, listening to her carefully now.

As I listened, I realized that she had come into the classroom, walked up behind me without my noticing, and deliberately slammed the book to the floor. Her words reached me across the vast expanse of my fight-or-flight consciousness. She was angry. Her lips were drawn back and her words were definitely veiled threats. The double entendre of the words she spoke is chilling to this moment.

Did I like her thesaurus?, she asked. Did I see how big this one is and that she had the best thesaurus now? Did I understand she had had no time before class to get one, and did I understand she did not intend to fail quizzes when she is an accomplished academic? Did I have a headache now, as she had told me earlier she had a headache? Could I see how that headache might hurt, might even kill me?

Responding to the Threat
I was strangely calm and minutely aware of my surroundings. I saw another student staring at a bulletin board and a faculty member locking an office in the hallway a few feet away. I tried to say that she and I could speak the next night or that she should have an appointment with our associate dean. I tried to diffuse her anger by telling her she might well be right. She said many uncomplimentary things to me, and I finally asked her...
I, or any of us, have if attacked by a student? I had never thought this before. Columbine was a defining event, and many other school shooters have appeared since, not the least being the student at Virginia Tech the day before.

What Can You Do?
If a student chooses to attack, what will you do? Do you have any options? Is there any way to be prepared or proactive? Teachers are beginning to examine their work situation with an analytical eye. Life is basically safe; schools are the place where the greatest good in our society is nurtured daily. But for that one-in-a-million moment when you are caught in a frenzied barrage, what is there for you to do to fend off what could be a fatal blow?

What are the dangers inherent in your physical setting or in your behavioral repertoire that you could marshal or change, depending on the situation? Is your classroom an interior or exterior room? What floor are you on? How do you get out of the room or the building? Are there alternatives to the main or common path? Are there common pieces of equipment or furniture that could shield you and your students or trap you?

These are questions that must be asked. I have chosen a path toward academia and sought a life detached from the malls and social bastions of the day for the calm, hope-filled, sought-after realm of colleges and universities. I truly believed that they were a haven from the mundane, certainly not the stomping ground for the deranged or dangerous.

Classroom teachers and school personnel are easy targets because of their very ease and comfort in their surroundings. Our names and schedules are publicly plastered all over the Internet for anyone to see where we are at any given time. Just as September 11, 2001, changed our mindset about national security, so have events such as Columbine and the Virginia Tech rampage raised our collective consciousness for the various venues in education.

Teachers and Administrators as Victims
Teachers engender student rage because we deliver their grades. Students earn the grades we deliver, but we are seen as capricious “givers” of grades: “She gave me an A” or “He refuses to give me an A.” As a student, I said and thought these countless times myself. Of course, I never tried to frighten or terrify a teacher over the matter. But then, it only takes one student or one student’s spouse or erratic significant other to be angry enough to make a murderous statement. The understanding of my vulnerability has sunk into my consciousness, and it is completely overwhelming.

Administrators are equally able to draw the attention of explosive rage.
A student came to our office requesting to speak with the dean about an official override of a class size limit. He wanted to attend a course, but every section was full for the semester. Try as she might, the dean could find no substitute that would meet the student’s stated need. He threatened her, and the dean told him that intimidating her could not change the availability of a seat. The student pressed his threat, and security was called. As he was being handcuffed, he leaned forward and told the dean that he knew where and when she entered and exited the campus and where she was when on campus. He said it very quietly, matter-of-factly, his gaze intently on her face.

Following the student’s manacled departure, the dean turned toward her office, exuding dignity as she silently walked away. Immediately upon her door closing, the office personnel buzzed with conversation. “What if?” peppered the conversations. What if he is released in a few hours or days or even weeks and then, harboring hatred, returns, armed? What, if any, protection against attack is possible in such situations?

How can teachers proceed with their work if students use intimidation to secure grades? Would a meeting with the student advocate and the associate dean placate the student? I began to think about safety and vulnerability in classrooms, how we could be protected from attack, and what could possibly shield us from unexpected events.

Preventing Violence

The police give practical advice in every year’s opening workshop. Be aware of your surroundings. Notice which people are customarily around. Never turn your back to a student or class. Use prophylactic approaches to violent attacks by diffusing anger, offering students recourse, and, most important, reporting threats. These are logical steps, but my experience was not an actual attack and could only be reported in anecdotal form. To spot and refer a troubled student, verbal and nonverbal communication must be noted, understood, and taken seriously.

Preventing a physical attack could come in the form of holding a notebook or textbook as an automatic face guard. When startled, hands may automatically protect the face. If a gun is pointed at the face, a strategically placed book may offer protection and a shield by blocking the attacker’s view. A desk or a book may be the best hope for blocking a bodily attack. But other more subtle types of attack occur. A sudden blackout can be a ruse for a robbery. Do we automatically grab our purses or wallets when the lights go out unexpectedly? We may be victims of a ploy when someone asks us for a pen or a match so that we will dig for them in our purses or briefcases, thus momentarily disarming ourselves.

Knowing our surroundings can help us avert being victimized. Alternative exits and potential obstacles should be pointed out to students. For interior classrooms, a plan for a sudden fire should include counting the doors by touch to know how to get to the nearest exit. Make a disaster plan for every room and building you teach in. Share your plans with your students in a calm, first-day-of-class procedural manner to familiarize English language learners with vocabulary and protocols associated with emergencies. Realize that students from other countries may have more experience and practice in self-defense than the teacher who is accustomed to the illusion of relative safety in the United States.

Awareness and planning for potential disasters (human and natural) may return our focus to curriculum content and instructional delivery, and our educational environment may again support learning, as opposed to facilitating violence.

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A Nonnative Speaker, and Still the Right Person for the Job

by Eun-Young Kim

I am a nontraditional ESL director. There is no denying that I am a foreigner. No matter how many times I’ve dyed my hair and tried to adopt an American name to appear more “native,” I am just too Asian; an invincible accent, a hard-to-pronounce three-syllable name, dark brown eyes, a body the size of an eighth grader’s—all these reveal the inconvenient truth that I am not from “here.” At just over 5 feet tall, I am almost indistinguishable from my ESL students.

An Uncertain Path

When I first came to the United States at the age of 22, I did not even dare dream of becoming an ESL teacher. To me, being an ESL teacher with imperfect English was equal to a crime because I would always feel guilty for being a nonnative speaker, even though I might never be openly accused.

Nobody even hinted to me that I might be able to teach in the United States. I finished my MA in English and even went on to pursue a PhD simply because I wanted to be more marketable later in South Korea, a country frantic about learning English. Life does not always go as planned, however, and mine was no exception. Marriage for an Asian woman traditionally means following the husband, and to me it meant giving up my dream of going back to Korea to become an English professor. So I chose an alternate route. I found a job at a local middle school in Powder Springs, Georgia, as a part-time ESL teacher. Going part-time seemed most ideal to me because my influence as a nonnative-English-speaking teacher would be only “partial.”

It was by chance that 3 years later I learned about an opening for an ESL director at a university in north Texas, and it was simply with a wishful thought that I e-mailed my résumé because, as I told myself, it wouldn’t hurt to try. Choosing a nonnative speaker over many qualified native speakers would be a bizarre antic, I thought, and I never would have thought that I might receive a phone call from the academic vice president the following day.

Certainly it was with a great deal of surprise, guilt, and courage that I accepted the offer. It was not by chance or accident, however, that I became a director of the ESL program, where hiring a nonnative speaker as an English teacher was unprecedented. The nontraditional administrators, who chose a foreigner for their ESL director, understood something I did not quite understand at that time. Although being a native speaker could be beneficial for a good ESL director, there are many other essential qualities that far surpass that of being a native speaker.

The “Drawback” Becomes an Asset

Someone wisely said, “It takes a village to raise a child,” and to this I add, “It takes an administration to raise a nonnative-speaking faculty.” No doubt, it takes someone who thinks outside the box to value foreignness as a valuable asset. The unconventional administrators who hired me are still on my side and continue to give me support when I struggle with feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. Those negative feelings, like influenza, periodically attack me on “inclement” days when I am struck by the same recurrent bouts of chronic guilt and incompetence that many other nonnative-speaking English teachers face. As I suffer, I develop some immunity, but it is always there, dormant and ready to flare up.

However, the path of a director who is sustained and nurtured by caring administrators is promising. I don’t need to fake nativeness because I am told that they “have complete faith in me” even when I err, as the vice president put it, and
because I am valued not for perfection, but for effectiveness.

I do not intend to tell an egoflatteringly story in which everything’s coming up roses. It certainly is a pleasant story, though not because a nonnative speaker has been given a fair opportunity. Rather, it’s because it has not been in vain that the administrators put their confidence in a foreign director and were willing to risk criticism.

Having gone through the same difficult paths of learning a new language and trying to fit in a new culture, I can be a mentor and counselor to my students. My repertoire of linguistic blunders is just as precious and useful as my feats. I still vividly remember the poignant disgrace I felt in an eighth-grade inclusion language arts class when I did not say the second syllable of the word worksheet long enough. The Korean language does not distinguish between long and short sounds like English does, and I consciously have to say it longer to make sure that it does not sound like that “other word.”

The mean eighth graders, all cracked up, certainly couldn’t pass up commenting on the amusing blooper of their nonnative teacher, and there is no doubt that my confidence plummeted in front of the giggling teenagers and two other teachers. The incident surely was an unforgettable pronunciation lesson for me, but a more important lesson that I learned from it was that, rather ironically, my follies could actually help me become a better ESL teacher. Because I have made many mistakes—including some really embarrassing ones—I know where pitfalls are and can try to save my students from such embarrassment. I can be a better guide to them.

Being able to empathize with students is another blessing that a foreign director and teacher has. Being alone in the dorm during spring breaks, suffering embarrassing moments of jokes not understood, always being left with limited campus job choices—usually custodial or cafeteria—and superficial relationships with U.S. peers make me aware of what some students go through. There’s so much more about being an ESL student than just learning a language, and I am in a better position to help students because I went through it all myself.

My background allows me to understand and address ESL issues holistically, and that’s probably why my ESL program is not limited to 4 hours of daily classroom instruction and monthly field trips. I teach the American anthem so that students will not have to stand feeling dumb, like I used to, when everybody else is singing. I teach them jokes and humor so that they, too, can have meaningful social interactions with their U.S. peers, which I lacked as an ESL student. I coordinate “sleepover at an American’s” events for students, risking a reputation of being an intrusive director, so that their

The unconventional administrators who hired me are still on my side and continue to give me support when I struggle with feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt.
experience is not limited to the classroom. Without administrative and faculty support, these activities would certainly be impossible.

Taking part in the student association-sponsored talent show assures the students that they are able to successfully function in any social event, even with their fledgling English. The goal of my program is to raise confident second language learners who can take initiative as well as actively participate in social functions, thereby enabling them to enjoy their entire ESL experience. To a foreign director, these are just as important as learning grammar and vocabulary.

**Keeping the Faith**

I have to confess that there are still days when I wish I were Eunice or Emily, or even Bertha or Dorothy, instead of Eun-Young. I still fear that my foreignness might send potential students away from my program. However, the positive sides far outweigh the negative. For example, a foreign director has a greater potential of bringing in prospective students through successful overseas recruiting. It’s a win-win situation for both the director and the institution.

My presence can be a source of inspiration to students. When I show them that they can speak with an accent and still be a successful person in the United States, I never fail to catch the glimmer of hope in their eyes. They appreciate me for being kind, patient, fun, and energetic. My colleagues appreciate my openness and innovative ideas. The biggest blessing to me is to feel connected with my students, not just in the classroom, but also in other areas of their ESL experience. They assure me that my enthusiasm, creativity, caring attitude, and genuine concern for their progress are far more important than being native.

One of my first-year Mexican students wrote, “I think that we don’t feel distant because we know that you pass for the difficult of English.” I felt appreciated when another student said, “You are a really good teacher and a friend, too.” And what can be more rewarding for a teacher than hearing “You are going to bless many people through your teaching,” as a Colombian girl kindly phrased it?

English has become a language of international communication, and undoubtedly it is one of the most important academic and professional tools. To me, the idea that the United States is the gatekeeper of the English language is a form of imperialism. Just like any other skill, any qualified person with objective credentials should be able to teach it upon receiving training, and variations should be considered. In addition, students should be exposed to different accents so that when they take university courses later, they can understand their German biology professor, Chinese math teacher, and Indian English instructor. If the current emphasis of this field is on preparing students for the “real” situation, it would help, not hurt, to expose ESL students to various types of English spoken by various people.

Nobody would challenge the value of a native-English-speaking ESL teacher, and there is no doubt that students should learn Standard English in the best possible circumstances. In my mind, the title ESL director still conjures the image of a blonde-haired White woman who speaks perfect English with perfect pronunciation. Then I remember that the potential of a nonnative-English-speaking director can be immense, and her influence can be quite striking.

But it takes a nontraditional administration to raise her.

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It would help, not hurt, to expose ESL students to various types of English spoken by various people.
As both a professional in the field of ESL and a nonnative English speaker, I (Feng-Ling Margaret Johnson) have noted with interest that ESL curriculum often does not adequately prepare ESOL learners for discussions and meetings in and out of the classroom. Many high-intermediate and advanced secondary as well as adult ESOL learners, especially adult learners of business and professional English, are required to participate in small-group discussions, student organization meetings, faculty or staff meetings, or other community-related meetings.

Many of these learners, although speaking fluently and having an adequate repertoire of vocabulary for the tasks required of them, find it frustrating and difficult to interact effectively in meetings—even those within the classroom. When I first began participating in meetings with native speakers, I found myself depressed about not being given a turn. There never seemed to be the right time to jump in and say something. Even when I got a chance to speak, I felt bad about my direct, unpolished style. I did not speak as eloquently as my native-English-speaking counterparts. I wondered what I was doing wrong.

The Sport of Conversation

Steinbach (1996) effectively captures the idea of different rules of turn-taking in her comparison of conversational styles to sports. She describes the Asian conversational style as bowling. Speaking turns are taken according to rules of etiquette and one’s hierarchical rank, longer pausing or silence between turns is characteristic, and only one person speaks at a time. In my meetings, I subconsciously followed Chinese rules of speaking: I should speak only after other colleagues who were older and had higher seniority and/or a higher rank. I also looked for long pauses to jump in, and I was waiting to be asked, “So, Feng-Ling, what is your opinion on this?”

The U.S. conversational style, according to Steinbach (1996), is like basketball. Native speakers of North American English do not take prescribed turns based on age, gender, or rank; the ball (i.e., a speaking turn) is passed around and is up for grabs to whoever chooses to participate. The assumption is that one will speak if he or she wishes; if one doesn’t speak, it is because he or she chooses not to. The pace is relatively fast, and one may take a turn from a current speaker when the latter hesitates, pauses, drops in intonation, or is at the end of a phrase.

It was no wonder I had trouble getting a turn. I was following the Asian rules of turn-taking while my American colleagues were following the North American rules of speaking. In addition, it was likely that I was perceived as passive or uninterested.

Picking Up on the Cues

Another thing I noticed was that my colleagues seemed to go in and out of the discussion seamlessly while I struggled with what I should say to let them know that I wanted to speak. After conducting extensive research into ESL textbooks for business English, and textbooks for speaking and listening as well as observing, recording, and taking notes on discussions in meetings over a number of years, I discovered that native speakers of North American English use a variety of lexical and kinesthetic cues for various turn-taking functions when participating in discussions.

For example, before proceeding to make their statements, they say things such as “This may be off the wall, but I wonder if...,” “Just a suggestion. It may be terrible, but I’ll throw it out,” or “From my experience...” Other examples include “Are you saying that...?” (for clarification), “May I interrupt you for a moment?” (for interrupting), “To piggy back on what Robert just said ...,” (for following up on another’s statement), “I completely agree” (for agreeing) or “I really can’t agree with you on that” (for disagreeing), “By the way” or “Incidentally” (for indicating awareness of a digression from the discussion), and “That’s all I have to say” (for giving up a turn).

This kind of introductory lexical signal upon taking a turn seems to be lacking in the speech of many English language learners, including me. This explains my colleagues’ smooth transition from one speaker to another lexically and my struggle in finding the words to get into a discussion. Unfamiliarity with these lexical cues or inability to apply them in real-life situations contributes to nonnative English speakers’ inability to enter and exit a discussion without appearing abrupt or out of context.

Smooth entrance into or exit from a discussion also involves recognizing and using various kinesthetic signals. Speakers of North American English...
may slightly raise their hands, make sustained eye contact with the current speaker, or lean forward a bit to enter a discussion. They may also raise a hand to hold off someone who intends to grab their turn. When they are ready to give up a turn, though, speakers sometimes look at a participant to give the next turn to that person or lean back slightly in their seats, signaling their readiness to stop talking. Because these kinesthetic signals vary across cultures, English language learners in the United States must learn to recognize and use these cues to effectively participate in discussions and meetings.

In addition to bowling and basketball styles, Steinbach (1996) posits a third style of speaking: rugby. Latin American, African, and Middle Eastern cultures are said to follow this style of conversation. Speakers are more tolerant of frequent interruptions, rapid turn-taking, and overlapping speech. Speakers also tend to be physically closer and more frequently touch one another. An individual who subconsciously follows this style of speaking in a group may be perceived as impatient, overly imposing, or even rude.

**Learning to Converse**

When ESOL students are not aware of these different cultural styles of conversation, they can become frustrated participating in cooperative groups, literature circles, or formal meetings. Their natural tendency is to follow their native rules of speaking instead of the rules of speaking in the target language, but this can quickly lead to misunderstandings and breakdowns in communication. Even worse, some may be perceived as rude, aggressive, passive, or disengaged. So how do we as ESOL teachers help our students participate more effectively in cooperative group discussions and meetings?

Research and personal experience testify that a discovery-based approach is the best way to teach this information. The first step is to raise awareness that different rules of speaking exist in different cultures. One way to begin is to ask students questions about meeting etiquette, both in their own cultures and in the United States. For example, instructors can ask how speakers show that they are finished speaking. Do they sit back, look away

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**Observation Worksheet**

Watch and listen carefully to this meeting. Write down what speakers do and what they say during the meeting.

**Beginning a Turn**

**Say:**
1. ________________________________________
2. ________________________________________
3. ________________________________________

**Do:**
1. ________________________________________
2. ________________________________________
3. ________________________________________

**Interrupting**

**Say:**
1. ________________________________________
2. ________________________________________
3. ________________________________________

**Do:**
1. ________________________________________
2. ________________________________________
3. ________________________________________

**Ending a Turn**

**Say:**
1. ________________________________________
2. ________________________________________
3. ________________________________________

**Do:**
1. ________________________________________
2. ________________________________________
3. ________________________________________
from the listeners, look at the listeners, or do something else? How does someone interrupt a speaker? In the United States, can this be done by raising a finger and waiting, by jumping in right away, by waiting until there is a long pause, or by waiting until you are asked to speak? Is this different in the student’s native culture?

Of course, discussion of this sort, although helpful, does not go far enough. And younger ESOL students may not be capable of responding to these questions. The next step is to help students actually see the communication differences. Students should observe and take notes on real-life group discussions or meetings. They should be reminded to note any phrases and body movement that speakers of North American English use to enter into conversation, to interrupt a speaker, to give up a turn, and so on. (See Observation Worksheet on p. 23, which students can use for taking notes during observation.)

I noticed that when I observed and took notes as a participant in a meeting, I was not as observant because I would pay attention to what was said rather than to the sociolinguistic cues. Students should be encouraged to observe as nonparticipants in the meeting. Otherwise, videotaping the meeting is a great idea; it offers the added advantage of having a recording that can be stopped and watched again during analysis. If videotaping a meeting, the camera should be placed in an inconspicuous place so that it does not make the meeting participants self-conscious.

After observation, students can analyze their notes or recordings to see how speakers of North American English interrupt or enter into conversation, and the various lexical and kinesthetic signals they use to do so. As a class, students can discuss their findings and how these rules of turn-taking differ from their own conversational patterns. ESOL teachers should explicitly point out these lexical and kinesthetic cues. Video recordings are especially helpful because the teacher can stop the recording at an appropriate spot to highlight a particular cue. During this step, special attention should be given to compiling, categorizing, and practicing the various phrases and body movements that are employed in discussions and meetings by native speakers of English.

The final step involves providing a plethora of opportunities for ESOL students to apply what they have learned through role-plays and group discussion. In these activities, they learn to modify their participation by employing the newly discovered lexical and kinesthetic cues. Students who tend toward the bowling style of conversation will need to not only overcome their tendency to wait for long pauses but also practice appropriate ways to engage in conversation. Students who follow the rugby style, on the other hand, will need to overcome their tendency to dominate turns. After the activities, it is essential to have an analytical conversation about what cues were used and how they worked. Students should reflect on their use of the basketball style of conversation and note what they did well and what they need to practice.

Hidden rules of speaking exist in any language and culture. Native speakers of a language know their own system of rules subconsciously; consequently, native communicative behaviors may be negatively transferred into their communication in the target language. ESOL teachers can help their learners participate better in target-language group discussions and meetings by raising students’ awareness of cultural differences in turn-taking rules and by helping them discover and learn the lexical and kinesthetic signals used upon entering, interrupting, or exiting a discussion. This learning should occur through a discovery-based, discourse-oriented pedagogical approach (McCarthy, 1998). Learners’ understanding of the turn-taking rules in both their native culture and the target culture will help them not only in meetings but also in many other communicative situations.

References

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See also “Easing Anxiety When Business People Learn English,” http://www.tesol.org/et/.
My daughter had a slumber party for her birthday when she was in the fifth grade. I brought most of her 10- to 11-year-old friends over to our house, and the others arrived a little later. The girls brought their pillows and sleeping bags and spread them out for their big night in the living room. Our guests were a diverse group of language speakers from a variety of ethnic groups. The one common denominator they shared was that of living in the United States and trying to negotiate American English.

While the girls were getting settled, I wasn’t actually eavesdropping—I was within earshot. They either didn’t care that I could hear them or didn’t think about it. I became intrigued by what they said as well as how they negotiated meaning and used nonverbal cues, including gestures and facial expressions. There were two- and three-way conversations with turn-taking, interjections, and overlaps.

From time to time, a pair of girls would come into the dining room to talk together and some would go upstairs to my daughter’s bedroom, which happens to be across from mine. They would gossip and comment about the girls at the slumber party as well as other classmates. Some accused others of lying to them about something or another (“I said ..., but she said ...” and “I can’t believe ...”).

I observed how various girls responded differently when they were accused of not being truthful. One argued that she “was telling the truth,” another admitted that she had been fibbing to keep from hurting someone’s feelings, and so forth. Some of the girls seemed to exaggerate, stretching the truth a little. Hearing the girls tell white lies (rather than “whoppers”) fascinated me!

Communicative Competence
As an ESOL/linguistic doctoral student, an elementary school ESL teacher, and the parent of three children, I have had ample experience with children’s conversation. But witnessing this sociolinguistic display of multilingual children negotiating truths in varying degrees made me wonder about terminological inexactitudes (i.e., lies). Where do they fit in applied linguistics? Is their use, at least in U.S. culture, part of communicative competence?

Communicative competence refers to the ability to interact appropriately based on the cultural and linguistic rules of a speech community, and it is closely related to values, attitudes, and motivations (Hymes, 1971). Like the girls at my daughter’s slumber party, almost everybody I know (including myself) has falsified the facts for a variety of reasons, both good and bad (e.g., to save face, to be nice, to get out of doing something, to mislead). However, I have never heard it talked about openly, and I certainly hadn’t discussed it with my own children.

Conceptualizations of Lie and White Lie
To answer some of the questions that swam in my head since I heard the girls “telling stories” (as it was referred to in my southeastern Tennessee home), I decided to look for dictionary definitions of lie. I went first to my favorite online dictionary, Dictionary.com, which lists several definitions, including “a false statement made with deliberate intent to deceive; an intentional untruth; a falsehood”; “something intended or serving to convey a false impression”; and “an inaccurate or false statement.” Next, I looked up white lie to see how it is distinguished from lie. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, a white lie is an “often trivial, diplomatic or well-intentioned untruth”; WordNet defines it as “an unimportant lie (especially one told to be tactful or polite).”

I decided to go to the university library to see whether I could find any books that addressed this topic. I found several that expanded on the dictionary definitions I had already found. For example, Bok defines a white lie
as “a falsehood not meant to injure anyone, and of little moral import” (cited in Barnes, 1994, p. 14). Barnes discusses the fact that the term white lie carries many connotations, including that of a false statement told by White people (as opposed to African Americans) and thus is not an adequate analytical term. He prefers the term simple benevolent lies to describe untruths “in which the liar merely intends to enhance the dupe’s interests by deceiving him or her” (p. 14).

**Politeness Rules**

Now that I had a better conceptual understanding about white lies, I thought further about their appropriateness within social interaction. I recalled politeness principles that I had learned about in one of my classes. For example, Lakoff (1973) developed rules of rapport, which posited that those in conversation avoid imposing on others and strive to establish and maintain positive relations. And according to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, politeness involves showing respect for face needs, including the desire not to be imposed upon and the desire to be liked. Although Brown and Levinson make no mention of lying, many times fibs serve the function of being polite.

So far my investigation revealed that the twisting of the truth is an intentional speech act and that its forms and functions differ depending on the social context, whether it be to enhance the interests of the listener (Barnes, 1994), to avoid conflict, or to obtain what the speaker desires. Miller and Stiff (1993) argue that it “may even be sanctioned as fulfilling norms of social acceptability and accountability” (p. 23).

My suspicion that lying in some form or another is part of the communicative competence for certain cultural groups was gaining more and more confirmation. After all, telling the truth in certain situations is socially unacceptable because it can be hurtful and humiliating.

**What the Girls Say About Lying**

My next step in coming to a better understanding of the appropriateness and use of white lies was to talk to some of the girls from the slumber party (after asking their parents’ permission, of course). I met with five girls individually and asked them how they would respond to various scenarios, including the following:

- You’re having a sleepover. Somebody you are not friends with wants to come. You don’t want her to.
- Your friend reads you a story she wrote and thinks it’s wonderful. You think it’s weird.
- Your friend asks you to spend the night. You want to go to her house to play but not spend the night.

I followed up with these questions:

- Why would you say that?
- Has something like this really happened? What did you do?
- What does it mean to lie? To tell the truth?
- Are some lies worse than others? How?
- Has an adult talked to you about lying? What did he or she say?
What the girls told me was quite interesting. All admitted to telling white lies at one time or another, but some did so rather reluctantly. For example, Melanie, a child from a bicultural family, said that she didn’t tell lies because her mother had told her that it was wrong and that she would be punished for doing so. When asked directly, “Have you ever told lies?”, she hesitantly responded that she had, pointing out that she only did so in an effort to be nice, but it didn’t happen often. She said that when she did lie, she felt guilt and shame because she was disobeying her mother.

Melanie’s responses to the scenarios suggested that she is quite blunt, confirming what I had noticed at the slumber party. For example, when asked how she would respond to a friend who thought she had written a great story, Melanie said that she would say, “I don’t think that it’s a good story” because “it would be the truth.” During her later visits to my house with friends, I observed that she could indeed be blunt, causing others to question their friendship with her. Did this occur as a result of translation from her native language to English? Did she realize she was being so blunt? Perhaps a native English speaker might soften the words, trying to be diplomatic. It was difficult to discern.

The other girls indicated that they saw white lies as a politeness strategy and therefore justified their use. Krista, a native English speaker from an African American family, said that her uncle had told her that it was okay to bluff and deceive if she was trying to avoid hurting someone’s feelings. Of the five girls, she was the only one given explicit permission to do this. The other girls said that it hadn’t really been discussed, but that they had observed their family members being less than honest, usually for the sake of politeness or to make themselves seem “nicer” than they were.

Another interesting finding was that the girls suggested that the gender, age, and relationship of others influenced whether they would lie to them. They had no problem being forthright with boys their age because they really didn’t care if they hurt their feelings. And some of the girls said they might lie to teachers and parents about doing their homework to “not get into trouble.”

Insights and Unanswered Questions

My interviews with and observations of my daughter and her friends gave me insight into girls at this age. Like many adults I know, the girls use white lies primarily for politeness or to protect themselves. And they had become quite comfortable and skilled in doing so—except for Melanie, who felt shame. I became convinced that the telling of white lies is part of communicative competence for at least some of the diverse groups living in the United States (see “The Ubiquitous Art of Bluffing,” Essential Teacher, September 2007).

But how does a teacher—or a parent for that matter—address a sensitive topic like this one? Should we talk to English language learners about the appropriateness and use of white lies and the norms of politeness in U.S. society? Should we discuss and practice strategies that can be used to maintain positive relationships without the use of lies? Should we just ignore the topic and let language learners figure things out on their own or simply use their own cultural norms? I still have so many unanswered questions.

References


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Teaching experiences contribute significantly to a teacher’s theory about educational practice. As educators we need to understand how theories of practice evolve in novice teachers and what impact teacher preparation programs might have on minority teachers working in bilingual special education.

Teacher educators need to provide meaningful, supportive programs if the pool of minority teachers is to increase. And high-quality teacher preparation in bilingual special education must address teacher competencies in both special education and bilingual education and include courses based on first and second language acquisition that provide in-depth knowledge instead of superficial instruction. All of this is necessary so that bilingual special education programs can ensure that nonnative-English-speaking students have opportunities to become fully proficient in both languages.

Whereas some models of bilingual teacher education emphasize training teachers in the utilization of the native language as a conduit to English-only instruction, others emphasize training teachers in ESL instruction over the native language, and still others emphasize training in dual-language approaches. All models, however, emphasize the need for bilingual teacher education to include training on reflective practices. Therefore, teachers need to understand the stages that English language learners go through while acquiring and learning the second language.

Programs preparing teachers to work with special education students need to develop a knowledge base comprising five major areas: (a) the linguistic variety among bilingual students, (b) the relationship between culture and learning, (c) ways of assessing exceptionalities, (d) the planning and delivery of instruction to special education populations, and (e) reflective practices (Rodriguez, 2005). Accordingly, teacher preparation programs must include required courses in special education that address these competencies. Further, as the special education knowledge base increases, teacher educators must reconsider those competencies in light of new discoveries.

**Important Aspects of Teacher Preparation**

Banks (2002) suggests a multicultural methodology that includes democratic values and beliefs, an affirmation of cultural pluralism, understanding of diverse societies, and integration of interdependent elements in the world. Is multicultural education a reality or a myth in teacher preparation programs in special education? A significant number of teacher education programs include a course in multicultural education, but the extent to which this course integrates com-
ponents of democratic values and beliefs, cultural pluralism, and understanding of diverse societies might be questionable.

Teacher education programs in special education must offer opportunities for teachers to expand their knowledge of cultural diversity. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE; 2006) defines multicultural education as “an understanding of the social, political, economic, academic, and historical constructs of ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and the geographic areas” (p. 54). In addition, NCATE’s multicultural goal is “the development of educators who can help all students learn and who can teach from multicultural and global perspectives that draw on the histories, experiences, and representations of students from diverse cultural backgrounds” (p. 31).

Gardner’s (1983) theory of multiple intelligences provides a way of understanding how students learn, which teachers can use as a guide for developing classroom activities that address multiple ways of learning and knowing. According to Gardner (1999), “the theory is an endorsement of three key propositions: (a) we are not all the same, (b) we do not all have the same kinds of minds, and (c) education works most effectively if these differences are taken into account rather than denied or ignored” (p. 91). Teachers who use multiple intelligences theory to inform and drive their curricular development find that they gain a deeper understanding of students’ learning preferences and greater appreciation of students’ strengths (Rodriguez, Pelaez, Perkins, & Luterbach, 2005).

Field experience requires prospective teachers to work with children or youth in an actual classroom setting. It is designed to help teachers evaluate their abilities as educators and to affirm their decision about choosing teaching as a career. It also enables them to understand how professional education courses in human development and learning, social aspects of teaching, and curriculum and methods relate to the classroom.

Mentoring is imperative in teacher education programs. Mentor support teams from schools and the university can offer invaluable assistance in immersing new teachers in the social, political, and everyday routines and procedures of schools. Teacher education programs must provide opportunities for dialogue between preservice teachers and university faculty because those dialogues can address a wide variety of topics, including course expectations, course content, field experience, instructional strategies, student diversity, and the role of bilingual teachers.

The Study

Ten participants were selected by me, the principal investigator, after identifying themselves as Latina teachers who had completed an undergraduate or graduate teacher education program. Each teacher selected was expected to complete both a questionnaire consisting of a 19-item Likert scale and an interview with me, during which I asked a series of open-ended questions:

- In special education teacher preparation courses, what do teachers learn about the use and methods of teaching a second language in instructional settings?
- To what degree do these courses include issues related to multiculturalism and bilingualism?
- How diverse were your field experience settings?
- What events and activities do you think facilitated your efforts to become a teacher?
- What components do you think were missing in your teacher education program?

The results indicated that the two most common multicultural themes of interest for Latina teachers were models of multicultural education and special education. Further, two important aspects of multiculturalism that they highlighted were the ways in which culture affects learning and the role of multiple intelligences theory in meeting diverse needs.

Recurring Themes and Missing Components

The teachers identified the following themes that facilitated their becoming teachers: multicultural education, cultural diversity, field experience, and faculty support.

As part of their teacher education program, the Latina teachers were required to complete courses in special
education and at least one course in multicultural education. Theories of multiple intelligences and first and second language acquisition were infused throughout other required courses in the program, so the teachers were not required to enroll in a course specifically on these topics. The more prevalent constructivist activity in their courses was small-group activity.

The teachers indicated that their field experience settings were sometimes diverse. They felt that field experience was an important immersion component that helped them learn about the realities of a culturally diverse classroom environment.

The teachers identified educational support systems that enabled them to pursue and complete their teaching degree. For example, they highlighted advisement, exam preparation, mentoring, scholarships, and career counseling as the dominant support systems that helped them along their path of becoming bilingual special education teachers. In addition, they discussed how their personal and professional experience intertwined in the process of developing pedagogical concepts.

The Latina special education teachers perceived an applied linguistics component in discussions about students’ native language as missing from the teacher preparation program. They took an applied linguistics course in English, which helped them somewhat in becoming proficient readers and writers of English, but the course was not actually designed to help English language learners become proficient readers and writers. The goal of this course was to teach about language, its components, its form, and its function. It did not help the teachers understand the grammatical structure of the students’ first language. A second missing component was any sort of formal instruction in students’ first language. Bilingual special education teachers want to be fully proficient in both languages.

Overall, the bilingual special education teachers encountered many real-world challenges that made it difficult to implement theories in practice. There is a critical shortage of teachers in the United States at a time when the numbers of diverse children are increasing in school systems. Colleges and universities preparing bilingual special education teachers must first ensure that potential teachers have the academic, linguistic, cultural, and personal qualifications to successfully work with English language learners with disabilities.

It is reasonable to expect that involvement of bilingual special education teachers will enable teacher education programs to provide more effective instruction and better understand how Latina teachers’ theories of teaching evolve. Teacher educators need to make great efforts to activate a conscious bilingual special education transformation to ensure high-quality teachers of bilingual education.

References


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Understanding How Tutors Can Help Nonnative-English-Speaking Students

by Elise Geither

A few weeks ago a professor came by the reading, writing and study skills center where I tutor. He was with a young Asian woman, obviously one of his students. He “deposited” her in the center, claiming that she desperately needed help with her English. The woman stared into the distance with a frightened, nervous look on her face and tried to force a smile. She handed me a paper she had written on the labor union and asked if I could help her make corrections. After a short introductory discussion, we looked at the paper that we were about to revise—it was filled with red marks indicating spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors; the only written response was something along the lines of “You need serious help with your English. Please see a tutor.” (from a tutor’s journal; Zamel, 2002, p. 359)

Working in a second language environment is difficult; doing so within the university context is even more so. However, nonnative-English-speaking (NNES) students enrolled in U.S. universities can find various forms of support at their educational institutions. Some universities offer specific ESL programs, either intensive or transitional; some offer partner-institution programs in which students may work on their English skills; and others offer specific tutoring programs to assist NNES students.

Responding to a Diversifying Population

One of the most familiar forms of support is the university writing center or writing lab, which assists native-English-speaking (NES) and NNES students alike in academic activities, most specifically writing. Although these programs serve both populations, it must be made clear that these populations have few similarities. Silva’s (1993) meta-analysis found that L1 and L2 writers differ in their composing process, the types of writing errors they produce, and how they organize and express their ideas in writing. Silva found these differences to be so significant that he believes L2 writers are best served in classroom settings specific to L2 writers.

Many studies have looked at the needs of the NNES student population (e.g., Kennedy, 1993; Silva, 1993). Teachers in Barkhuizen’s (1998) study were surprised to learn that student perceptions and desires in language learning did not match teacher perceptions. For example, students ranked mechanical language skills “high” as an important need and interest; teachers, on the other hand, are often encouraged to steer their classes away from mechanical language skills and toward communicative competence. Silva and Matsuda (1997) found a pattern of neglect regarding the writing issues and differences of L2 students, and although they see some responsiveness to the unique needs of these writers, these students continue to experience mandatory writing classes in which teachers are unaware of the needs of this population.

Writing centers, which may be the only support services available to NNES students, will be better equipped if their administrators and staff understand the needs and expectations of this population. The purpose of the pilot study described in this article was to investigate the characteristics of successful tutoring sessions for NNES students by examining the perspectives of tutors in a
Characteristics of successful tutorials are linked to faculty perception of the NNES students and student perception of the goals of the writing center.

As with any consultation, a student who is more willing to participate in discussion is going to have a more successful consultation. In the case of NNES students I find it especially helpful to also center some of the discussion around the assignment itself to make sure that the student understands what is required of him/her. Having an assignment sheet is fairly necessary to ensure the assignment is interpreted accurately by both the consultant and the student.

Assignment and instructor expectations. Sometimes instructors force students to come to the center to “clean up” their work. This forces them to focus on grammar exclusively (and not in combination with other writing concerns) and raises their level of anxiety, leading to a potentially unproductive session.

Two other things lead to successful tutoring sessions—the willingness by the student to work with a tutor, and that the tutor is willing, patient, and attempt[s] other ways to explain ideas if the first attempt does not seem helpful. Rewording explanations about ideas and concepts when a student seems confused is a useful teaching skill, but NNES students may require more attempts than regular students.

Engaging the student and not simply handing down linguistic mandates is, without a doubt, the best way to feel successful. Patience is also key: Even if it takes a few minutes to make sure that you and the student are communicating clearly and that you understand PRECISELY what the student means, the extra effort invariably results in stronger papers—and a more satisfied client.

The instructor’s influence!! If an instructor seems interested in the person and a learner and writer and supportive of her/his growth, sessions are much more likely to be successful. If an instructor seems interested only in reading “clean,” unaccented English, however, this sometimes unrealistic goal becomes the focus of the session. Students who write for these instructors are often also very anxious, and this can
color a session, moving it away from learning and toward pleasing.

What the Literature Says

This survey highlights student participation and willingness as main factors in successful tutoring sessions. But Blau and Hall (2002) critique the use of a nondirective style of tutoring that focuses on student participation. According to them, the language skills of tutors and tutees are unequal; therefore, the use of a totally collaborative session, with focus on student participation as an element of success, will actually be unsuccessful. Tutoring sessions should instead mirror the inequality and allow for students to rely more on directive tutor feedback.

In regard to willingness, Blau and Hall (2002) also comment on the need for tutors to become cultural informants for students who may feel uncomfortable or even unwilling to adjust their work when they write in English because of their cultural views of the language. Therefore, relying on student willingness as a characteristic of a successful session may not be realistic when working with NNES students. Although other outlying factors are evident (e.g., institutional demands, faculty participation and perceptions, time issues), future research can now focus on student perceptions of successful and unsuccessful tutoring sessions.

References


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The use of an outdoor nature center is an appealing strategy designed to help English language learners (ELLs) make meaningful connections between science and the world in which they live. Likewise, it is important for these students to be able to transfer scientific connections from a more familiar context to the mainstream classroom.

**Addressing Poor Test Scores**

Leaders at an elementary school in my region recently decided to take deliberate action to improve ELLs’ success rate in science. Thirty-two percent of ELLs in the third grade and 64% in the fourth grade scored below “basic” (less than 70) on the 2005–2006 state exam, the Palmetto Challenge Achievement Test (PACT).

This summative assessment requires students to apply four indicators of scientific knowledge (factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive) to problems posed in familiar and less familiar situations. Questions that require students to transfer and apply scientific facts, knowledge, and skills to solving real-world problems account for 70% of the test; the remaining 30% requires the use of metacognitive knowledge. The ELLs were unable to answer any items that required them to generate hypotheses to solve problems, showing a deficit in metacognition. Moreover, report card information for the beginning of the 2006–2007 school year indicated that the same population of ELLs, now in fourth and fifth grades, was still below “basic” in metacognitive science skills.

**The Project**

I randomly selected 14 students for the control group and 14 students for the treatment group. My hope was that the treatment group would have more positive learning outcomes in science. In an effort to improve science learning outcomes for ELLs, I used an outdoor nature center as part of a sheltered model of instruction so that ELLs could increase metacognitive knowledge. In conjunction, the administration adopted an environmental science program designed to enhance transfer of knowledge from a more familiar context to a less familiar one. This inquiry-based curriculum, called Nature at Your Doorstep (Basile, Collins, & Malone, 1997), requires teachers to shift from direct instruction to student-based discovery.

Problem-solving activities allowing for development of higher order thinking skills are at the core of Nature at Your Doorstep (Basile, Collins, & Malone, 1997). The researchers who developed the program advocate that knowledge transfer is most successfully mastered when teachers give students the schemata to undergird this process with visuals, realia, total physical response, technology, and an outdoor setting. Science teachers can incorporate strategies that enhance the development of language skills, make the science material understandable and meaningful, involve students in the process, and enhance sheltered English communication (See Steps for Designing a Science Unit).

Doing these things allows ELLs to pose questions, formulate scien-

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**Steps for Designing a Science Unit**

1. Select a topic (e.g., habitats).
2. Choose a science concept (e.g., water, air, food, and shelter make a suitable habitat).
3. Identify the language functions necessary for science activities (e.g., observe, hypothesize, interpret, apply).
4. Design a teacher demonstration related to the concept.
5. Design one or more student group investigations to explore the concept.
6. Design individual or paired student investigations to explore the concept.
7. Plan oral exercises for developing listening and speaking skills.
8. Plan written exercises for developing literacy skills.
By the end of the 6-week unit, I had incorporated higher level questions about habitats, requiring conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive knowledge.

Control Group vs. Treatment Group

The control group learned about different animals and habitats primarily through direct instruction, reading assignments, and classroom discovery with a sheltered English approach to vocabulary and language structure. This group showed negligible growth in higher level knowledge indicators on the posttest, whereas the treatment group, which engaged in outdoor science learning, gained metacognitive knowledge about habitats, learned new processes of investigation, and saw a variety of scientific interactions while learning English.

While making observations about various birds living in the outdoors, students in the treatment group began to formulate hypotheses by speaking, drawing, and writing their ideas in a science notebook. To assess students’ learning, I talked with them individually about their ideas. Every day, these ELLs continued to collect, analyze, and interpret data on a graph about what the habitat supplies. Again, they used both verbal and written language to show their understanding. During the unit, these students learned to communicate their scientific findings with real-life pictures taken with a digital camera and created a visual presentation using Microsoft PowerPoint.

All of these activities helped the treatment group develop metacognitive knowledge. Students in this group began to show significant improvement in their problem-solving ability as they discovered that the baby bird and other living organisms need food, water, and shelter. After observing, talking about, and recording data about other animals and insects living in and around the nature center, these ELLs began to understand how to apply this knowledge to the problem of an injured eagle and how to sustain life in outer space. They showed further evidence of this ability to transfer knowledge to less familiar contexts when I gave the posttest.

It is important to note that the sheltered English model was applied to both the control and treatment groups. This model promoted language learning and the acquisition of science concepts in several ways: relating new knowledge to prior knowledge, moving from the concrete to the abstract, applying concepts in various settings, providing feedback, and making instruction meaningful for ELLs. Both groups were allowed to examine habitats through three types of activities:

Students in the treatment group began to formulate hypotheses by speaking, drawing, and writing their ideas in a science notebook.
teacher demonstration that included use of a video, a group investigation, and independent student activities.

Before the activities began, I found out what students already knew about habitats so that I could activate their prior knowledge. During the video demonstration, I led students in questioning and discovering relevant facts and concepts. However, in the outdoor nature center, activities were open-ended so that students in the treatment group could initiate and discover different ways of solving problems. This approach was helpful in introducing new concepts to this group, creating student interest in habitats, providing relevant and meaningful learning opportunities through modeling and guided practice, stimulating thinking, and fostering independent inquiry.

Students were given the opportunity to listen and observe before having to produce any language. During the videos, they watched and listened as the scientist spoke, and I extended this demonstration by having the ELLs repeat what was said or done in the video.

After my demonstration, a group investigation of eagle habitats helped students increase their comprehension and language production skills through student interaction. Cooperative work in the outdoor setting allowed the treatment group to further explore the habitats of other birds and animals, and provided an ideal environment in which to learn a new language.

According to Cummins (1994), language is acquired naturally as students listen to others and express themselves while working in a group. I found that heterogeneous groupings of students at different proficiency levels provided models of good language use and encouraged development of metacognitive knowledge. More advanced students, who needed little guidance in following directions or carrying out an inquiry, interpreted for students who had less English proficiency. Student roles within a group can be varied according to each student’s proficiency level. For example, one student who could read and write in English recorded the results of the investigation, and the student who wrote little English put tally marks on the chart and drew pictures illustrating the group’s findings.

As a follow-up to the group activity, I assigned each student to do an independent investigation to examine a science concept. However, in the outdoor setting, it was more beneficial to allow ELLs, who may not yet be ready to work individually, to work in pairs. This problem-solving activity gave students the opportunity to explore questions related to a familiar science concept and, for those in the treatment group, to extend their inquiries outside the classroom. Students at almost all levels of English proficiency could carry out individual inquiries, but they differed in their ability to describe their observations and express solutions.

**Results**

Upon completion of this action research project, the ELLs in the treatment group demonstrated that they were able to apply their scientific knowledge to other meaningful situations by attaining positive learning outcomes on the state exam. Moreover, I observed that these same students became adept at using scientific vocabulary and language as they described how to solve a problem. And the ELLs who had been in the treatment group made significant gains in applying factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive knowledge in science during the 2006–2007 school year.

Providing an on-site science center could allow for natural language acquisition to occur and support the goals of an engaging, student-centered curriculum for ELLs. Further studies on the use of outdoor nature centers to improve ELLs’ academic language performance will determine if this approach can help all learners.

**References**


Debra W. Hawke is an ESL teacher at Windsor Elementary School, in Columbia, South Carolina, in the United States.
Since the term blog surfaced a decade ago, blogs have revolutionized the way people communicate with others and learn about the world. In 2004, Merriam-Webster chose blog as the top word of the year. As one of the emerging Web 2.0 tools, blogs could be a particularly useful tool for language teachers to design and integrate constructivist learning environments into their instruction. They can facilitate incorporation of authentic materials in language instruction, link the classroom with the real world, and foster learner autonomy by supporting more collaborative, interactive teaching.

In the past century, educators used instructional technologies as one-way “conveyors of information, communicators of knowledge, or tutors of students” (Jonassen, n.d., ¶ 1). This approach was founded on the premise that communicating content to students and exposing them to rich comprehensible input will result in learning. Warschauer (1996) describes the historical stage of computer-assisted language learning as the behaviorist stage, in which language teaching focused on repetitive drills, using the computer as a self-paced mechanical tutor or simply as an instructional medium. The turn of the 21st century marked the transition from the behaviorist to the constructivist approaches to language learning, demanding a more collaborative, student-centered, and motivating environment for language acquisition.

Blogs can be used not only as an instructional medium for delivering authentic information, but also for providing opportunities for language learners to produce comprehensible output. In this article I describe how I implemented a blog as a cognitive tool in my ESL classes at the University of Mississippi.

When I designed the ESL class blog and used it as an integral part of my daily instruction, I wanted it to function as a working space for students to use interactively while exploring other online tools for learning. English. Jonassen (n.d.) states that technologies function best when used as cognitive tools, which he defines as “computer-based tools and learning environments that have been adapted or developed to function as intellectual partners with the learner in order to engage and facilitate critical thinking and higher order learning” (¶ 7). Because of the interactive nature of Web 2.0 technologies and their information-processing capabilities, Jonassen proposes using these functions to motivate learners to employ technology to both construct and represent knowledge.

Chapelle’s (2001) theory of computers as cognitive tools states that modern technologies allow students to be integrated in collaborative projects, which shift the focus to the relationship between students working together and away from a student working alone with a machine. Also, these modern technologies do not broadcast information in one direction, but serve more as pliable tools for displaying a vast array of information and stimuli on demand while also providing constant opportunity for input and more creative expression (p. 5).

I believe that blogs should be integrated as cognitive tools in language learning environments because they support the constructivist theory, which encourages individual learners to actively build knowledge and skills (Huitt, 2003, ¶ 1). Many educators and cognitive psychologists who have applied constructivism to the development of language learning environments suggest that a cognitive approach allows multiple representations of reality; focuses on knowledge construction (not reproduction); presents authentic tasks (contextualizing rather than abstracting instruction); provides real-world, case-based learning environments, rather than predetermined instructional sequences; fosters reflective practice; and supports collaborative construction of knowledge through social negotiation (Jonassen, 1992).

Creating the Blog

While working as an ESL instructor, I was asked to develop and implement a new syllabus for teaching a special course, ESL Lab, to intermediate-level students. I decided to create a class blog and make it an integral part of my daily instructional routine because blogs provide the following benefits:

- professional development tools for teachers to write about teaching experience, personal experiments, and achievements
- opportunities for students to be coauthors and add their own posts, links, and videos
- collaborative spaces for online projects or task-based instruction
- extracurricular extensions of the classroom for deeper reflection on themes discussed in class, featuring links to other online resources that students can use in the future

I used Blogger for this project because it is one of the easiest platforms for creating a blog. It requires just three steps:

2. Name your blog.
3. Choose a template, and start blogging!
Posting on a blog, making comments, and adding different applications and widgets are easy with Blogger. You can manipulate your blog using the “Manage your blog posts” feature on the top of the main page under “Dashboard,” which includes all the necessary features: settings, layout, comments, permission, and so on. You can make your blog public (allowing anyone with Internet access to see it) or private (allowing only registered users to read and post comments).

I used the ESL class blog as a well-structured guide to authentic online resources. The Internet has a bewildering array of resources that are potentially useful for students. The problem is finding the good ones and directing learners to them. For this reason, I used the blog as a portal for my learners to access and post videos, articles, and links to educational Web sites related to the topics covered in class. I posted one message for each lesson and gave students 5 to 10 minutes to explore the resource and come up with their own ideas and suggestions. I exposed learners to real language and posted authentic materials on the class blog.

With blogs, as with other online resources, it is important to select teaching materials carefully because not every source of authentic language available on the Web is appropriate for classroom use. I suggest that language blogs incorporate the following:

• news articles written especially for language learners (e.g., BBC Learning English, http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/)

• podcasts for improving grammar and listening skills (e.g., Grammar Girl, http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/)

• sites that offer instructional videos by and for students and teachers on a wide variety of topics (e.g., TeacherTube, http://www.teachertube.com/)

Benefits of the Class Blog

In traditional classroom settings, the teacher is usually the only person who reads student writing, and the focus of this reading is primarily on form, not content. With blogs, however, students find themselves writing for a real audience that may include teachers, peers, students,
from other classes (or even other countries), their parents, and anyone with access to the Internet. Because stu-
dents write and post online, they are usually more concerned about getting things right, paying particular attention to spelling and grammar. They edit their postings based on suggestions they receive from their peers.

For example, for Halloween I posted an article about a German farmer who attracted his customers’ attention by building a huge crocodile out of thousands of pumpkins (see Halloween Crocodile; http://dvmunca.blogspot.com/2007/10/halloween-crocodile.html). Students responded enthusiastically in the exchange of comments following the post. The immediate feedback (in this case, from peers) further sparked an exchange of ideas, suggestions, and opinions. This demonstrates how highly motivating blogging is and how relevant it is to a communicative approach to language teaching.

Giving Students the Tools They Need

The most important step in integrating the ESL class blog is encouraging students to become independent learners. I integrated a toolbar on the main page of the blog, which is visible to everyone at all times and displays links to valuable cognitive tools available online, including the following:

- dictionaries, encyclopedias, and thesauruses (e.g., Merriam-
  Webster’s online dictionary, http://www.m-w.com/; Oxford
- instant puzzle and crossword makers—Krajka (2003) argues that the strongest reason for teaching
vocabulary through computer-assisted activities is that learners can work at their own pace inde-
dependently, using automatic scoring, report-generating, and multimedia capabilities in vocabulary
presentation and getting fast access to an enormous amount of information. As such, it is important for
ESL/EFL teachers to look for ways in which learners can input their words in the previously created
activity structures.
- essay maps and graphic organizers, which encourage students to develop critical thinking skills and
organize their ideas in a logical, coherent manner
- tools for creating slideshows, which let students add their own voice to the story following the slides (e.g., SlideShare, http://www.slideshare.net/; VoiceThread, http://voicethread.com/)
- free tools for creating worksheets and interactive exercises, which students can use to create their

Students as Creators of Content

I asked students to work on different tasks requiring them to use these tools to create something original related to the topics covered in class. They created Microsoft PowerPoint presentations, digital essays, short videos and photo stories, crossword puzzles, and interactive exercises that they posted on the class blog. It was at this stage that I stopped being the only responsible authority for the content of the blog. The students became coauthors, choosing what to post and which tools to use. They became more confident language learners and extended their learning experience outside the classroom into the real world.

The students were more motivated to read the posts and reply to them because they reflected the students’ personal interests and learning styles.

Our ESL class blog became our working space, a collaborative place to experiment, create, and share work. Instead of being an instructional medium for information delivery, the blog became a tool for implementing a constructivist learning environment, where students are responsible for what and how they learn.

References


Daniela Munca is an ESL instructor at the University of Mississippi, in the United States.
College Oral Communication 1

It is rare for me to find a textbook that so precisely meets the needs of the students in my academically based community college ESL program as *College Oral Communication 1* does. Part of the English for Academic Success series, the book consists of six chapters, each containing the following sections: Effective Academic Listening, Effective Academic Speaking, and Assessing Your Listening and Speaking Skills. Through the presentation of authentic academic lectures and rigorous support activities, this text provides students with a sound framework on which to build long-range academic competence.

The book’s greatest strength is its assumption that the lecture is the major listening component in the academic learning process. Accordingly, it structures all other listening activities around the following components in a section:

- learning vocabulary, pronunciation, and the stress, rhythm, and intonation related to the section
- learning the language patterns used
- listening for key words, numbers, and discourse markers
- identifying main ideas and details
- taking effective notes

The result is that students develop useful listening and note-taking strategies to apply to any college course.

A second strength is the book’s wide range of speaking activities that help students internalize the content and oral skills of the lecture. These activities include discussing lecture themes, retelling the content of the lecture with the help of a partner, giving short talks that demonstrate an understanding of the lecture theme, presenting personal experience to expand on the lecture content, and using body movement to express the rhythm of language. The purpose of these activities is to help students synthesize what they have learned and, when they discuss it, to increase understanding and retention.

A third strength of the book is its review activities at the end of each chapter. The instructor can assign as homework two or three activities that provide ready-made test preparation and then review those activities with students just before the test. As a result, instructors can quickly assess student readiness. These review activities include questions about the main ideas of the lecture, questions about the language patterns presented in the lecture, and practice with pronunciation, stress, and fluency. The instructor can also give an in-class dictation as an additional assessment, if desired.

Other aspects of the book that make it attractive and user-friendly for instructors and students alike include the following:

- four CDs containing the audio program to accompany the activities
- downloadable teaching suggestions, transparencies, student handouts, and quizzes
- interesting and thought-provoking lecture topics
- Master Student Tips appropriately placed within each chapter to emphasize important points for students

*College Oral Communication 1* presents a relevant and well-designed program that meets the academic needs of students. My students have particularly benefited from the guided activities on what to listen for in a lecture and how to take notes. They also love doing the Circle Dance in chapter 1, which shows them how body movement helps the mind learn and remember.

In my opinion, the book exceeds the expectations given in the listening and speaking objectives that appear on the first page of each chapter.

Marianne Brems is an instructor in the ESL Program at Mission College, in Santa Clara, California, in the United States.
Designing texts for lower level English language learners can be challenging. Children’s stories are often too juvenile for adults, and fiction can contain daunting cultural and historical references for some newcomers.

Photography offers an enticing “way in” to learn about the world. The Easy Stuff Library series is based on everyday activities such as grocery shopping, going to school, eating in a restaurant, going to the doctor or dentist, and playing sports. It also features titles that focus on nature. These glossy books use professional photographs and straightforward text, and they are supported by interactive media. On the companion CD-ROMs, key words in the text are hyperlinked to additional information, including pronunciation of key words.

Morgan, who has taught elementary ESOL for more than 25 years, has chosen useful functional as well as academic topics that support students in classes across the curriculum. Wopperer’s high-quality photographs not only illustrate the text, they lure readers into engaging with the content.

For the Grocery Store volume, Morgan and Wopperer received permission to photograph stores and products at Wegman’s, a grocery chain. The book opens with prereading vocabulary, including sections on irregular plurals and compound words. Hyperlinked descriptive text in the CD-ROM explains various grocery store activities. Photographs feature a diverse population of store patrons, including shoppers with physical disabilities. After explaining the meaning of various store departments and the checkout line, the book provides a summary of vocabulary with additional photographs. It concludes with Book Talk, a page of discussion questions on topics such as different types of food containers, the kinds of jobs that are available at a grocery store, and a comparison of large and small stores.

Library follows a similar format, opening with Word Help and then providing a tour of services available at libraries. Again, accessible text is supported by high-quality photographs of diverse people, from parents with small children, to teenagers, to elderly adults using the library. In Book Talk, readers are asked to report on where to find things in the library and how to borrow books. The questions on this page progress from simple reporting to critical thinking questions that prompt readers to present their opinions.

Trees presents an attractive illustration of tree types during different seasons. This book takes a scientific approach, providing a chart that compares different deciduous and coniferous trees and how they develop, grow, and bear fruit or nuts. The Easy Stuff approach provides an important bridge from a picture-book style into academic content. The Book Talk section in this volume helps readers make connections between what they see in the pictures and what is offered in their science curriculum.

Overall, the Easy Stuff library offers excellent resources for low-proficiency English language learners. The format of prereading vocabulary, enticing photographs with hyperlinked text, and follow-up questions offers multiple ways to access the content. Titles such as Computers, Elementary School, and Emergency are due to be released later this year, and the Web site will soon offer enhanced features that include a section of images and word banks to use as story starters.

Mary Jane Curry is an assistant professor of foreign language/TESOL education at the University of Rochester, in the United States.
Imagine a computer lab full of adult ESOL students where not a word is heard, where every head is bent in concentration, where smiles erupt spontaneously, and where fingers are clicking away on the keyboards. This is precisely what occurs when my students work with journalist and author Bill Zimmerman’s Web site, MakeBeliefsComix.com.

The Web site allows students to create their own comics, and it is easy to navigate for language students who want to express their ideas in a novel way. From the moment they open the Web site and discover the tools, the students begin to explore. Minimal instruction is needed because the tools are self-explanatory (with language or visuals), and students feel comfortable experimenting with them. Students readily learn to choose among different characters, select facial expressions to reflect emotions, move the characters in the panels, scale their size, write text in talk and thought balloons, and even add background colors.

The power of this Web site lies in its ease of use and in the way the writing can be integrated into the study of language. Clearly, when students create a comic strip of their own, they are using their reading and writing skills as well as tapping into their creativity. The comic strip work readily supports classroom work. In one instance, my students had worked on a panel presentation in the classroom, and their task for the comic strip was to reflect on that work. The end results were fascinating and, quite likely, cathartic. They created comic strips that revealed their self-assessments of the panel presentations, their successes and anxieties, and their ideas about the challenges and joys of working with a team.

Those of us who have worked in the field of ESOL for many years realize the importance of the affective component of learning a language. Students need to be able to express their feelings about the learning that occurs, and MakeBeliefsComix.com offers them an unthreatening and playful arena in which to do so.

Adding playfulness to language learning is a significant attraction of this site. One of my students, an attorney from a culture in which comics are a rarity, found herself drawn into the Web site. After experimenting with it, she created a marvelous fantasy exchange between her mother and herself about dressing up on Halloween. She wrote humorously about a cultural element that was new to her, Halloween, using another new cultural element, the comic strip! She later explained, "I learned how to concentrate and focus better, practice my grammar, be more creative, and have more fun by challenging myself and my legal mind!"

When using MakeBeliefsComix.com to teach English, teachers can ask students to engage in all sorts of classroom activities, including writing about their classroom themes, assessing a class project, reflecting on a field trip, focusing on a specific grammar point, and incorporating new vocabulary. Bill Zimmerman has created a magical makebeliefs world of language learning and welcomes students to enter and explore!

Tamara Kirsan is ESOL lead instructor at City College of New York, in the United States.
Computer technologies have become a significant part of K–12 lessons because teachers are always looking for more hands-on techniques that can improve the quality of student learning. Concept mapping is one of the beneficial tools that have become computerized with the help of Inspiration, software that allows users to build graphical representations of concepts. It is slowly but surely making its way into instructional techniques for English language learners.

Inspiration is designed for students across the curriculum from Grade 6 to the adult level. (Kidspiration is a version of the same software that is designed for students in Grades K–5.) Inspiration offers teachers multiple ways of helping students acquire content knowledge as well as language. It can be used to help students learn new vocabulary items representing familiar or new concepts and see them used in context with an explicit display of how each word relates to one another within each theme.

ESOL teachers can use this software in their teaching to achieve cognitive as well as linguistic learning goals, and ESOL students can use it to organize and categorize information visually. Inspiration also enables students to switch between outline versions and diagrams that support two different modes of visual representation of ideas. By making connections and structures more explicit, computerized concept mapping can mitigate the cognitive load for English language learners so that they can handle the linguistic demands of academic tasks more easily.

Content area teachers of English language learners reported to me that Inspiration helped their students build stronger connections between newly learned concepts and students’ preexisting knowledge. Content area teachers view the program as a great tool that helps students acquire new vocabulary items in depth by displaying not only the multiple meanings of each word simultaneously but also how each meaning relates to one another. Teachers implement Inspiration for the purposes of brainstorming as a whole group before beginning a unit, and they claim that this technique helps ESOL students activate their background knowledge and interact with their peers in English during the process of building their concept maps.

Reference


Berna Mutlu is a doctoral student and instructor in the ESOL/Bilingual/Bicultural Education Program at the University of Florida, in the United States.

The following is a list of tasks that teachers can help English language learners accomplish with the help of Inspiration:

- brainstorm ideas
- develop, organize, and communicate ideas
- see connections, patterns, and relationships
- assess and share prior knowledge
- develop vocabulary
- outline writing process activities
- highlight important ideas
- classify or categorize concepts, ideas, and information
- comprehend the events in a story or book
- improve social interaction between students, and facilitate group work and collaboration among peers
- guide review and study
- improve reading comprehension skills and strategies
- facilitate recall and retention (AEL, 2003, p. 9)
More than 9,300 professionals from 117 countries attended TESOL’s 42nd Annual Convention and Exhibit, Worlds of TESOL: Building Communities of Practice, Inquiry, and Creativity, in New York this past April. Attendees visited more than 160 exhibitors to view the latest products, professional texts, classroom resources, and multicultural instructional materials.

Educational, Career Development, and Networking Opportunities

Throughout the convention, attendees were able to participate in a variety of combined educational and networking events. More than 730 educators participated in 30 Pre- and Postconvention Institutes, 4- or 6-hour workshops covering a wide variety of issues such as collaboration with mainstream teachers, integration of technology into online and classroom teaching, adoption of effective pronunciation techniques, adult literacy, and utilizing technology to teach pronunciation and vocabulary. In addition, 88 attendees participated in TESOL’s Leadership Development Certificate Program workshops, which cover a wide variety of key leadership themes and skills, from advocacy and government to strategic planning and supervision.

Evening Forums and Breakfasts With the Experts

Two new networking events were offered this year to give attendees the opportunity to meet and visit with each other in informal settings. Many attendees participated in three diverse evening forums focused on current English language teaching (ELT) challenges. At “TESOL and a World of Peace,” presenters from different parts of the world shared how to integrate peace education into classroom teaching and teacher training programs. “English Language Learners With Special Needs” showcased a panel of ESOL professionals who discussed identification, assessment, and service delivery to English language learners with special needs. The objective of “New Perspectives in Teaching Business English” was to illustrate how teachers can use a variety of resources, both new technology and traditional, to enhance their nonnative-English-speaking students’ development of professional English language skills.

Approximately 25 TESOL experts hosted breakfast events that featured topics as diverse as “Preventing and Recovering From Teacher Burnout” to “Helping Adults Learn to Navigate Forms.” Each breakfast event was capped at nine attendees per session and included a continental breakfast.

Daily Plenary Sessions

Several plenary sessions were interspersed throughout the convention, each focusing on a specific ELT challenge. TESOL President Sandy Briggs’s plenary, “Creating Independent Language Users,” featured vignettes of her 40-year high school teaching career, first as a Spanish teacher and later as the English language coordinator for the San Mateo Union High School District in San Mateo, California, in the United States. The central theme of her message encouraged all ELT educators to take responsibility for helping students become independent language learners.

TESOL Global Advocacy Leadership Recognition Awarded

Dr. K. Lakshminarayana, director of collegiate education for the government of the state of Andhra Pradesh, in India, received the TESOL Global Advocacy Leadership Recognition for his role in advancing the quality of English language education in Andhra Pradesh.
A public official with the Andhra Pradesh government for more than 25 years, Dr. Lakshminarayana’s leadership and innovation helped establish the Andhra Pradesh State English Lecturers Retraining Program. A collaborative project with the U.S. Regional English Language Office in New Delhi, the program’s objective is to improve the English language communication proficiency of local undergraduate students through professional development of English language lecturers. The program has proved very successful and has grown to include multiple postsecondary institutions throughout Andhra Pradesh as well as lessons broadcast over the state-run educational TV channel, MANA TV.

TESOL Advocacy Leadership Recognition Awarded

At the opening plenary on Wednesday, April 2, 2008, U.S. Representative Timothy H. Bishop (D-NY) received the TESOL Advocacy Leadership Recognition for his leadership in education reform. Elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2002, Rep. Bishop had previously served as the provost for Southampton College since 1986. As a member of the House Education and Labor Committee, he has advocated for increasing the affordability of education for all Americans. He has also focused on reforming the U.S. No Child Left Behind Act by meeting with educators in his district and staying informed on special challenges that English language learners face under the law.

Members Can Access 2008 Plenary Sessions in the TRC

If you weren’t able to attend the convention in New York, you can catch up on the event with recordings of numerous plenary sessions that are available to members in the TESOL Resource Center (TRC) at http://www.tesol.org/resourcecenter. TESOL convention presenters are encouraged to submit their papers or presentations (or other resources, in the form of lesson plans, teaching tips, quizzes, etc.) to the TRC. For more information, contact resourcecenter@tesol.org.

Uncharted Mountains Are Waiting for You . . . It’s Denver in 2009!

It’s not too early to start planning for TESOL’s 43rd Annual Convention and Exhibit in Denver. The scheduled dates are March 25–28, 2009. Submissions for poster sessions and video theaters are due August 1, 2008. The theme for the 2009 Convention is Uncharted Mountains, Forging New Pathways. Presenters are encouraged to incorporate the theme into their proposals. The opening plenary will be on Wednesday evening, March 25, and convention activities and exhibits will take place March 26–28.
Language Teacher Research in Australia and New Zealand
(Anne Burns and Jill Burton, Editors)

Over the past 30 years, inquiry-based teaching has become a highly valued component of professional development and practitioner research in Australia and New Zealand. This volume of the Language Teacher Research Series focuses on teaching and learning experiences in those two countries, which encompass a large geographical area with diverse policies and practices. The authors examine their various learning environments and share reflections and insights that can promote effective teaching practices, cross-cultural understanding, and improved learning outcomes in English language classrooms in other parts of the world.

Perspectives on Community College ESL Series Volume 3: Faculty, Administration, and the Working Environment (Jose Carmona, Editor)

The Perspectives on Community College ESL series brings into practical focus an array of reflective work on ESL education in U.S. community college settings. In response to the growing awareness of the difficulties that ESL practitioners face daily in making a viable living, Volume 3, Faculty, Administration, and the Working Environment, explores five critical areas of the community college environment in which ESL professionals function and interact: teachers/culture/pedagogy, adjunct faculty and training, faculty collaboration, teachers and technology, and the working environment. Given the large numbers of part-time ESL instructors, many of whom work multiple jobs in different programs at diverse institutions, it is more crucial than ever to understand the impact that this state of affairs has on classroom effectiveness, professional standards, burnout, employee–employer relationships, and program management. This volume looks at workplace issues realistically and offers suggestions and strategies for improving the long-standing inequalities that have beset ESL education for some time.

To order, visit the Bookstore at http://www.tesol.org/.
ANUPI is the new and growing Mexican Association for University English Professors. It was founded in 2002, when a group of university colleagues visualized the need to offer Mexican English language teachers the opportunity to stay current with the latest teaching trends. They were looking for a forum to exchange their areas of expertise at a high academic level. ANUPI became an affiliate of TESOL in 2005, and since then it has been actively involved in the annual convention. From its inception, one of the main objectives of ANUPI has been to provide its members with the ability to become certified English language teachers. In September 2007, after 3 years of negotiations with the College Board, Puerto Rico and Latin America, this momentous goal was achieved: During the Fifth ANUPI International Conference held in Puerto Vallarta, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between ANUPI and the College Board, Puerto Rico and Latin America.

The beginning of 2008 brought good news from the College Board that the Teachers of English to Spanish Speakers Test (TESST) instrument was ready to evaluate the competencies of teachers of ESL/EFL, regardless of the differences in their educational backgrounds. It is through TESST that Mexican teachers who want or need an international certification become certified. Passing the exam means that they have the necessary pedagogical and linguistic knowledge and skills to be effective ESL/EFL teachers to native Spanish speakers. One of the key aspects of TESST is that it is culturally sensitive; it takes into account the linguistic transfer and interference between Spanish and English. Another important aspect is that it has been validated by ESL/EFL specialists from Mexico.

ANUPI has officially opened test centers in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Mexicali, and will soon open centers in Monterrey and Puebla. As the number of test centers grows, the exam becomes more accessible to more teachers.

ANUPI is very proud that it is accomplishing one of its primary goals, and TESOL has helped broaden this affiliate’s vision to explore other opportunities to help its members and Mexican teachers to be among the very best in the field of TESOL.

Board Approves Positions on Global English, Content-Based Instruction, and Adult Educators

At its meeting in March 2008, the TESOL Board of Directors approved position statements on English as a global language and on teacher preparation for content-based instruction. In addition, the Board approved a position statement on credentialing and professionalization for teachers in adult education. All three position statements are available on the TESOL Web site.

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.
Communities of Practice

The 19 TESOL interest sections (ISs) represent communities of practice, all sharing similar interests over the wide-ranging field of ESL/EFL. Common to each is the networking that occurs online and in face-to-face meetings. Because not all members have the luxury of attending meetings, the e-lists managed by each IS play a critical role in member satisfaction.

Members are encouraged to sign up for as few or as many ISs as they would like through the easily accessible My Communities page on the TESOL Web site.

1. Log into http://www.tesol.org/ (username = your ID number; password is your last name unless you have changed it).
2. Click on My Communities.
3. Scan the list, and click on whatever lists interest you.
4. Click Save.

Immediately, you are connected to your community or communities of interest. Interact directly with other community members via e-mail, posting, and responding to messages. Questions? Contact jhoward@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.

TESOL to Cosponsor Worldwide EFL Spelling Tournament

In April, TESOL announced its partnership with Franklin Electronic Publishers to sponsor an annual spelling competition for students 15 years old and younger who are learning English in selected countries outside of the United States. Under the agreement, which was reviewed by the TESOL Board of Directors, a series of preliminary rounds with selected TESOL affiliates will be held in April and May 2009 to determine participants for the final round, to be held in August 2009 in New York City. A press release with more information is available online at http://www.tesol.org/.

Conduct TESOL Business Online

You can join or renew your membership, subscribe to TESOL serial publications, and purchase TESOL publications online. TESOL members get an average discount of 25% on publications.

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Using the Forgot Password? Function

If you forget your password or member ID to log in to TESOL's Web site, use the Forgot Password? option under the log-in area on the left side of the home page. If you have any questions or problems, e-mail info@tesol.org.
Join the world of advocacy!

Let your voice be heard in Washington, DC through TESOL’s US Advocacy Action Center!

www.capwiz.com/TESOL

Help make a difference for English language learners and educators! Through the US Advocacy Action Center you can:

- Quickly and easily contact your elected officials in Washington, DC
- Find information on key bills that impact you and your learners
- Help TESOL promote sound legislation and policies that help advance English language teaching
- Connect to the Advocacy Action Network and receive action alerts and updates on legislation and policies

In addition, by joining the Advocacy Action Network, you will receive action alerts and updates on legislation and policies that impact you, your classroom, and your students.

Want to know the latest in education policy from Washington? Read the weekly Federal Education Update online at http://www.tesol.org/fedEdUpdate.

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