Language Issue or Learning Disability?

by Caroline Linse

Planning Lessons With Language Functions in Mind

by Debbie Zacarian

Tuning Learners Up With "Sweet Nothings" in the Language Classroom

by Okon Effiong

Three Perspectives on Leadership

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Three Perspectives on Leadership
Essential Teacher (ISSN 1545-6501) is published four times a year by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL).

For submission guidelines, see http://www.tesol.org/et/. Send correspondence to et@tesol.org or Essential Teacher, TESOL, 700 South Washington Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA 22314 USA

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With this issue, we say good-bye to two editors and give a warm welcome to our new editors. Many thanks and much appreciation to Michael Fields, as the longtime editor of Compleat Links rotates off the team. We also bid farewell and thanks to Hanizah Zainuddin as she steps down as editor of Portal. Taking over as editor of Compleat Links is Maria Coady, from the University of Florida in Gainesville. And our new Portal editor is Susanne Lapp, from Florida Atlantic University. We all extend a warm welcome to Maria and Susanne and look forward to working with them on exciting projects for upcoming issues.

This issue of *Essential Teacher* offers a panoply of thoughts for English language teachers to reflect on and instructional strategies that enable English language learners (ELLs) to make gains in learning through reading, technology, and classroom interaction.

**Communities of Practice:** Judie Haynes offers research-based strategies for engaging ELLs in productive learning along with their native-English-speaking peers. Linda New Levine reflects on the learning brought about by her professional collaboration with another teacher who had similar goals for her ESL students. Debbie Zacarian illustrates how one teacher successfully infused her social studies curriculum with language objectives aligned with seven language functions in order to benefit ELLs. Ke Xu continues to share his memorable, often extraordinary experiences as an EFL professional in Jiangsu Province, China. Alvino Fantini further discusses the development of students’ intercultural competence (ICC) by offering directions on appropriate assessments of ICC. Dorothy Zemach’s upbeat and insightful column motivates readers to attend the upcoming TESOL Convention in Denver, Colorado, March 25–28, 2009.

**Out of the Box:** Okon Effiong reveals the creative techniques that he used to increase positive classroom interaction and cooperation among coed university EFL students. Sulaiman Jenkins discusses the need for teachers of English as an international language to take an intercultural approach to teaching, one that is nonthreatening to students’ cultural beliefs and sensitive to their learning. Paula Korsko shares the remarkable effect of instructional scaffolding, which took shape as she modified and sought students’ feedback on learning tasks related to reading a novel in English. Ronaldo Lima Jr. writes about the qualities and competencies of excellent teachers and asks us to reflect on what excellence in teaching means to each of us.

**Portal:** Caroline Linse offers invaluable information for educators who are trying to differentiate language difficulties from potential learning disabilities in their ESL students. Patrick Ng Chin Leong talks about the effects of combining a problem-based approach with readers theatre in an EFL setting. Martin Sankofi illustrates the potential of using Web 2.0 tools to create an exciting and interactive learning environment for ESL students. Dorit Sasson shares her recommendations for improving reading fluency for struggling ELLs.

**References & Resources:** Jose Carmona presents an overview of *Creating Meaning,* with its selection of authentic readings and extension activities suitable for intensive English classes. Susan Kelly’s review of the PBS documentary *Frontier House* offers ideas on incorporating the show into the study of U.S. culture with upper-intermediate- and advanced-level ELLs. Vanessa Caceres reports on *From Home to School 1,* a book used in family literacy classes to counter the overwhelming issues that adult second language students face. Taniea Engel reviews *Weaving It Together,* a book devoted to an integrative approach to reading and writing for intermediate-level ESL students.

**Compleat Links:** Ayanna Cooper reflects on the use of data to help drive instruction, which in turn can assist in professional development. Khaled Al-Seghayer offers a discussion of good instructors in the field of English language teaching. Kathy Brenner writes about the use of audio journals and the progression of technology.

Enjoy this issue of *Essential Teacher,* and please plan to attend our session on getting published in *ET* at the 43rd Annual TESOL Convention and Exhibit, March 25–28, 2009. It’s sure to be another great experience!

Eileen N. Whelan Ariza et@tesol.org
How to Engage English Learners and English Speakers Using Inquiry-Based Instruction

Carol Edelsky
Karen Smith
Christian Faltis

Picture your classroom with English speakers and English learners working side by side, learning new ways of talking, reading, and writing in English at the same time they learn content. This is the power of inquiry-based instruction, an approach that becomes possible when teachers invite students to enter a unit of study through their own natural curiosity. The questions students ask about content guide your instruction, energize their learning, and become the basis for exploration and focused study.

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One of the values TESOL represents is accessible, high-quality education. TESOL continues to expand the availability of professional development offerings to meet the diverse needs of its global membership. With the advent of new technology and social networking, the traditional classroom is rapidly being complemented with online opportunities for peer-to-peer learning. I’d like to update you on the numerous opportunities you have to enhance your professional development:

- **Online discussions**: Introduced in the fall of 2008, the first discussion topic was “Successes and Challenges in Meeting the Needs of Young Learners.” Members and nonmembers alike are invited to participate in these lively quarterly discussions.

- **Virtual seminars and other webcasts**: These 90-minute programs focus on key issues in ESOL. They are easy to access online from your home or office, as a live event or using the playback feature when it fits your schedule. Students and global electronic members can attend for free. Registration for the playback versions of the following virtual seminars is currently available on TESOL’s Web site: “Theory and Practice in Classroom-Based Assessment,” “Teaching Young Learners (K–12): Challenges and a Way Forward,” “Learning to Read a Second Language: What Does the Research Say and What Do We Do About It?” The playback version of the following TESOL–New York Times Knowledge Network webcast is also available online: “Falling Through the Cracks: Meeting the Needs of Adolescent English Language Learners.”

- **Online courses**: Registration is now available for TESOL’s popular Principles and Practices of Online Teaching Certificate Program, which starts again in January 2009. Other online courses from TESOL focus on using the PreK–12 English Language Proficiency Standards and on English language learners (ELLs) with special needs.

- **Interest sections (ISs)**: There are 20 ISs, any of which you can join for free as a member benefit. IS members share resources and information regularly.

- **Symposia**: TESOL symposia are 1-day regional programs conducted in collaboration with TESOL affiliates worldwide. They provide opportunities to learn from and dialogue with experts on key topics selected by the affiliates. “Learner Autonomy: What Does the Future Hold?” was held in Sevilla, Spain, on November 8, 2008. The next TESOL symposium will take place in Panama on September 18, 2009.

- **Pre- and Postconvention Institutes (PCIs)**: Held in conjunction with the annual convention, PCIs offer in-depth, hands-on professional development. Selected by the Professional Development Committee, they are designed and led by experts in the field and address professional development needs identified by convention planners and past PCI participants. Topics for 2009 include content-based instruction, computer-assisted language learning, pronunciation, writing, and materials development. The next PCIs take place March 24, 25, and 28, 2009, in Denver, Colorado, USA. Registration for the PCIs is now available on TESOL’s Web site.

- **Academies**: The 2009 TESOL Academy will feature six 10-hour workshops focused on key issues in K–12 and adult education. It will be held June 19–20, 2009, at the College of Charleston, in Charleston, South Carolina, USA.

TESOL will also soon hold a conference on building a culture of peace, “Integrating Language Teaching and Learning With Social Responsibility: Sharing Practical Strategies for Understanding and Resolving Conflicts.” It will be held on February 8, 2009, at George Mason University, in Fairfax, Virginia, USA. This professional development conference is for K–12, adult, and higher education ESL teachers, teacher trainers, administrators, and other educators who work with ELLs. TESOL members who cannot attend may participate in discussions electronically with members around the world. As we celebrate this holiday season of peace, let us continue to remind ourselves of the tremendous opportunities that we as TESOL members have to promote a more loving and just society.

I encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities to expand your professional knowledge and connect with your colleagues! To find out more about professional development through TESOL, go to www.tesol.org and click on Education.
Students from Mrs. Mahoney’s fifth-grade science class walked proudly into my ESL class wearing labels from a cooperative group science activity pinned to their shirts. In science class, the students were divided into heterogeneous clusters and the English language learners (ELLs) held roles such as artist, timekeeper, or errand runner. In this activity, students studied the formations of different kinds of volcanoes. A native English speaker was each group’s scribe and wrote down the information that the group had brainstormed.

Eduardo was the artist in his group and drew pictures of the various types of volcanoes with the support and help of his group members. Carolina was her group’s errand runner, gathering and distributing all of the supplies from a written list. It was also her job to ask the teacher for help when it was needed. In another group, Hena worked as the timekeeper, telling her fellow group members how much time had elapsed.

The ELLs were assigned group roles that were appropriate for their English language level. As they became more proficient in English, their roles reflected their increased usage of English. Hena reported to me that her experience in Mrs. Mahoney’s class was the first time she felt comfortable working with her native-English-speaking peers. I noticed that all of the students in my fifth-grade ESL group started to work much harder. They began bringing their science work to ESL class for extra help because they wanted to do a good job in their groups.

Not all small-group instruction, however, is created equal. Let’s look at another example.

Students in Ms. Feeney’s sixth-grade class worked in small groups to complete a health assignment. Many of the ELLs were in the same cluster, so the groups were not linguistically balanced. Each student had his or her own activity sheet, and the groups worked together to complete the task. These groups were informal, and the more proficient native English speakers often supplied the answers to any ELLs in their group without helping them understand the information. The classroom was noisy and disorganized. Students were assessed individually; as a result, they did not support each other’s learning and had no stake in how their group functioned.

Research shows how important small-group instruction is to student learning in general (Radencich & McKay, 1995; Slavin, 1995). I believe that cooperative group instruction is a crucial tool for the ESL classroom and for content area teachers who have ELLs in their classes. When students have specific guidelines and roles in the group and native English speakers are coached in how to include their ELL classmates, the academic and social results are impressive.

The following are some important aspects of effective small-group instruction.

Arrange the physical space so that active student participation is encouraged. Seating in the classroom should facilitate small-group and paired learning. If desks are arranged in groups of four or five, ELLs feel that they are an integral part of the classroom community.

Assign students to heterogeneous groups. Groups need to be structured so that the ELLs in the classroom are working in different clusters. Assign to each group native-English-speaking students who you know will buddy with ELLs and give extra help and support. All students will benefit from working with classmates from varying ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and linguistic abilities.

Give students real reasons to communicate. By participating and producing authentic language for academic communication, ELLs gain not only content area knowledge, but also language proficiency. Native-English-speaking peers will modify their speech and adapt their oral communication to help their classmates better understand content. New learners of English will have multiple opportunities to negotiate meaning because there will be more opportunities for repetition of academic content.

Teach teamwork and social skills directly. Teachers should encourage groups to support each other’s learning. In addition to providing the content task, teachers should provide explicit instruction about the group’s process. In a well-structured lesson in which the task and process have been taught, students will learn language and academic material as well as gain social skills. ELLs who may be afraid to speak in front of the whole class will be more willing to participate. It is much easier when classmates support each other.
All students will benefit from working with classmates from varying ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and linguistic abilities.

Teach students how to reflect on how well their group is working. Roles should be assigned, and individual participation monitored, and individual as well as group accomplishments rewarded. Students should reflect on how well their group works together (their process) and how they view their own participation.

Although many of the well-known small-group structures are difficult for ELLs to utilize, there are still many that can enhance their learning. The following are a few cooperative learning strategies (Kagan, 1994) that I have found work well with ELLs if adapted to their appropriate linguistic level.

Showdown is an activity that is beneficial for reviewing material before a test. Each group creates 10 questions about the topic to be reviewed. They then pass their questions to another group. One student from each group reads the first question, and the other group members write their responses. When the lead student calls out “Showdown,” everyone shows their responses. Those with correct answers are congratulated, and those with incorrect responses are helped. A different team member reads each question until they have all been answered.

Round Table is an activity that can be used with ELLs if the responses do not require too much written language and spelling does not count. For example, the teacher gives an instruction such as “Name as many insects as you can.” The first student in each group writes a response and passes the paper to the next student. It helps to place the ELL in an early spot. The paper is passed around the group until the group members have written everything they can think of. The group with the most correct responses wins some type of recognition.

It is important to keep in mind that some of these strategies will need to be modified so that all students can participate.

References

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HOME ROOM

Teachers as Learning Partners

by Linda New Levine

Teacher professional development can occur in a variety of ways. My school district ensures continuing professional development through required graduate courses, fly-in consultants, and ongoing summer curriculum and textbook review. I’ve been involved in all of these experiences throughout my teaching career, but none of them helped me develop and grow professionally as much as my collaboration with Mona.

Mona was the other ESL teacher in my school district at the elementary level, and we brought different strengths to our collaborative pairing. She had trained as an elementary teacher and worked in that capacity in other schools. I had trained as a secondary teacher and worked at the middle school level. She was a field-sensitive, global learner. She preferred to learn in a social environment and consider big-picture topics. I was field independent and analytical. I worked incrementally, individually, and in sequential order.

In spite of these differences, we were fast friends from the start. I had been in the district longer, and I welcomed the addition of new staff to handle the needs of our quickly growing population of English language learners (ELLs). I shared everything with Mona to help her get started: school information, lesson plans, strategies, and materials. That first year, we even shared a classroom—a long narrow room where she taught at one end and I taught at the other. Our classes were scheduled during the same time periods, so we had opportunities to observe each other teaching.

Watching and listening to each other’s lessons reassured us that we could work together. We saw that we shared the same philosophy and, more important, had a great deal to learn from each other. We developed mutual respect and trust that proved to be the most essential elements in our long collaboration that followed.
As the days and months passed, we developed the theory and practice necessary for English language learners to succeed in our classes.

Planning in the morning or after school allowed us to share strategies and ask each other for suggestions when problems arose. Because we taught in the same space, we often met in the center of the room after a class to celebrate a small success or talk about what we would do differently next time. Those miniconferences filled me with excitement.

Later I came to realize that the excitement arose from the shared experimentation Mona and I were conducting in terms of student learning. As the days and months passed, we developed the theory and practice necessary for ELLs to succeed in our classes. Reading about theory in a graduate course or hearing about it from a consultant had never engaged me as profoundly as the experimentation I shared with Mona in our classroom. It was an exciting time.

Mona and I eventually moved into separate classrooms as space became available and our student population grew. Later, she was assigned to a neighboring school, but our collaboration continued as we held monthly meetings to share teaching units and strategies. As a result of that continued collaboration, we applied for and received a grant to create our own ELL curriculum for the school district. Another grant enabled us to spend a month in Mexico improving our Spanish language skills. We also presented at the TESOL convention, sharing our curriculum and ideas about thematic teaching with other teachers.

As our district’s ESL staff grew, Mona and I modeled the kind of collaborative partnering that helped other ESL teachers adopt our form of professional development. This type of collegiality became the culture of our ESL department, and we all thrived on it.

My interest in professional development through teacher collaboration stems from a very personal experience, but my reading and research into this topic support everything I learned instinctively through my collaboration with Mona. I learned that true collaborative interdependence is rare among teachers (Little, 1990). We are often thought of as the “egg carton” profession because of the separation that exists in our professional experiences. Frequently, teachers work behind closed doors, rarely interacting with other professionals in their school. This isolation is counterproductive to the development of a strong school culture and to the continuing professional development of teachers (Lacina, Levine, & Sowa, 2006).

But collaborations such as Mona’s and mine do not develop spontaneously. For strong interdependent collaborative bonds to develop, internal or external forces may be responsible. Mona and I were strongly motivated by the need to develop better programs for beginning readers in a competitive school climate where standardized testing was utilized for student placement and retention. Our internal motivations evolved from a shared dedication to students and a desire to see civil justice and academic success prevail for them and their families.

I also learned that interdependent collaborative teams operate under a different structure from traditional groups of teachers. Successful teams have increased frequency and intensity in their interactions and a higher probability for mutual influence. Collective judgments and decision making are the norm. These attributes were certainly characteristic of my first heady years of collaboration. In addition, Mona and I shared other characteristics with collaborative teams (Little, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1991):

- high frequency of talk about teaching
- high frequency of planning and making instructional materials together
- teaching each other about the practice of teaching
- asking each other for help

Successful collaborative groups have commonalities that promote reflective inquiry. Teachers in these groups develop norms for group work and communication skills that help “establish and maintain a safe and trusting environment and encourage group members to reexamine, clarify, and transform their thinking so they can help students succeed” (Langer, Colton, & Goff, 2003, p. 14).

The development of mutual trust and respect created a base that propelled Mona’s and my future learning and collaboration. How would we have developed that respect if we had never seen each other teach? How would we have developed trust if we had never shared our problems and asked each other for help? In this current challenging educational environment, we need the help and collective intelligences of our colleagues to ensure academic success for all learners.

References


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See also “Instructional Coaching for English Language Educators,” http://www.tesol.org/et/.
Carla Miner, a high school ESL teacher, planned on teaching a unit on exercising the right to vote. Drawing from the Massachusetts Department of Education’s (2003) English language benchmarks and outcomes, she created several language and content goals that complimented the goals for learning language and social studies (see Benchmarks and Outcomes below).

During the previous year, Carla had used a particular learning format that had worked well. She had taught her high school students a social studies concept and then had them create and perform a puppet show about it. She had found that her students’ use of English expanded using this format, so she created the following sequential sketch of her “right to vote” lesson plan:

1. Teach students about exercising the right to vote.
2. Separate students into small groups or learning communities.
3. Assign each group the task of creating and performing a play about the right to vote, using puppets of their own design.
4. Each group performs the play for a small group of kindergarten students.
5. Each group creates a kindergarten assessment to measure how effective the lesson is with the students who watch the performance.

Building on this lesson sequence, Carla wrote several language objectives that she planned to display for her high school students:

- Watch a video about exercising the right to vote.
- In small groups, share ideas about how to develop a play about this topic.
- Write a play using a puppet-show format.
- Perform the play for a group of kindergarten students.
- Assess the kindergarten students’ understanding of the right to vote.

Carla used group work frequently. In planning this lesson, she began to think about the types of language functions that she would require her students to use. Drawing on Halliday’s (1985) functional categories, she planned the lesson based on the activities that she wanted her students to engage in. Halliday posits that people use language to perform seven different functions, and Carla decided to plan a lesson that would engage her students in each of these language functions.

First, Carla decided to separate her students into small groups. This would ensure that they would engage in an interactional function. Second, she would tell her students that they would be creating a puppet play for a group of kindergarten students about the right to vote, and she would ask them what they needed to perform this task. Their response would reflect an instrumental function. Third, she would instruct her students to gather facts and resources about the right to vote, reflecting the informational function.

**Source:** Massachusetts Department of Education, 2003.
In 1983, I returned to the Education Department of Jiangsu Province and worked in the Office of Teaching and Research (OTR), a combination of a curriculum branch and an institute of pedagogical and methodological studies. I was a founding member of Jiangsu’s OTR and, later, the youngest EFL program director at a provincial level in China. The establishment of OTRs in the early 1980s marked the beginning of China’s governmental involvement with teaching in subject areas. There is now an OTR at provincial, regional, and county levels throughout the country.

My work at the Jiangsu OTR was multifaceted. The province had 16 regions, and 65 counties, with 3 million secondary school students for whom English was, and still is, a requirement. I called for an annual meeting of EFL program directors from all 16 regions so that they could update their curriculum implementation and discuss issues of general concern.

I also traveled a great deal, visiting cities, schools, and individual classes. Each year, I observed 50–70 classes, including those in other provinces. This was the part of my job that I enjoyed most because it greatly broadened my horizons and deepened my understanding of teaching.

In addition, I ran an EFL journal, published twice a year, that included research articles, lesson plans, book reviews, and other teacher resources. Because I was the only person in charge of foreign languages for the entire Education Department, I had to do everything by myself. I found contributors and reviewers, but I was also the editor, copy editor, and proofreader.

Among the many things that happened during these 10 years, some stand out more clearly in my memory. The first was a tough job I handled...
Right after I started at the OTR. On an inspection tour, I found that many schools were teaching advanced-level content to students who couldn’t even read the English alphabet. Without much thinking, I told the school principals to use lower level textbooks that matched the students’ actual proficiency levels.

My boss’s response to my report, however, stunned me: “What? You told the principal to use lower level books? Are you out of your mind?”

Curriculum decisions were made at the national level. Anyone violating the guideline could get fired. To save me from getting fired, my boss asked me to write to the Ministry of Education requesting instructions, which I did right away. I was lucky to be able to keep my job, and 2 months later the ministry issued a new guideline that allowed local educational authorities some choice in adapting their curriculum to students’ actual proficiency levels.

The second momentous thing was a teaching contest held in 1989. It was part of Jiangsu’s endeavor to enhance EFL teaching through more structured yet more creative ways of teaching. More than 600 EFL teachers participated in primaries held at the county level. Those who won their primary entered a regional semifinal. The winners of the semifinals entered the final at the provincial level. The day before the final contest, they were assigned a lesson to teach (by drawing lots). The next day, contestants assigned to teach the same lesson were grouped together to demonstrate their teaching skills to students “borrowed” from a local school. All of the lessons were videotaped and later broadcast on the provincial education TV channel.

I was so impressed by the skills that these teachers displayed in quickly adapting themselves to a new teaching environment and by the many different ways they found to engage the students in various interactive activities.

The third occasion was an unusual experience in jail. In 1990, China decided that each province should hold its own high school certificate test (HSCT). Test-writing teams were soon formed for all subjects to be tested, and I was one of the five members of the task force for English. To ensure maximum security, a correctional facility 35 miles from Nanjing was chosen as the site of the project. The day we moved into the heavily guarded camp, we all took oaths to keep the test information confidential. All communication with the outside was cut off. We worked 10–12 hours a day in our room.

The food sent in for us was awesome, but few of us had an appetite. After each meal, we took a walk in a playground outside, much as the inmates did, counting how many new buds had sprouted out from the trees at the foot of the high wall that kept us from freedom. When the project was finally finished, we were taken on a sightseeing tour out of Jiangsu to visit some of the hottest tourist attractions in China. This was not only a reward, but also a security requirement—the test was still 2 weeks away. On the day of the test, we all sat around the phone, praying that no printing errors were found on the test we had produced.

When I look back today, these seemingly ordinary events were actually milestones in the development of Jiangsu’s EFL education system. The ministry’s 1983 curriculum guideline heralded an era of “one syllabus, multiple textbook series.” Teaching contests helped prepare teachers for a changing world of TESOL in the 21st century. The provincial HSC English test ended the dominance of national college entrance exams and guided schools toward a quality-oriented EFL teaching model.

The decade I spent working in China as an EFL professional was also a milestone in my personal growth. I grew with Jiangsu’s education system, just as I am now growing with TESOL.
Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence

by Alvino E. Fantini

In the March 2008 issue of Essential Teacher, I made the case for expanding the goal of ESOL to include the development of intercultural competence (ICC; see “Expanding the Goal of ESOL”). In the June 2008 issue, I presented a course redesign model to further this goal (see “Redesigning ESOL Courses to Address Cultural and Intercultural Aspects”). And in the September 2008 issue, I offered frameworks and activities for implementing cultural and intercultural exploration in the classroom (see “Implementing Cultural and Intercultural Exploration”). All of this, of course, leads to the question: How do we assess intercultural competence?

Not surprisingly, questions regarding assessment take us full circle, back to the initial goal and objectives. Having expanded this goal to include ICC, we now need to rethink both what and how we assess. Traditional language assessment is inadequate in terms of addressing the full range of communicative abilities—from language proficiency to appropriate behaviors and interactions.

Evaluating ICC presents special challenges given its multiple components. Even considering only one component (e.g., the dimensions of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness) brings up issues not normally addressed by language educators. Although teachers assess language knowledge and skills, evaluating learner attitudes and awareness is uncommon and not easily subjected to quantification or documentation. Several assessment instruments suggest objectives for both areas (e.g., Byram 1997; Fantini, 1999, 2006).

Although language proficiency remains at the core of ICC, it is clearly not the whole concept. Yet proficiency enhances ICC in quantitative and qualitative ways. Grappling with a second language, for example, causes people to confront how they perceive, conceptualize, and express. It promotes new communication strategies on someone else’s terms. And it transforms one’s habitual view of the world. Conversely, lack of second language proficiency constrains people to think about the world and act within it entirely in their native system, an unenriched ethnocentric approach. But because language alone does not make people interculturally competent, it is important to consider behavioral, interactive, and now attitudinal and awareness objectives.

**Basic notions about assessment.**

Connections among instructional objectives, course design and implementation, and assessment are fundamental to educational design. Assessment is interrelated with all aspects of the design process, and its quality depends on various factors:

- clarity of purpose
- the target audience
- clarity about success and outcomes to be assessed
- proper assessment tools and techniques
- the procedure (e.g., how the test is administered, evaluated, and scored)
- the validity, reliability, and scope of instruments
- representative and varied samples of student achievement
- bias avoidance (e.g., extraneous interference affecting samples)

Today, innovative approaches have greatly improved assessment efforts, including outcomes assessment, mastery learning, and performance assessment. Portfolios, logs, observation, and performance-based tasks are also especially valuable. All of these assessments have the same purpose: to ascertain the degree to which students achieve the stated objectives. These newer approaches help obtain this information better and in more varied ways while providing alternatives to traditional paper-and-pencil tests. They also permit multidimensional assessment, which is appropriate for a complex phenomenon such as ICC.

**Aspects of assessment.** Assuming a multidimensional approach, four important aspects of assessment are worth reviewing: area, type, form, and technique.

To determine the areas to assess, I return to the original objectives regarding ICC: ICC attributes; the three aspects of building relationships, communicating, and collaborating; the four dimensions of awareness, attitudes, skills, and knowledge; language proficiency; and developmental indicators.

Once test areas have been determined, consider which test types are best suited to your purposes. Test types reflect their primary use (e.g., readiness, placement, diagnostic, aptitude or attitude, proficiency-based, norm- or criterion-referenced, bilingual or culture-language dominance, formative, normative, summative, achievement).

Assessment approaches take various forms, and it is important to choose the form, or combination of forms, best suited to your needs. Direct assessment is conducted at specified moments and is usually announced beforehand, as with traditional tests and quizzes. Indirect assessment is ongoing, sporadic, and not usually obvious to learners. For example, a teacher observes students and makes notes after class based on preestablished criteria (e.g., how they interacted or participated, problems that arose, students’ interest and moti-
Seven Reasons to Attend the TESOL Convention

by Dorothy Zemach

If you are reading this in December, then the annual TESOL convention (which will be held in Denver, Colorado, March 25–28, 2009) is just around the corner. If you submitted a proposal to present, then you already know whether it has been accepted. If it has, I assume that you are going. This column, then, is more for those of you who are wondering whether to go—not only to the TESOL convention but to other local and national conferences as well.

Like many others, I struggle with financing my own way, giving up a week’s worth of work while I’m away, and missing my family. However, I consider conference attendance one of the most useful things that I do for myself in terms of professional development. So here are my seven reasons for attending (though not necessarily in order of importance).

1. You can learn something. Back home, the learning you do tends to be focused on the job at hand. A conference provides the opportunity to attend sessions on topics of immediate relevance to your work, but it also affords you an excellent opportunity to attend sessions on topics you’ve never considered before. If you’re not sure what corpus linguistics is all about or what’s new in genre studies, here’s your chance to attend a session or three. If you teach in a high school, why not go to a symposium on Generation 1.5 learners at the community college level? ESL teachers often wind up teaching classes they didn’t anticipate, so the session you attend this year out of pure curiosity could turn out to be quite useful in the future.

2. You can do something different. Are you going to sit in your regular sessions and do the same thing you do in your classes? Or, are you going to attend a session that challenges the way you think about your classes? If you teach in any language other than English, you will be impressed by the creativity that goes on in the other classrooms here. They are using their students as resources, moving away from the book and into the real world. If you teach in English, there are innovations here that you can bring back to your learners at the community college level.

3. You can collaborate. We all have a difficult time when we do our jobs alone. It is reassuring to know that others are facing the same problems. This is where we form long-lasting friendships and get some of our biggest ideas. The TESOL convention is a great place to network, to ask questions of others who have a wealth of experience and to get answers to questions that have puzzled you.

4. You can meet your heroes. If you are like me, you have a list of people you would like to talk to. You may not know them personally, but you have been inspired by the work they do. You can meet them and talk to them at this convention.

5. You can give back. If you are a teacher, you know how hard it is to get people to come to a symposium or a workshop to learn something new. If you are a learner, you know how inspiring it is to see others share what they know. This is the perfect opportunity to be a student among students.

6. You can pass it on. If you are a teacher, you know how important it is to have someone who knows what you know. If you are a learner, you know how it feels to be given the opportunity to pass it on. The TESOL convention is a great place to be inspired and to pass that inspiration on to others.

7. You can make a difference. As educators, we must be clear and explicit about the things we do. How we conceptualize our subject matter affects how we define goals and objectives, design and implement courses, and monitor and assess outcomes. Testing and evaluation practices are integral to this process. Increased assessment options ensure effective and reliable evaluation. Properly executed, quality assessment provides solid information to guide our educational practices from start to finish. In the end, appropriate assessment procedures enhance both teaching and learning.

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2. It may be the only vacation you get. When I attend a conference, I’m busy from the time I wake up (too early) until the time I drop into bed (too late), but yes, it does still feel like a vacation of sorts. I’m in a new location. I don’t have to make my bed or cook my meals. Even if I bring work with me, I’m not really going to do it. To the alert, there’s always food and coffee and drinks on offer. Graduate schools, state affiliates, and interest sections are all having parties. It’s not quite the same as relaxing in the Bahamas, but it beats grading papers.

3. It’s a good place to look over materials. Yes, the publishers’ area is a zoo, but there’s much to be learned there. We’re fortunate to work in a profession in which the salespeople, for the most part, have come from a teaching background, so the people who are eager to show you the latest textbooks can also talk about how they would work in an actual classroom. Take enough time to visit the small publishers as well as the large ones. Talk with other teachers you see standing around about what works for them. If you search high and low and cannot find the book you need, tell every publisher about that as well. Who knows? You could influence future publishing plans.

4. It will look good for you professionally. That may sound self-serving, but so what? Most teachers could do with a bit more stumping for themselves. Attending conferences boosts your reputation with your home institution and makes you more visible to colleagues elsewhere. You’re demonstrating your interest in your field, especially if you are participating actively and it is noticed. You can also bring back information for your institution and your colleagues who couldn’t attend.

5. You’ll meet people face to face. Many of us connect online through interest section and forum e-lists. Conferences are our chance to meet in person.

6. It’s a great place to network for jobs and career advancement. The Job MarketPlace is an obvious venue in which to look for work if you’re actively hunting, but the informal networking you do every time you make small talk in an elevator or sit down next to someone new at a lunch table is invaluable. Graduate school classmates and former colleagues congregate at conferences, so you can also renew old friendships. Those connections sometimes pay off even years down the road. (Now that the annual TESOL convention has been shortened by a day, serious networkers may wish to arrive a day early or stay a day late.)

7. You’ll renew your spirit. OK, I did save the most important point for last. Although a conference week (or weekend) can be physically exhausting, it can be emotionally uplifting as well. You’re surrounded by people who love the same things you do but have a different perspective. They’re not bogged down by your particular challenges, and they might have useful insights into your struggles—just as their problems may seem far easier for you to solve than your own. Let their enthusiasm renew yours.

One of my favorite literary treatments of the liberal arts conference scene is David Lodge’s (1984) Small World. In the prologue, he compares the modern conference to earlier religious pilgrimages and notes that presenting and attending sessions allows people to

- journey to new and interesting places, meet new and interesting people, and form new and interesting relationships with them; exchange gossip and confidences (for our well-worn stories are fresh to them, and vice versa); eat, drink, and make merry in their company every evening; and yet, at the end of it all, return home with an enhanced reputation for seriousness of mind.

So if you’re still making up your mind, spend a little time online searching for bargain air or train fares and cheaper alternatives to conference hotels. E-mail old friends and colleagues to see who’s planning to attend. Sort through the announcements and invitations for events, and start filling out your calendar. Write a quick list of things you’d like to learn or do at a conference. And I hope to see you there!

Reference

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Revitalizing a Curriculum for School-Age Learners
Editors, David Hayes and Judy Sharkey

The contributors to this volume used creative approaches to breathe life into outdated or underdeveloped curricula for school-age English learners. Through collaborative work with students, other teachers, administrators, and researchers, the contributors enhanced English learning through language arts, math, technology, and other subject areas. Sometimes their work required stepping back from cultural norms to innovate the way that their students learn English. Each chapter in this volume provides inspiration as well as practical ideas to educators who want to view their curricula in a different light.

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Pages: 360
ISBN: 978-1931185-48-6
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Walking into a 90-minute English language learning class in a Japanese University is not usually the most exciting prospect for any teacher or learner. You could hardly tell the difference between this and walking into an empty classroom. The preferred boy–girl dichotomous seating arrangement, the stonewalled silence that greets the teacher, and, even with the best of prompts, you still find that most learners remain tight-lipped as you attempt to defuse the situation or warm up the class with icebreakers. A situation like this definitely calls for the teacher to wear not just one, but two or more thinking caps.

Rules to Live By

Fortunately, I was warmly received on my first day in class, and I quickly capitalised on this by establishing class ethics in the form of a humourous rule book. It contained simple dos and don’ts, including wearing a smile at all times as rule number one for the students as well as for me. I joked that a smiling face is more receptive to a new language because I personally would not feel welcome at their house if I were met at the door with a frown or a bland expression. This strategy worked. My students all make an effort to look happy in class, which leaves me staring at 48 smiling and cheerful faces during lessons.

It can be quite irritating to see sleeping students in class, especially when I am making great effort to inject as much excitement into the lesson as possible. Rule number two is that sleeping in class is not necessarily a no-no and would not be frowned upon as long as the student brings his or her own futon and pillow. Well, I must say, I have not seen any sleepy eyes or drooping heads in my class since setting that requirement.

Because the students in my classes are all freshmen, I reckoned that encouraging them to learn to call their mates by their first names should help in building relationships in and outside the language classroom. I made it a class objective that students should learn each other’s names and address them as such. Each student has to endeavour to add a new name to his or her collection every week. During class activities, I casually stroll around the room and randomly ask them how many classmates of the opposite sex they know by name. The response I receive gets better every week. To promote this objective, students swap partners every week for tasks involving pair work, and I insist on personal introductions before they can commence any activity.

Rather than let students continue with the same-sex seating plan that is quite common in Japanese secondary schools, I encourage them to mix and familiarize themselves with their classmates. I give them a simple reminder: “This is a university, you are all grown-ups, and I expect grown-up behaviours.”

Student Interaction

I structure my lessons in such a way that students work in dyads, and two random pairs merge to form groups of four. One week, I announce loudly, “Okay girls, get up and find a boy.” And the following week, I switch it around: “Guys, it is your turn to find a girl.” In the first week of one term, it took 25 minutes for a class of 48 students to pair up. In week 10, it took just under 5 minutes.

As they get to know and address each other by first name, it makes it easier to relate to each other as partners, and the task gets done in a much
A happy class is a fertile ground to grow the seeds of a second language.

friendlier atmosphere. Close friends do not get the chance to sit together because this can easily degenerate into a private chat session. The long-term benefit of this structure is that students gain social skills that decrease inhibition and promote production.

Unfortunately, there are more girls than boys in my classes. Of particular interest in one class was a group of four girls who were always hesitant, would wait until the rest of the girls had found partners, and then form girls-only groups. I asked them about this privately, and they confessed to being more comfortable working with each other than with boys. A couple of these girls claimed to be shy, but many students, boys or girls alike, can and do overcome their shyness and become more relaxed about finding a partner in class when prompted.

In the class in question, because there were not enough boys, I chose to ignore the girls’ cold feet in order to see how they would perform when giving their second oral presentation of the term, a 2-minute speech on a topic of their choice. I was curious to know if these girls’ past failure to interact with boys in class would affect their composure in front of the whole class.

When reviewing the video of the presentations after class, I observed that the girls who stuck to themselves turned out to be the ones who were the most nervous during the oral presentation, and I must say that theirs was the most unnatural presentation. There was no problem with accuracy or fluency; they simply were not as natural and comfortable as the other students.

Helping Boys and Girls Feel Comfortable With Each Other

To make the class more relaxed and friendly, whenever the girls go searching for male partners, I ask the students to welcome each other with some “sweet nothings.” When they are all seated, I then go round the class and get samples of what they have said. I get responses such as “He said my hair is pretty,” “She said my t-shirt is very cool,” “She said ‘nice watch,’” and “He said that I am very kind.”

I take it a step further by insisting that whatever the boys say should elicit a smile, and if the girls don’t smile, it means the compliment is not good enough. I remind the students who are particularly austere with their compliments that “You are very kind” is not so sweet because we are all kind human beings. This makes them work harder to produce comments that are more pleasing to the ear.

These strategies that encourage students to be friendly and comfortable with each other go a long way toward setting a positive mood in the classroom. Before any task is introduced, the students are already in a good frame of mind, and I could not wish for a better setting in which to introduce the day’s activity. A happy class is a fertile ground to grow the seeds of a second language.

Okon Effiong is a part-time lecturer at Kogakkan University, in Ise, Japan, and runs a small private language school in Hatano, Japan.
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These are hardly the comments I expected students to make about the instructors at the college where I taught—not our student-centered, multicultural teachers with master’s degrees. Last summer, as I was sitting in a preservice orientation program for new teachers, I realized that something very wrong was happening in some of our classrooms. Here we were as foreigners, as guests in this country, telling members of the local population that their traditions are backward, their understanding not quite modern or Western enough, their way of life draconian. In what role did the teachers see themselves when they made these comments? Were they proselytizers? Liberators? Imperial troopers?

At that moment, it became clear to me that in light of all the benefit, hope, and cross-cultural understanding that English language teachers bring to this country in terms of their teaching, there are other darker, more unpleasant truths about what takes place in classrooms here. This article examines the idea of necessarily incorporating target-language culture into English language teaching and suggests a better approach that teachers should take when teaching English in foreign contexts.

I begin by stating the obvious: Teaching is very much a human enterprise. As such, English language teachers throughout the world need to understand the delicate complexity of this enterprise within their particular teaching contexts. So many human characteristics are constantly at play in the classroom, including fear (of mistakes), hope (of acquiring a language for a better future), joy (at using the language correctly), anger (at misunderstanding the material), and confusion (with difficult or abstract concepts). As teachers, we ought to be sensitive to that reality and to the fact that much more is taking place in the classroom than simply the teaching of English.

The quotes at the beginning of this article speak to the dire need for TESOL professionals to be culturally sensitive to and respectful of the local contexts in which they teach. We are not proselytizers. We are not teaching to deconstruct students’ perception of reality. We are not here because we are

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**OUT OF THE BOX**

**Adopting an Intercultural Approach to Teaching English as an International Language**

By Sulaiman Jenkins

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One teacher suddenly said that she thinks Saudi girls are oppressed, spoiled airheads.

One student said something about the Prophet [praise be unto him] and the teacher said, “Who said God created the world?”

Miss X doesn’t like my perfume, which is Arabic, and every time I walk by she says I stink, even when I am not wearing it.

They must know, as we must know, that every country has different traditions, so we must respect each other without mocking. —Asadi, 2007

Yes, we have been offended by one of the teachers because she was talking about our lives and how we are miserable and deprived and we don’t have freedom like in other countries and we just care about our looks and we are shallow, and we don’t care about anything except money and being spoiled.
culturally superior. (I would argue that teachers who do feel like this ought to find another career; these feelings are completely antithetical to all that TESOL represents). From what pedagogical models do comments like these originate? What are the pedagogical benefits of forcing students to question their belief systems, of ridiculing them?

Statements about the necessity of integrating target-language culture into language learning contain (some) elements of plausibility. From a pragmatic standpoint, failure to understand some of the cultural influence on using English may inhibit learners from functioning and communicating well in an English-speaking country. But in analyzing this position, two critical issues emerge. The first relates to understanding the role of culture not within the context of a national or regional language but within the context of a global language that is spoken across linguistic and cultural boundaries (McKay, 2000). The second issue relates to the assumption that the target-language culture is necessarily desired and accepted by English language learners.

The Role of English as an International Language

English has become the gateway of access to technological advancement, scientific research and medicine, and business for many developing nations. As such, it has assumed features that need to be reanalyzed accordingly. In his analysis of international languages, Smith (1976) argues that they differ from national or regional languages in the following ways:

- An international language becomes denationalized.
- There is no necessity for nonnative speakers to internalize the cultural norms of native speakers.

- The purpose of teaching an international language is to facilitate the communication of learners’ ideas and culture in that medium.

The denationalization of a language indicates that use of the language has expanded beyond its national or regional boundaries, and it is used as a means of wider communication between members of different cultures. Within this framework, the more its use expands, the less connected it becomes to its culture.

Smith (1976) challenges the idea that the incorporation of target-language culture is a necessary enterprise when using an international language. Such incorporation in English language learning is a superfluous task when students are learning the language to function exclusively in local contexts.

And the incorporation of target-language culture is of little significance if students or institutions are explicitly learning the language to communicate first language (L1) ideas and culture. So for those who express the function of English in their society as a purely instrumental tool and medium of communicating L1 ideas and culture, as the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia has done, the incorporation of target-language culture is not desirable. Therefore, incorporating Western ideologies (about democracy, sexual orientation, legal systems, gender relations, religion, evolution, etc.) is secondary to the main objective: learning English.

Intercultural Approach vs. Bicultural Approach

Some teachers of English as an international language (EIL) working in foreign contexts assume that students want to learn more about target-language culture, perhaps based on the notion that language and culture are inherently wedded. Some even go so far as to believe that students are enamored with Western culture and readily accept all that the West represents. In helping teachers adopt the most appropriate approach, teacher educators need to think about the different views that language learners, governments, and institutions have regarding the relationship between language learning and target culture.

It is fitting to talk about these views within the context of Byram’s (1998) intercultural/bicultural paradigm. Byram presents two approaches to language learning. There are those who wish to learn the language and basic knowledge of the target-language culture without accepting or necessarily identifying with it. These individuals take an intercultural approach to language learning. Then there are those who wish to learn the language while simultaneously incorporating, internalizing, and acculturating to the target culture. These individuals take a bicultural approach to language learning.

For language teachers heading to foreign countries to teach English, it is essential to understand these two models and the implications that each may have in terms of teacher practices and learner outcomes. Assuming that every country, college, or classroom adopts one particular approach to language learning is highly problematic and may
We are not proselytizers. We are not teaching to deconstruct students’ perception of reality. We are not here because we are culturally superior.

result in teachers doing the very things that elicit comments such as those at the beginning of this article.

Adopting an Intercultural Approach by Default

Essentially, the least presumptuous, and thus most advisable, thing to do is to adopt an intercultural approach to teaching EIL in foreign countries as the default approach. Doing so will mitigate the risks of incorporating target-language culture when it isn’t desired and committing cultural infractions by presenting material or ideas that the local culture does not find culturally appropriate.

In adopting this approach, teachers must employ or be aware of key elements to be effective. Knowledge of the local culture is imperative. Even if teachers may not agree with certain practices or beliefs upheld by the local community, with this knowledge they should be able to discern the appropriate from the inappropriate and better understand the teaching context. This can be achieved by doing the following:

- learning about the function of English in the local community
- learning extensively about the culture to determine cultural (in)appropriateness
- developing materials (if none are available) or tailoring materials to be culturally appropriate and so that the local culture is represented

By taking these steps, teachers will be better equipped to serve people in various communities who choose to acquire English in order to help them achieve in their local context, and the teachers will be able to do so without compromising students’ self-perceptions. Sharing and exchanging cultures is beautiful; subordinating, criticizing, and patronizing students and their culture is heinous.

Adjusting to the Local Culture

Before coming to Saudi Arabia, I did a number of things to prepare myself for my journey to this foreign land, including a great deal of independent reading about the country’s culture. Being Muslim, I had a basic understanding of the fundamental issues, but nonetheless, Saudi Arabian culture is drastically different than my native U.S. culture. Doing this reading helped me gain a general understanding of what was acceptable and unaccepetable. After all, I would be a guest in this country. So, first and foremost, I would need to respect its customs, regardless of how I felt about them.

When I arrived in Saudi Arabia and began teaching, I noticed that the material students were learning was not entirely representative of their culture and some themes were culturally inappropriate. Because of some of the background knowledge I had gained about the country and the culture, I was able to supplement the material by including activities that were culturally safe and relevant. The result was that students felt much more comfortable in the classroom because they knew that their ideas and culture were welcomed, which ultimately would help them focus on the more important learning issues.

One of the ways in which I built rapport with students was to elicit from them—via discussions, videos, news articles—the topics that they want to talk about and the things that interest them the most. This strategy made English class a place for them to express themselves and talk about their issues. One student complained harshly about a teacher who did nothing but play American/Western movies in class (to many students’ objections), specifically mentioning a comedy targeted at American youth. He asked, “How could the college allow a man like him to be here?” The student was noticeably uncomfortable about the entire situation. Where was the learning opportunity for this student? How were his needs being addressed?

As teachers in foreign contexts, if we fail to adopt an intercultural approach, we run the risk of causing unnecessary pain and discomfort for students, especially if we have preconceived notions about their culture and beliefs. However, do not misconstrue the content of this article as suggesting that Western culture has no place in teaching EIL. Certainly there is no harm in learning about another culture. In fact, it is through this critical enterprise that important cross-cultural bridges are formed. However, teaching culture should be a safe and healthy, mutually beneficial exchange—not one that compromises students’ self-perceptions.

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Sulaiman Jenkins is the academic advisor at Golden Gate Saudi, a private educational consulting firm in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
How many times have we as teachers been confronted with lessons that, once implemented in the classroom, didn’t achieve what we had expected or wanted? I’d like to share with you a lesson that was successful, but only after undergoing multiple transformations based on my observation and my English language learners’ feedback.

In my first semester in a new teaching position, I was charged with teaching, among other texts, *Esperanza Rising*, Pam Muñoz Ryan’s (2000) award-winning historical novel for young adults, to second language learners in a beginning college-level academic skills program. What struck me immediately about this book was how engagingly beautiful the images in the text were—right on the very first page, the metaphors jumped out, drawing me into the story. All I could think was, “Wow, I want my students to enjoy the sheer sensory beauty of this narrative.”

My overarching instructional goal became to engage students’ interest in reading the novel by helping them notice and appreciate the figurative language that Ryan uses to tell her semiautobiographical story.

One of the books I read in graduate school, *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), discusses and categorizes broad figurative concepts of everyday language, thought, and action. With this in mind, I designed an activity—namely, a chart—that would help students identify the figurative language in the text that they were reading. The chart organized the metaphoric concepts into three groups: orientational (or spatial) metaphors, human-as-object or -animal figurative speech (similes), and object-as-human figurative speech (personification). I chose not to introduce the terms simile and personification, but instead let them emerge from the students themselves (and they did) as the activity unfolded. (Had these terms not emerged, of course, I would have introduced them at some relevant point down the line.)

**Actual Versus Expected Production**

So I gave the students their reading assignment, confident that they would be able to successfully identify and record the three types of figurative speech using the chart. Yet when they returned to class, many had not done the homework at all and those who had done it turned in long passages copied from the book that had nothing to do with identifying the figurative language in the text. The activity had failed miserably, and I felt miserable.

What I had expected was not at all what I got. As a result, I looked at the discrepancies between what the students actually had produced and what I had wanted them to produce, and decided to redesign the task.

**Maintaining the Learning Objective While Simplifying the Task**

I wanted to redesign the activity in such a way that the goal would be maintained. I still wanted the students to discover for themselves the rich imagery in the text, and I wanted the chart to help focus their attention on the language while they learned the plot, character, and setting indirectly. In short, I was committed to having the students notice the language and for the story to emerge from the images created by the language.

I redesigned the activity by including the page number where the students could find an example of the specific figure of speech (see Identifying Figurative Language in a Text). This scaffolding presented the learners with a puzzle to figure out while reading. The newly expanded chart gave them a more directed problem to solve by isolating the possibilities so that they could find the correct answers and be successful.

Off they went with the new and improved version of the initial task. Did it work? Sort of … but not really. That is, it did not work as smoothly as I had envisioned. The task was still not getting at what I wanted the students to notice and appreciate in the text.

**Controlling Frustration Through Modeling**

What’s worse, the level of frustration was mounting. To control the steadily increasing annoyance and disappointment—my own as well as the students’—I began to do the exercise with them. We read, identified, and discussed the various metaphors and figures of speech using the chart. We did this in small groups and as a class. During this joint problem-solving stage, our frustration began to wane—finally! The problem-solving puzzle kicked in, and we began to have fun with the activity.
and see the beauty of the written word. The students started to see the movement, colors, and shapes depicted in the language; they started to smell, hear, and taste the author’s descriptions. The book had come alive for all of us. Eureka! One of those longed-for golden moments in teaching had happened.

**Demonstrating an Idealized Version of the Activity**

It was during this successful phase that I showed the students my copy of the book. They passed it around and saw how I had done the assignment. They saw the way I interacted with the text not only by circling and underlining words and phrases, but also by putting comments and questions in the margins. This led us, as a class, to discuss the process of having a conversation with a text as one reads. We kept at it; we practiced and practiced some more, thus maintaining and enhancing the original goal of the activity. My help was needed only insofar as confirming that students had successfully identified the figurative language. The scaffolding process was giving way to independent competency.

One day, as we kept reading, one of the students discovered the central metaphor of the book—the phoenix rising from the ashes. He noticed it, identified it, and shared it with the class, and then we all discussed it.

At this point, I introduced a handout that I had prepared beforehand based on a myth that I had researched online. All of the students read it eagerly because they were curious and wanted more information that had come naturally from reading. We read about the myth and connected it to *Esperanza Rising*, to life in general, and to our individual lives specifically. Class was over in a flash. We were all thrilled, and I knew that the students were ready to really read and enjoy the images that enriched and explained the book’s plot and themes.

And this time they could and would do it on their own.

**Expanding the Task to Writing and Listening**

In the next class, a student handed me a paper and asked me to read the story she had written about her life. She told me that after our previous class she had read a story in a local English language newspaper about a woman from Brooklyn who, against terrible odds, was now completing her degree at a well-known college. My student reported that she had identified the phoenix-rising theme in the article and that this connection prompted her to write her own story for me to read. I distributed the news-

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**Identifying Figurative Language in a Text**

**Directions:** As you read *Esperanza Rising*, keep track of the figurative language Pamela Muñoz Ryan uses to make her story come alive.

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paper article for the contemporary issues component of the course, and we tied it to *Esperanza Rising*. For homework, the students wrote their own phoenix-rising stories, whether real or fictitious.

The students started to see the movement, colors, and shapes depicted in the language; they started to smell, hear, and taste the author’s descriptions.

Then another student connected the phoenix-rising theme to a historical event and another text, *In the Time of the Butterflies*, by Julia Alvarez (1994). This is a fictionalized story about the Mirabal sisters in the Dominican Republic and their struggle to overthrow the dictator, Trujillo. The student not only prepared a packet of materials to educate me on the topic, he also gave me a DVD of the movie version of the book. I decided that we should watch the movie in class, so I asked him to prepare a handout with a comprehension question for each scene, which I then modified and added to.

At this point in the semester, the class had become a team—a learning community. Students were taking the initiative and contributing materials that connected texts and themes. We were organized and working toward a common goal.

The Scaffolding Process

As Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) explain it, scaffolding learning happens throughout the entire instructional process, from start to finish. It begins with selecting or receiving the learning objective, designing or choosing the task that best suits the learning point, and breaking down the task to isolate the parts that need to be learned so that they can be acquired successfully by students. The process continues in the classroom by engaging learners’ interest in the task and keeping them engaged, noting discrepancies between actual and potential task performance, and simplifying the task so that students can recognize these discrepancies.

The scaffolding process maintains the learning objectives while pushing the learners forward to the next level of potential competency, when mastery is obtained. The teacher’s role in this process is to reduce mounting frustration in the learning process and model idealized forms of the task.

These characteristics of scaffolding are not fixed (Johnson, 2004), nor is the process necessarily linear. Rather, the features move in and out when needed, and the process—dynamic and spiral—advances the learning to the next level once mastery of the new information and skills is achieved. Wood et al. (1976) have identified the teacher’s function in the problem-solving process: to keep learners motivated and engaged in the task that is created or selected to enhance the learning objective (“to lure”), to break down the learning process so that the end goal is recognizable and doable (“to coach”), and to confirm for learners when they are and are not doing the task correctly (“to confirm/check” output; pp. 95–96).

What is being described here is Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD), the didactic space between what a person can and cannot do on his or her own. Scaffolding, a notion within the ZPD construct, is a problem-solving mechanism (reflective, action oriented) that the teacher uses before, during, and after the task to ensure that students acquire the desired knowledge or skill.

Often the tension or discomfort arising from a mismatch between learners’ actual performance and teachers’ expected outcomes goes unrecognized as a productive, problem-solving moment in instructional practices. This occasion and the subsequent measures that teachers take (based on learners’ in-the-moment feedback) to modify the activity, either on the spot or later, is scaffolding and is the very heart of the teaching–learning process.

References


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Recently, when completing the application for a teaching position, I had to write a short essay answering the question “What qualities make an excellent teacher?”

My first reaction was that this was too broad a question to be answered in a few lines. But later, after writing many pages and then having to select the best parts for the application, I noticed that this reflection is a very good exercise that language teachers should do from time to time. I realized that my reflection isn’t the same as it would have been when I began teaching EFL in Brazil 9 years ago, and it is probably very different from what it will be after 9 more years of teaching.

Here is my current reflection:

Teaching has always been part of the world. From primates teaching their descendants the best hunting strategies to parents nowadays teaching their children how to behave at the table, everyone goes through life as a learner and a teacher. However, some people choose to go beyond this intuitive and natural teaching, fostering a career around the sharing of knowledge. These are noble individuals who do not feel satisfied simply having knowledge; their satisfaction comes from sharing their knowledge. Nevertheless, the beauty of such a profession notwithstanding, it is easy to notice among teachers different levels of excellence. With my teaching experience, I can see one characteristic that is crucial for excellent teaching: a constant and ongoing pursuit of a higher level of professional competence.

Teaching Competence

In the field of language teaching, the term competence has been thoroughly discussed, but the competencies I want to highlight are the ones discussed by scholars such as Perrenoud (1999) and de Almeida Filho (1993, 1999, 2006), that is, the teaching competencies. Whereas the former discusses teaching competencies in general, the latter has condensed language teaching competencies into five categories: linguistic competence, the knowledge of the language taught; implicit competence, which concerns teaching practices based on intuition and past learning experiences, guiding novice teachers in their first steps, and which should gradually be substituted with the next two competencies; theoretical competence, acquired through courses and the reading of specialized journals and books; applied competence, the ability to turn the theory acquired into principled classroom practice; and professional competence, the reflection and recognition of the role that one’s teaching plays in society.

The search for a higher level of linguistic competence is clearly the most basic for language teachers, and this can be achieved by constant study of the language taught—through books, grammar, dictionaries, Web tools—and by exposure to the kind of language needed by students. Language teachers, even those who are native speakers, should never take for granted that they know all the language they need to know and should, therefore, engage in a never-ending search for more knowledge about the language they teach.

Past experiences as a learner can bring some fruitful practice to the classroom, but a teacher trying to achieve excellence must progressively replace this implicit competence with theoretical and eventually applied competence. Taking specialization courses, joining communities of practice, presenting at and attending conventions, attending seminars and in-service sessions, and pursuing graduate studies—yet never leaving the classroom—are some of the ways to let theoretical competence supersede the teaching practices once driven by implicit competence. One must always remember, though, that doing all of this while not leaving one’s place in the classroom is the key to being a well-informed practitioner as opposed to a mere theorist.

Referred to by Brown (2001) as professional citizenship and discussed by Kumaravadivelu (2003) under the theme teachers as transformative intellectuals, professional competence should be the ultimate professional goal for teachers. It is this competence that leads teachers to reflect, recognize, and discuss the role that they—and their teaching—play in society. Excellent teachers know that teaching goes beyond the subject being taught and affects students’ lives, social and cultural beliefs, principles, and values. This is why excellent teachers are never content with their level of professional competence; it is what pushes them toward a deeper and more principled understanding of their practice.

Excellent teachers are never content with their level of professional competence; it is what pushes them toward a deeper and more principled understanding of their practice.

Building Rapport

Besides the five competencies mentioned earlier, I would also add inter/intrapersonal competence, that is, the ability of teachers to foster positive
and constructive bonds with students, parents, fellow teachers, and supervisors. Although it may seem obvious, it is still important to point out that the most crucial bond is the one between teacher and students, which can be forged through rapport.

Brown (2001) defines rapport as “the relationship or connection you establish with your students, a relationship built on trust and respect that leads to students’ feeling capable, competent, and creative” (p. 202). Rapport is, therefore, vital to creating a positive classroom climate, where students see the teacher as both an authority and a friend, and where the teacher and students treat each other as peers while maintaining respect and courtesy. When a teacher achieves good and positive rapport with students, friendship and cooperation will be some of the results harvested from that classroom.

Building rapport is not an easy task, though, and one must never take for granted that techniques used to build rapport with one group of students will work with every group. An excellent teacher ought to be sensitive to the need to change or adapt strategies in order to achieve rapport. Besides finding a balance between dull lenience and unnecessary strictness, a teacher striving for excellence should take other actions.

One such action is to personalize the teaching to students’ specific needs and interests; get to know students and then adapt the lessons to meet their goals and preferences. It is also essential to see each student as an individual, show interest in each of them, and overtly solicit and encourage their participation. Another important step is to value students by welcoming and respecting their input and giving individual and meaningful feedback on their progress.

Respect is also key to building rapport. Teachers who respect their students never expose them; these teachers focus classroom activities on cooperation rather than competition, and they create an enjoyable classroom environment.

Teacher as Learner

One additional step that teachers should take toward excellence is to see themselves as learners, too. With time and experience, teachers run the risk of seeing themselves as the source of all knowledge and may begin to believe that everything that they teach is learned. Prabhu (1999) goes so far as to claim, in the title of an article, that “teaching is at most hoping for the best.” In fact, teachers may even interfere with the learning if they focus on the teaching and forget that their role is to lead students toward learning. Thus, the most fruitful way of never disassociating teaching from learning is to always be in contact with both processes.

There are two dimensions to this argument. The first is that teachers who are constantly engaged in the pursuit of a higher level of teaching competence will always be learners and will more easily be able to put themselves in their students’ shoes.

This makes teachers better able to understand the learning process that students are going through.

In the case of language teachers, continuously engaging in the process of learning a foreign language is instrumental, for only this experience can give them a sense of the mental, psychological, sociological, and cultural struggles that language learners go through. This points to one of the advantages that nonnative-speaking (NNS) teachers have over native-speaking (NS) teachers. Although NS teachers may have been learners of other languages, only NNS teachers have had the firsthand experience of learning the language that they are teaching as a foreign language and, hence, can more sensitively understand the difficulties, doubts, frustrations, and barriers that naturally occur in this specific learning process.
No teacher will ever be fully competent, but this fact does not impede excellent teachers from continuing to search for improvement.

The second dimension is that of teachers seeing their own classroom as a learning environment for themselves as well as for their students. In other words, teachers should not consider the teaching–learning process a one-way road, with the teacher teaching and the learners learning. On the contrary, teaching and learning are multi-directional; the teacher teaches and students learn, but also students teach and learn from their peers and the teacher learns from students. Excellent teachers see themselves as mediators and facilitators of this complex process that flows in every direction. Teachers should be humble enough to accept that they can learn from their students.

What Is Excellence?

It is hard to define and conceptualize excellence in teaching. This is due to the fluid nature of such a concept. Excellence in teaching is far from being a recipe with clear steps that lead to a certain outcome. Rather, it is a goal that can never be fully achieved. No teacher will ever be fully competent, but this fact does not impede excellent teachers from continuing to search for improvement. In fact, quite the opposite is true—it motivates them. Pettis (2002) describes this notion quite well: “Just as adult ESL students realize that learning English is a possibly lifelong process, so too have I realized that the development of professional competence is equally long-term and ongoing” (p. 393).

The bottom line is that excellent teachers do not stop once they have attained a high level of the teaching competencies described earlier. They are willing and eager to continue striving for higher levels of those competencies.

References


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See also “Excellence in the ESOL Classroom” http://www.tesol.org/et/.
At times, a student in my classroom will trail behind his or her peers in understanding coursework or grasping new concepts. Distinguisishing whether this occurs because the English language is new to him or her or because the student has a learning disability can be challenging.

When it comes to addressing the needs of English language learners (ELLs) who have difficulty in the classroom, a good starting point is to determine whether they have vision or hearing concerns before investigating whether they have other types of disabilities. Although some students may have multiple disabilities, others may be dealing with cultural or societal barriers. A number of barriers impede learning. This article presents various issues that need to be addressed when learners are struggling.

**Uncorrected Vision**

Identify uncorrected vision. ELLs may not have had their vision problems identified, corrected, or accommodated. A daughter of migrant workers may have repeatedly missed September eye exams because every year at that time she is harvesting vegetables. Or perhaps vision screeners have not received the training necessary to perform eye exams with nonnative speakers. As a teacher, you can request that a student receive vision screening if he or she missed it, and you can request that the exam be given in the student’s native language (L1). In some cases, learners who do not have L1 literacy skills will need to be assessed using picture tests instead of the alphabet.

Help learners obtain corrective lenses or magnification equipment. Some learners know that they have vision loss but may not have the financial means to pay for corrective lenses. A school’s special education teacher, organizations for the blind, service clubs, or independent living centers may be able to help learners obtain free or low-cost corrective lenses.

Other resources include the following:

- **Vision USA** ([http://www.aoa.org/x5607.xml](http://www.aoa.org/x5607.xml)) helps individuals in many U.S. states obtain glasses and provides information in both English and Spanish.
- **Lions Clubs International** ([http://www.lionsclubs.org/EN/content/vision_index.shtml](http://www.lionsclubs.org/EN/content/vision_index.shtml)) helps people in developing countries and the United States acquire eye glasses or magnification tools to assist in their learning.
- **Unite for Sight** ([http://www.uniteforsight.org/](http://www.uniteforsight.org/)) provides eyeglasses, vision surgeries, adaptive equipment, and volunteer opportunities for people worldwide.

Urge learners to wear their glasses or use their magnification tools. Some students, especially school-age learners, may refuse to wear their glasses or use their magnifiers because they are embarrassed by how they look or because the glasses are not comfortable. Remind students about the benefits of these tools and the importance of keeping track of and storing the glasses and magnifiers in a safe place when they are not in use.

**Hearing Loss**

Identify difficulties with hearing. A number of factors may cause hearing loss, and some are more prevalent among certain groups of ELLs. In some cultures, students may not be aware of the dangers of loud noises or may have been exposed to loud sounds, such as from farm equipment or gunfire in the case of war refugees. In addition, learners may have untreated ear infections because they were not able to access health care due to civil unrest, immigrant status, or lack of financial means to acquire health insurance (lack of vision screening is also common for similar reasons).

Students may say that they were tested for hearing loss when in reality they underwent an ineffectual hearing screening in a group setting where they were asked to merely raise their hand when hearing a single sound. Scheduling a complete and comprehensive hearing exam for students who exhibit signs of hearing loss may be necessary.

Help learners obtain hearing aids or amplification equipment. If students...
are identified as having a hearing loss that can be improved with hearing aids or amplification equipment (such as FM audio loops), then help connect them with individuals or groups that can help them obtain this assistive technology, such as organizations for the deaf, service clubs, community nurses, or a school’s special education teacher. Other resources include the following:

- Lions Club International (http://www.lionsclubs.org/EN/content/programs_hear.shtml) provides hearing aids, testing, and fittings for low-income people throughout the world.
- The World Hearing Network (http://www.thecni.org/hearing/world.htm) provides education, immunizations, ear surgery, hearing aids, and diagnostic equipment in developing countries.
- The Starkey Hearing Foundation (http://www.sotheworldmayhear.org/) provides 20,000 hearing aids each year to low-income people throughout the world, with some support from Rotary clubs.

Modify instruction for all learners who may have hearing loss. Providing clear spoken and written instructions ensures that students with unidentified or unsupported hearing needs can still have access to lessons. Have those with identified hearing loss sit in the front of the classroom. Speak in a natural, strong, clear voice, and be sure to provide extra visual support. Make sure that you face learners when speaking and that there are not strong lights behind you or strong shadows in front of you. Pair students so that the student with hearing loss can ask clarifying questions and receive notes about the lessons from the other student.

Interrupted Schooling or Cultural Assumptions That May Present Barriers

Help students attend school regularly. Many students may not have been able to attend school consistently in the past. They or their family members may have been preparing to immigrate to a new country, or perhaps the students had to work or take care of family members. If learners have had interrupted schooling, meet with them and their parents or other family members to ensure that these students attend school regularly. You may have to point out to some learners that school is not canceled when it rains or when there is light snow. And some students may not be familiar with school systems that penalize students for missing classes. Realize that some learners may need to start at a lower level to build the necessary foundation.

Determine whether academic content is too challenging or overwhelming because of learners’ different cultural knowledge. Consider asking a professional who is familiar with both the learner’s linguistic and cultural heritage and the challenging academic material to assess the student. In the case of a very young student, he or she might not even consciously know that there is a culturally based learning barrier. Lessons may not resonate because the student doesn’t eat the same foods, use the same expressions, or play the same games that are presented in a lesson. The learner may be bewildered by long division because the U.S. system of long division is different from the system used in other countries. More often than not, the learner and teacher won’t even be aware that different cultural assumptions are operating in the classroom.

Learning Disabilities

Find out if students had trouble learning their L1. It can be helpful to know whether students had trouble learning how to speak, read, write, and understand their L1. Usually students who had such difficulty
It needs to have been professionally translated into the learner’s dominant language and normed with learners who share the same language and cultural background. For example, if a test has been developed for students from Spain, then it will not necessarily work with a learner from Mexico. It is also necessary to make sure that the assessment instrument has been normed with learners in the same age range as the learner you’re trying to assess. The local university’s special education or bilingual/TESOL department may be able to help find an appropriate test instrument.

Determine who is the best person to communicate with learners and their families regarding the learning disability or potential disability. Many ELLs and their families are unfamiliar with the concept of learning disabilities. They may come from cultures in which society does not recognize nonapparent disabilities. Or they may equate learning disabilities with more significant cognitive disabilities. It is important to find a professional who understands the home culture and is able to communicate with the family regarding learning disabilities and to liaise with the teaching staff regarding relevant concepts to promote understanding.

Determine the best language to use to assess learners. Bilingual or ESL/EFL staff and special education staff should meet to decide together whether learners need to be assessed and which is the best approach to take. Students may speak two or three languages, one of which is stronger or more dominant than the others. For example, students who spoke Russian at home but Latvian in the community may have come to the United States and found themselves using English more than the other two languages.

Find an instrument that is appropriate for each learner. It is not sufficient to merely translate a test instrument into a learner’s dominant language. It needs to have been professionally translated into the dominant language and normed with learners who share the same language and cultural background. For example, if a test has been developed for students from Spain, then it will not necessarily work with a learner from Mexico. It is also necessary to make sure that the assessment instrument has been normed with learners in the same age range as the learner you’re trying to assess. The local university’s special education or bilingual/TESOL department may be able to help find an appropriate test instrument.

Locate a test examiner who has the language skills, cultural knowledge, and educational training necessary to assess the learner. It is important to find a test examiner who has the cultural and language skills as well as the educational preparation and training necessary to assess the learner. The test examiner needs to understand the learner’s culture and speak, read, and write the learner’s dominant language. The test examiner must know how to administer the test instrument. It is not satisfactory to merely hand the test examiner an examiner’s booklet.

Develop a plan to assist learners with identified learning disabilities. Legally, in the United States school-age ELLs who have disabilities need to receive English language instruction in addition to special educational services. The challenge is to make sure that they receive both sets of services. ESL/EFL teachers may need to learn how to help students with learning disabilities, and teachers with learning disability training may need to learn language instruction methodologies. In other countries, learning disability services may be minimal or unrecognized, or the term learning disability may be used to describe more significant cognitive disabilities. Many of the classroom modifications and remedial tutoring to be used with students with learning disabilities can be obtained online and from clearinghouses on the topic, and they can be implemented without the need for many extra or hard-to-find resources. The following are some organizations to start with:

- The Australian Learning Disability Association (http://www.adce.edu.au/oao/) provides information and resources to people with learning disabilities.
- The British Institute of Learning Disabilities (http://www.bild.org.uk/) publishes a range of books, journals, and training materials.
- The Learning Disabilities Association of America (http://www.ldanatl.org/) offers information and referral services, advocacy, research, education, and collaborative initiatives.
- The World Dyslexia Network Foundation (http://web.ukonline.co.uk/wdnf/) provides a forum for sharing information and international contacts.

Check at regular intervals to make sure that the plan is helping the learners. Because so many issues impact ELLs with learning disabilities, educators serving these students need to check that progress is being made.

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Readers theatre (RT) has been defined by many authors in various ways. For example, Routman (1991) defines it as “creating a script from a narrative text and performing it for an audience” (p. 68), Sloyer (1982) defines it as a specific reading interpretative activity, and Shanklin and Rhodes (1989) define it as a technique that involves turning a story into a script for reading aloud. Regardless of the specifics of the definition, RT generally has five basic characteristics:

1. There is selective and limited use of scenery and costumes.
2. Voices, retrained gestures, and facial expressions project the mood.
3. A narrator usually describes the setting, action, characters, or mood.
4. Readers use a physical script.
5. Effort is made to develop a close relationship between the performer and audience.

RT is fairly easy to implement in class because of the following key features:

- no full costumes
- no full stage sets
- no full memorization

RT provides richness and energy in the classroom because students are experientially involved in performing a piece of literature. They realize that the problems and situations that the characters experience may be similar to their own real-life circumstances. As a result, students become engaged and develop a sense of investment in the lesson because they are not only reading an assignment, they are also performing the assignment through interpretation of the characters. It is also energizing for the teacher to watch students read, interpret, and perform literature, knowing that they are holistically involved in the process of learning.

Problem-based learning (PBL) is a curriculum model that emphasizes the effective use of task-based problems to engage students in active and multidisciplinary learning. It presents
a problem as the starting point of inquiry and helps students learn how to solve problems that are ill structured, open ended, or ambiguous. PBL engages students in intriguing, real, and relevant intellectual inquiry and allows them to learn from these life situations (Barell, 2007). PBL emphasizes real-world challenges, higher order thinking skills, interdisciplinary learning, independent learning, information-mining skills, team work, and communication. PBL is a powerful tool that can be used to encourage English language learners to negotiate task-based projects in English.

The Study
I introduced RT to a class of Japanese students studying intermediate-level English in an international university in Japan. In Intermediate English 1, students study how English is used to communicate ideas about global issues, and the content focuses on environmental topics. The class in question consisted of 20 students around the ages of 18–20 whose average TOEFL score was approximately 450.

The students in this class generally experienced difficulty with reading and understanding the prescribed English comprehension passages extracted from various Web sites on environmental issues. There were too many new words for them to handle. They also felt that the text did not allow them much opportunity to practice their spoken English in class. The course’s attention to detail and analysis of word usage gradually led students to become slow, passive, and dictionary-dependent learners. I introduced RT to motivate these EFL learners to appreciate English texts and to help them gain enough confidence to discuss the topics they had read about.

Method
The following is the first reading passage that I assigned to students.

Kyoto is well known for its historical sites and cultural centers. However, the city council wants to “modernize” the city but needs to develop a new environmentally friendly power station. There are several groups in Kyoto (city council, developers, residents, environmentalists, entrepreneurs, historical societies, and farmers) that may agree or disagree with the plan to build a power station. Suppose you belong to one of the groups. How would you voice your arguments to support or oppose the plan?

I pretaught the pertinent vocabulary and then had students read the passage individually and discuss their responses to the topic in groups. After they had gained sufficient background knowledge of the topic, I put the students in groups of three or four. I then assigned the task of writing a script on the topic that should be guided by a problem-based scenario.

Students had to write a script of at least one page that involved at least four of the groups mentioned in the excerpt in order to portray these groups, their main arguments, and all possible responses to the construction of the power station. After they finished writing their scripts, they read and rehearsed their roles. When they performed their scripts, I recorded their performances using a tape recorder.

Data Collection
I then administered a survey to assess students’ response on the RT activity using a problem-based scenario approach. A majority of students in the class enjoyed the activity and commented positively about their experiences, as is evident in the following responses:

I enjoyed this activity because speaking English is so interesting for me. But sometimes it is difficult for me to express my ideas in English. So I need a lot of times to practice speaking English. That is why this activity is important for me.

I enjoyed this activity because I could write the script by myself and also act. I think its good for us to improve our English skills like writing or speaking. We have to practice the pronunciation more, so this activity is good. If I have an...
I want to speak more clearly. I had a very good time.

This activity was very interesting for me because I could understand what my friend thinks about the environment. We became more friendly to each other after the lesson. I think English class should be like this. I want to use English to communicate with my friends from now.

I find it difficult to speak about environmental issues because it is difficult for me to use English in my daily conversation. I want to improve my speaking skills!

However, several students did not respond favorably to the activity. Some felt that the activity was good but acting out the script was not interesting because they felt that everybody merely read the script. These students preferred to perform without reading the script.

Benefits of Readers Theatre

Using a problem-based approach with RT enhanced the oral skills of these Japanese EFL learners. They learned to experiment with their voices by varying their pitch and volume while portraying characters during rehearsals. RT enabled them to concentrate on the elements of voice that carry meaning, for example, accelerating and raising the pitch to suggest excitement. They paid more attention to their articulation of words, especially when they were rehearsing their scripts and even more so when they knew that they had to act out the scripts for an audience.

The students learned to deliver smoother speech, with little pausing or searching for words, because repetitive rehearsals of the script increased comprehension as well as fluency. As they rehearsed their scripts, they also learned to use tone to portray the attitude of the character.

RT also renewed the students’ interests in oral reading. They were keen to develop oral fluency because they recognized the need for improving this skill. RT removes traditional boring reading practices, such as mechanical word calling, and enables students to use oral reading to perform. Hence, they gain self-confidence in their spoken English.

Finally RT helped students appreciate expository text. Previously, students found expository texts uninteresting and irrelevant to their lives. They could not really identify with the topic due to insufficient vocabulary and lack of background information. But RT overcame this obstacle and generated quite a bit of discussion in class. However, it is important to keep in mind that RT isn’t right for every situation, particularly if students have no familiarity with theatre as a genre or lack the linguistic ability to produce their own scripts. But when conditions are right, a class of language learners can truly benefit from this method.

References


Web 2.0, which is omnipresent lately, provides a contemporary platform for effective learning. In this article I describe how some free Web 2.0 applications can be used effectively to create a virtual language learning environment.

**Learning in a Contemporary Way**

*Flickr* (http://www.flickr.com/) is a photo-sharing Web site that you can use to make your photos available online and organize them in different ways. It caters to photo aficionados and hosts a large number of amateur as well as professional photographs, which you can browse through and perhaps use to add color and life to projects or worksheets. Many pictures are licensed with a Creative Commons license, which means that you can use the photos freely under certain terms (e.g., by quoting the owner’s name). On the Creative Commons site (http://creativecommons.org/) there is also a search engine that can be used to search for photos that have a Creative Commons license.

There are many ways to use *Flickr* in the classroom, including having students create a story or a picture dictionary with a set of pictures taken from the site. You can provide students with a set of pictures that you have already chosen, or students can search by themselves for, say, five photos in a certain category. In the latter case, it is a good idea to set a limit on the amount of time students can spend searching.

**Bringing Authenticity Into the Classroom**

*PollDaddy* (http://www.polldaddy.com/) is a free Web site that lets you author and edit online surveys and polls; store them in your *PollDaddy* account; and post them on your Web site, blog, or social network profile. Polls and surveys reflect daily life by showing students how to use and interpret surveys. *PollDaddy* can teach students to read news sources critically by having them report the results of a survey that they have conducted. This is a skill that they often need later in life when, for example, they have to give a business report or speak about statistical news items.

**Reflecting the Students’ World**

Videos from *YouTube* (http://www.youtube.com/) can be used in the language learning classroom as well. On *YouTube*, you can see firsthand accounts of current events, find videos about special interests, and discover funny videos. It is easy to upload your own videos, and many students already know how to do so. In fact, young people are so familiar with *YouTube* that some media reports suggest it has become a real alternative to TV in their world (*Online video*, 2006).

*YouTube* videos can be used like regular videos or DVDs, and there is a wealth of them available. Some of the videos, especially the ones from news sources, are extremely useful when trying to find content for a particular topic, such as elections or problems facing teenagers.

You can use videos to stimulate classroom discussion on cross-cultural issues, incorporate them into a warm-up activity that introduces additional topics, and so on.

If you have broadband Internet access in the classroom, you can access short news reports and discuss them in class. For example, the ABC News report on young Syrians (http://youtube.com/watch?v=Fi_z tlnmmNQ) is a short interview with three Syrians about the United States and stereotyping. As a follow-up activity after watching this video, students could find videos on a similar topic and present them. You could also use the public service announcement on inhalants (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSWt8UMRsDy) to stimulate discussion on the topic of drugs. As a
follow-up activity, students could research related Web sites.

**Sharing Written Content**

Blogs and wikis have been around for a number of years, and their popularity is only increasing. Blogs, which are easy to set up, are Web pages on which people usually publish regularly about topics that interest them. Wikis are Web pages that can be edited and shared with a group of users, writers, and editors (e.g., *Wikipedia*, [http://www.wikipedia.org/](http://www.wikipedia.org/)). Both tools can be used productively and receptively.

Blogs can be used in the classroom, for example, to document or record recurring events, such as field trips or book reports that students present in class. Blogs may also facilitate teacher–student communication and serve as a means of keeping parents informed about classroom events. You can also have students read and rate blogs from different news sources, such as the BBC or *The New York Times*.

Other resources that can be incorporated into your lessons are the free online wikis that are designed for educational purposes (e.g., *Wikispaces*, [http://www.wikispaces.com/](http://www.wikispaces.com/)). When working on a given topic (e.g., art of the 20th century, religions of the world), you can set up a wiki in which students work on different subtopics in groups. For example, one group works on pop art and another works on surrealism. You can also use wikis to share lesson plans with students and other teachers. A good example of this is *Wikigogy* ([http://wikigogy.org/](http://wikigogy.org/)).

Besides providing easy ways to create Web pages without technical knowledge, blogs and wikis are good for teaching students about editing and rewriting. I generally find that students are more careful when they consciously write their daily journal entries for an online audience. And in terms of teacher professional development, wikis are great for technical documentation or if you work on a collaborative research product and wish to present the results at a conference.

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**PollDaddy**

*PollDaddy can teach students to read news sources critically by having them report the results of a survey that they have conducted.*
Animating Your Voice

Vokis (http://www.voki.com/) are little avatars or animated characters that you create, customize, and equip with your own voice. You can customize your voki to look like you or take on the identity of various characters—animals, monsters, anime characters, and so on. Vokis also can be used in an educational setting. For example, in Voices of the World (http://votw.wikispaces.com/September’s+Task), a project for young learners from around the world, students are asked to create a voki and then use it to say hello in their native language. You could also have students create vokis to introduce each other at the start of a new school year.

Reusing and Sharing Materials

Moodle (http://moodle.org/) is a powerful learning management system, or course management system—a free, open source software package designed to help educators create effective online learning communities. With Moodle you can do the following:

- **Create a virtual classroom:** You can use the integrated forum and messaging system for easy communication among teachers, tutors, and students. For example, you can see students’ profiles, track their activities, and communicate with them through various channels.
- **Manage content:** You can upload various files (e.g., documents, audio, video) and arrange or display them to suit your course. You can also have students upload their work.
- **Create tests and assignments:** You can incorporate electronic tests, which can be graded automatically, as well as exercises created using Hot Potatoes (http://hotpot.uvic.ca/), which can be imported and used for testing purposes.
- **Display podcasts:** The Remote RSS feature allows you to display podcasts so that students can differentiate their own learning according to their levels of study. An advanced student may listen to a general Voice of America podcast while an intermediate student listens to a Voice of America Special English podcast (http://www.voanews.com/english/podcasts.cfm) in which the speech is slower than native-speaker speed.
- **Insert Web content:** You can have chats, insert Web links, embed vokis and YouTube videos, and display directories of different reading materials categorized according to level.
- **Protect your content:** You can use integrated wiki and blog functions in a protected environment without having to worry about unwanted users manipulating them or writing spam comments.

Moodle helps manage students’ learning and organize materials and communication in one place. If used well, it can engage all four competencies: writing (wiki, blog, forum, chat), reading (course materials, forum, wiki), listening (podcasts, integrated MP3 player), and speaking (audio forum, vokis).

Although there may be some disadvantages, such as more work initially, I think that the advantages of using Web 2.0 technology in the language classroom outweigh the disadvantages and that it is well worth looking into some of these applications in greater detail.

Reference


Martin Sankofi teaches EFL at a high school for arts and crafts and fashion in Vienna, Austria.

Besides providing easy ways to create Web pages without technical knowledge, blogs and wikis are good for teaching students about editing and rewriting.
As a new teacher working with lower performing ninth-grade Israeli English language learners (ELLs), I was looking for that one particular tip or strategy that would improve their fluency levels in reading. These were borderline students who had been constantly exposed to failure. They struggled to achieve set standards in reading skills and fluency, and as a result they had low self-esteem with regard to their ability to close the reading gap. Many of these students had poor reading strategies, and some were too intimidated to read even beyond the first few sentences of a given text.

I had preassessed their reading abilities orally using word and sentence lists. I began teaching lessons with the most logical starting point: the text. Many courses for students at this level often do not have relevant and interesting texts. Some texts are longer than necessary, so I felt it was necessary to simplify the existing text, find a more interesting one, or write a new one in order to facilitate the reading process for students.

Once they were given a reading passage, many of my students suddenly became passive. I gave them simplified exercises, easier language input, and a choice of graded exercises, but even with these solutions, I had limited success in improving their fluency levels. My goal was to choose a text that was both motivating and readable and would ultimately help increase their fluency. Keeping in mind issues of motivation, particularly at this age group, I learned that the right text can facilitate vocabulary learning and comprehension, which are the necessary ingredients for improving fluency.

So the question was: How could I and the ELLs in my class manipulate the text in such a way as to improve fluency levels in reading? I found the following tips helpful.

### Tip 1: ELLs Need Shorter Texts With Known Vocabulary

The role of vocabulary knowledge is crucial for helping ELLs develop fluency (Barone & Xu, 2008). Choosing texts for practicing fluency should take place once students have already managed to read the targeted words with greater understanding; the focus on developing fluency involves practice with easy texts in which all the words are familiar. As Barkon (2007) points out, in the early stages of teaching ... reading, learners are learning to read not reading to learn. In other words, they are learning how to identify words automatically, accurately and rapidly. To that end they need practice with easy texts where all the words are familiar so that they can develop sight vocabulary. (p. 21)

If texts or passages initially appear too difficult for ELLs, the teacher can facilitate fluency by reworking the structure or vocabulary of the text to increase active practice. As a prereading activity, I often encourage students to make predictions about the text based on the target vocabulary. Teachers should expose students to all types of texts, including shorter varieties such as dialogues, songs, poems, advertisements, and greeting cards. Teachers should also preview text structure to aid ELLs in overcoming challenges related to comprehension (Barone & Xu, 2008, p. 148). Here are some recommendations for working with texts when teaching lower performing ELLs:

- Texts should be on motivating topics that relate to students’ background knowledge.
- Language structure, syntax, and semantics should be simplified.
- Teachers should provide sufficient vocabulary preparation prior to having students work on the text.
Struggling English language learners need a variety of exposure to and practice with texts that are motivating if they are to become fluent readers.

• Teachers can rewrite difficult sentences to make them less ambiguous.
• Teachers should link reading tasks with at least one oral activity such as echo or repeated reading.
• Texts should be accompanied by glossed words in an easy-to-understand context.
• There should be a 50-50 balance between texts and activities.
• Teachers should identify different reading strategies needed for various text types.
• Teachers should develop pre-, during-, and postreading tasks.

Tip 2: Preteach Vocabulary

Because ELLs, particularly those in general education classrooms, are expected to read information relatively fluently, teachers need additional classroom procedures that help them attend to student comprehension and development of vocabulary (Barone & Xu, 2008). As a prereading activity, teachers should preteach vocabulary while taking into account the students’ background knowledge. For some ELLs, however, teachers may need to provide additional vocabulary instruction.

High levels of reading fluency imply that ELLs can tend to lexical, semantic, background, and textual knowledge. But teachers may need to ease at-risk or struggling ELLs into acquiring such knowledge by providing additional vocabulary reinforcement. Teachers can help these students develop fluency by engaging them in a variety of skills, both global (the meaning of a whole sentence or paragraph) and analytical (breaking a sentence down and analyzing it), when engaging in prereading activities such as presenting a list of words or brainstorming around a word.

Tip 3: Exploit the Text

Day (1994) points out that the appearance (layout, print, and type size) of the reading passage affects readability. Although many texts appear overcrowded in terms of the information presented and the layout of that information (e.g., font size, organization of text), which can demotivate ELLs, teachers can do several things to alleviate any interference with comprehension:

• Keep the number of lines to a minimum to facilitate reading speed.
• Number the paragraphs to help ELLs find information more quickly.
• Subtitle the paragraphs to help organize content.
• Make the font clear and attractive.

If texts are not exploitable due to their thematic, lexical, syntactic, and structural appropriateness, they may not enable the teacher to accomplish the objectives of the reading lesson.

Tip 4: Use More Open-Ended Questions and Activities in a Differentiated Instruction Framework

As part of a differentiated instruction framework, teachers can provide two options for assigning tasks after their initial input to the entire class. The first option is quanti-
successful literacy instruction” (August & Shanahan, p. 4). Therefore, teachers of ELLs should use oral instruction to teach text-based skills.

Oral instruction has four main purposes: to introduce; to reinforce; to use; and to bridge the gap in order to work on sound, word, or text elements (e.g., a sound–letter correspondence, a word, a sentence or paragraph of a text). Teachers should link oral instruction with other aspects of the reading lessons. For example, if a teacher’s primary focus is to teach the word core, he or she can present the word orally before students get to the stage of reading it in a text.

By connecting the oral and written contexts of targeted vocabulary, students have more chances to understand the targeted words that they will later read in the text.

**Tip 6: Maximize Classroom Time for Consolidated Presentation and Practice**

Practice should focus on global and analytical elements of reading, and teachers need to target elements of speed and accuracy in fluency-based activities as they read connected text. “Teachers can also support students in developing reading fluency by having them reread text [that is] at their independent or instructional level” (Barone & Xu, 2008, p. 205).

Consolidated presentation and practice are needed for ELLs at the K–2 level to develop literacy. Learners are said to be fluent when they can successfully implement their knowledge of reading skills and strategies. The following are characteristics for teachers to look for in terms of identifying ELLs’ fluency based on their reading performance:

- The student can understand the main idea of a text with minimal assistance from the teacher or learning tools.
- The student can partially understand a text, but words sometimes interfere with understanding.
- When asked about the main idea of a text, the student can manage comprehension of isolated sentences and offers responses that do not accurately reflect deeper reading.
- The student needs a glossary to check comprehension of vocabulary words.

Producing words and sentences using fluency-based activities

- timed readings on both word and sentence levels
- 10–15 minutes of sustained silent reading
- choral reading and echo reading

Struggling ELLs need a variety of exposure to and practice with texts that are motivating if they are to become fluent readers. Meaningful vocabulary and comprehension activities complement the text such that students can actually become motivated and engaged. Providing a choice of materials has important implications for giving ELLs the tools necessary for becoming fluent readers. Students will eventually be able to read much more fluently if their teachers know how to reach out to them beyond the level of the text.

**References**


Dorit Sasson is an ESL instructor at the Community College of Allegheny College, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the United States.
Creating Meaning: Advanced Reading and Writing

While looking for a high-level reader for an advanced reading and writing class in my university’s intensive English program, I stumbled upon Creating Meaning: Advanced Reading and Writing.

This new book has eight high-interest chapters touching on relevant 21st-century subjects: relationships, innovators, natural disasters, roads to justice, crossing cultures, ethical and social issues, generations, and life online. The readings are authentic, and the authors have included writing tasks as well as critical thinking and discussion activities. At the same time, students are able to incorporate traditional academic rhetorical modes such as process, comparison, cause and effect, and argument, culminating with the necessary skills to paraphrase, summarize, document sources, and write a research paper.

Each chapter has three readings as well as chapter objectives. The readings are presented in a predictable format. For example, Reading 1 is preceded by previewing to give students an idea of what it is about; discussion questions that prompt students to predict the purpose and the main idea; the reading passage itself; and a comprehension check with questions about the main and supporting ideas. The chapters also include boxed sections called Reading Skills, Critical Analysis, Vocabulary, and Writing Skills, which are highlighted for each reading. The first reading in each chapter is followed by the second and third readings, and the writing focus, which appears at the end of each reading, introduces the rhetorical focus of the chapter.

Chapter 1, Changing Relationships: A New Definition of the Family, is one of my students’ favorites. It elicits much discussion in the classroom because it presents students with the many facets of what a family is today. An example is the Mr. Mom reading, which describes a single dad who stays home to raise his son. The statistics presented in this reading startled many of my international students: According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were approximately 143,000 stay-at-home dads in the United States in 2005.

Two of my students’ other favorites are chapter 3, Natural Disasters, and chapter 5, Crossing Cultures. Chapter 3 begins with a comprehensive reading on how global warming affects climate, plants, and animals and goes on to discuss melting ice, sea levels, and greenhouse gases. The second reading in the chapter discusses natural disasters and strategies for reducing catastrophes, and the last reading focuses on tornados. The first reading in chapter 5 presents the stages of culture shock, which hits home for my students because many are either experiencing culture shock at that moment or have experienced it recently. The chapter’s next reading highlights cross-cultural interaction among two Native American groups, and the last reading discusses Indian expatriates living elsewhere in the world and the cultural differences that they have encountered.

Finally, this book also contains a useful vocabulary index and appendixes on suffixes and prefixes.

Overall, Creating Meaning not only encourages students’ enthusiasm for reading, it also gives them much-needed tools on how to write research papers in future English composition classes at the university level.

José A. Carmona is the director of the Embry-Riddle Language Institute at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, in the United States.

Frontier House

In Frontier House, a six-part PBS documentary available on DVD and video, three families accept the challenge of living like pioneers in 1880s Montana in the United States. They give up cell phones, television, ready-made breakfasts, cars, iPods, make-up, toilet paper—any and all inventions developed after the late 19th century. They learn to build cabins, milk cows, raise livestock, tend gardens, and support themselves in a valley in Montana.

The series follows the Clunes, a family of six; the Glenns, a blended family of four; and the Brooks, a newly married biracial couple, as they face the challenges inherent in leaving a world of malls and condos for the frontier, where the nearest store is a day’s journey by horse. To succeed, not only must the families feed themselves, they must store enough food to sustain themselves through a harsh winter. After 6 months in Frontier Valley, historians evaluate each family’s food supply, their animals, and their homesteads. All three families realize that only one in three homesteaders succeeded in establishing a working farm long enough to qualify to keep the government’s land.

I have used this documentary successfully in two settings: an intermediate-level content-based culture course at a Korean university and a cultural series at a university in Indonesia. This documentary shows students how the American West looks, how 19th-century Americans lived, and what modern Americans think of their history and current society. Throughout the program, participants reveal their attitudes and opinions about the challenge itself, the role of women then versus now, marriage, divorce, education, childhood, racism, parenting, health, loneliness, and competition.

*Frontier House* presents some paradoxes of U.S. culture, such as the values of self-reliance and interdependence. And there are many questions you could ask to stimulate discussion with students: Which era in your country’s history would you like to live in? Who in your family would want to participate in such a challenge? Who wouldn’t? Why? What is essential to a good marriage? How much should children work? The program also has a companion Web site (http://www.pbs.org/wnet/frontierhouse/) that offers more background information and lesson plans, which provide rich material for discussions.

The documentary’s recurring “Will the families succeed?” challenge provides an opportunity for me to introduce students to writing persuasive papers with a thesis, which is a new rhetorical style for them. I ask students to consider which family they think will succeed and to explain their choice with evidence. This assignment results in clear, well-organized papers.

Because *Frontier House* lacks subtitles, this documentary is most appropriate for students at high-intermediate and advanced levels. To ensure understanding, I summarize events before showing a clip and offer two or three questions that focus students’ attention. Additionally, before discussing any questions, I ask students to summarize the segment we have just seen and to list the events or comments that they found most interesting. *Frontier House* gives students a vivid picture of this era and its influence on Americans today.

Susan Kelly is a private tutor and studies law at Loyola University Chicago, in the United States.

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**From Home to School 1**

ESL students in family literacy classes are often overwhelmed by the issues their children face in today’s U.S. school system—issues such as testing, homework, and what to do when their children must stay home sick. *From Home to School 1* is targeted at these adult students and introduces a variety of subjects related to school life in a nontaxing manner.

*From Home to School 1* includes 15 narratives about school-related problems or issues that children face. In one story, the school nurse conducts an eye exam with a girl named Layla, who has had trouble with headaches and her eyes feeling tired. The nurse then speaks to Layla’s parents about taking her to an eye doctor. In another story, a boy named Max gets into a fight at school, prompting his mother to call the principal and discuss the troublesome student who started the fight. Some of the text’s stories present novel situations, such as the first day of school for a student from Mexico who does not yet speak English. Other stories deal with more routine dilemmas, such as waking up on time to catch the school bus or making sure students do their homework in the evening.

Prereading questions before each story help adult students relate the story to their own lives. Following each story, there are several related exercises to practice the story’s vocabulary and subject matter. The kinds of exercises used include cloze exercises, problem solving, and those that require students to check “yes” or “no” to gauge comprehension. Each story has dialogue practice that builds on the information presented and a related audio component that provides listening practice.

Within the 96 pages of *From Home to School 1*, students are exposed to a large number of topics that affect their children’s everyday lives at school. The stories serve as a great springboard for family literacy classes to discuss the U.S. school system, and they work well within the realm of survival subjects studied in many general adult ESL classes, such as health, money, and transportation. The practice exercises are structured and predictable, but at the same time they keep students engaged with the material.

The biggest complaint I’ve heard about *From Home to School 1* from teachers who have worked with it is that the reading level is too high for literacy-level students, even though the text is part of a three-part series written for literacy- to high-beginning-level students. That said, interested teachers should still consider what this series has to offer, which includes textbooks, workbooks, a teacher’s guide, and audiotapes and CDs.

Vanessa Caceres is a family literacy specialist for Fairfax County (Virginia) Public Schools, in the United States.
Considering the large selection of available reading and writing textbooks, finding a good one can be a difficult and time-consuming process. *Weaving It Together: Connecting Reading and Writing 3* offers teachers of intermediate-level ESL students an integrative approach to reading and writing and is based on the principle that good readers are good writers and good writers are good readers. Moreover, the book encourages students to discover the writing process through writing multiple drafts.

The content of the book is based on multicultural themes and is designed to engage a diverse population of ESL students. From superstitions to genetically modified food, this textbook offers an interesting selection of topics. The book is composed of eight units, and each focuses on the interrelatedness of the reading and writing processes. Furthermore, each chapter contains prereading, vocabulary building, comprehension, and discussion activities. The interesting prereading discussion questions prepare students for the text that they will read by activating their content schemata, a process believed to facilitate text comprehension.

Units 1–3 focus on composing the parts of an essay, beginning with a review of the parts of a paragraph—topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentences—and culminating with the composition of a whole essay, including a focus on composing the introduction and conclusion. Units 4–7 present a traditional approach to writing instruction and focus on the rhetorical forms of essays: descriptive, narrative, comparison, cause and effect, and argumentative. Unit 8 concludes the book with a focus on basic literary analysis and the composition of a poem and a story.

Accompanying the textbook is a series of CNN videos related to the vocabulary, activities, and topics presented in each unit. In conjunction with Internet-based activities presented at the end of each chapter, the videos provide opportunities to supplement textbook readings with authentic materials that provide additional writing opportunities for students. *Weaving It Together 3* also encourages the use of journal writing to promote fluency, to provide students with a medium for creative and personal expression, and to create opportunities for continuous assessment of skills that require focused attention.

The visual aspects of the textbook are especially appealing. The page layout displays a balance of text and white space, which allows students to take notes or create glosses in the margins. The font and pitch make the texts accessible to ESL readers, and the featured lexical items are highlighted using boldface type, drawing readers’ attention to key words in each chapter and facilitating comprehension.

Although *Weaving It Together 3* has many positive attributes, especially for students, it would benefit from providing feedback tools for teachers. It may be assumed that teachers know how to provide productive and constructive feedback, but occasional suggestions directly related to activities in the book would be helpful and would enable teachers to consistently refine and improve their feedback practices. Finally, students would benefit from the inclusion of tools that teach them how to incorporate teachers’ feedback.

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The 2009 TESOL Annual Convention & Exhibit

March 26–28, 2009
Colorado Convention Center
Denver, Colorado, USA

Forging New Pathways—For Everyone in the TESOL Profession

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**Job MarketPlace:** More than 50 recruiters from around the globe attend the Job MarketPlace to interview qualified candidates. Job seekers are encouraged to submit applications and schedule interviews prior to the convention through TESOL’s Online Career Center. For more information, visit http://www.tesol.org/jmp.

**Graduate Student Forum:** Sponsored by Brigham Young University, the Graduate Student Forum is a student-run 1-day miniconference that invites graduate students in TESOL teacher preparation programs to present papers, demonstrations, and posters. For more information, please visit www.tesol.org/GSF.

**Doctoral Forum:** Sponsored by the University of Texas at San Antonio and the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, this informal 1-day forum invites doctoral students to network with each other and with experienced TESOL researchers and educators to discuss their doctoral programs and dissertation research. For more information, visit www.tesol.org/DF.

TESOL Convention is Going Green

The number of Advance Programs that were printed was cut almost in half, which helped save 71 trees! TESOL has enhanced online resources to give you a one-stop shop for planning your convention experience. Visit www.tesol.org/convention2009 to find all of the following: downloadable Advance Program, registration and hotel reservations, itinerary planner, virtual exhibit hall, organizational meetings calendar, and tour information.

Important New Information About Registration and Membership Status

To access the online registration form, all registrants need to log in to TESOL’s Web site.

If your current TESOL membership expires before May 1, 2009, you must renew your membership to qualify for the member registration rate for the convention, or register as a nonmember.

Any issues pertaining to the current status of membership must be resolved before registering for the convention.

Your registration convention category must be the same as your current membership category.

For more information, go to www.tesol.org/convention2009

March 26–28, 2009
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What’s In a Name?

When TESOL was founded in 1966, the acronym “TESOL” referred to almost nothing other than that association. Type “TESOL” into Google today and you will receive almost 3 million hits coming from every corner of the world offering all types of education programs, publications, and credentials. The possibility of obtaining a trademark on “TESOL” disappeared long ago. What can be done to make TESOL, the association, stand out among a multitude of similar-sounding names?

The idea of modifying the TESOL name to emphasize its presence as a global professional community was first discussed in 2004. The topic was raised again by the Board in 2006, and in 2007 a consultant was given a contract to advise the Board on ways to make TESOL stand apart from all other organizations using “TESOL” in their names. The consultant’s report prompted the Board to appoint an ad hoc committee in 2008.

That committee recommended that the Board retain the prominence of TESOL in its name but consider enhancing the name in ways that would emphasize its nature as a professional association with a global focus. The committee also insisted that membership be educated and engaged on any enhancements to TESOL’s image, its ways of communication, or its name.

Please attend an open meeting in Denver, Colorado, USA, at the 2009 TESOL Annual Convention and Exhibit, to give your input on enhancing TESOL’s name.

Save the Date! Open Meeting
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Three Perspectives on Leadership

Views on leadership by three participants of the Leadership Mentoring Program

Just as taking a cruise is exciting because of the endless activities and adventures you can participate in, there is plenty to do when you embrace leadership roles: in front, behind the scenes, or in person. TESOL has it all—one-stop leadership shopping! Whatever your interests are, I encourage you to become involved with the organization as a future or experienced leader. The captain always needs a first mate and a crew.

By being a Leadership Mentoring Program participant, I’ve had the opportunity to shadow leaders in the field and develop my leadership skills. At the convention in New York, I was able to talk with new members and tell them what my experiences with TESOL have been as a student member. At the TESOL academy in Chicago, I assisted in the development and delivery of a highly attended workshop. A glossy travel brochure can convince you that it’s time for a new adventure. Let the TESOL Web site do the same! I encourage you to explore the site and submit a story or lesson plan to the TESOL Resource Center. A click of the mouse may welcome you to your new adventure. Come aboard . . . we’re expecting you!

Ayanna Cooper
DeKalb County School District
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

You know that feeling when you meet people you have synergy with, people who feel passionately about the same things as you do? It’s an amazing feeling. It’s a feeling that enveloped me when I stepped into the TESOL 2008 convention and, in doing so, stepped into a world of people who were crazy about the same things as I am . . . crazy and enthusiastic. I was home.

At the convention I received the TESOL Leadership Mentoring Award and met Dr. Suresh Canagarajah, who was to be my mentor. I could write an entire article just on the guidance and support that I am receiving from this wonderful mentor. I also met Ana and Ayanna, my fellow awardees, and we found out that we had an unbelievable opportunity to get and stay involved as potential leaders mentored by the first names in the field of TESOL—people who bring in years of experience and the warmth and willingness to guide us as we begin to find our niches.

If you are the kind of person who thrives on synergy and believes that active participation can lead to the changes you wish to see, then you should join the leadership efforts in TESOL. For starters, check out the TESOL Web site for leadership opportunities!

Rashi Jain
University of Maryland, College Park
College Park, Maryland, USA

It was only after joining the former NNEST Caucus (as of July 2008, we became the NNEST Interest Section) that I fully understood the meaning of the terms shared leadership, team leadership, mentoring, and collaboration. I used to believe that to be a leader, one had to be a visionary, someone who is charismatic, powerful, and inspirational. I know that for an organization or community to be effective and functional, it needs extraordinary individual leaders with those qualities, but I also learned that it needs people like me, who like to help, plan, and organize. Communities like TESOL need people who like to put things in motion, have strong communication skills, and are daring. In our organization, we need people who function as the architects, engineers, diplomats, firefighters, and philosophers.

As you can see, there are plenty of opportunities for involvement, even for someone like me, who would rather be in the comfort of her bed hiding behind a computer screen than center stage, directing the show. So in the spirit of promoting shared leadership, I invite you to join your unique forces to help TESOL grow, better serve the teaching community, and achieve distinction!

Ana Wu
City College of San Francisco
San Francisco, California, USA
EVERYTHING NEW IN THE TESOL BOOKSTORE

Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults
Global English Teaching and Teacher Education: Praxis and Possibility
Classroom Management (TESOL Classroom Practice Series)

Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults offers performance indicators, vignettes, and evaluation tools for instructors. The clearly organized components for these long-awaited standards will help instructors identify the qualities and practices to pursue in their teaching. The standards in this book address planning, instructing, and assessing as the basis for effective teaching. These standards can be applied to most settings with adult ESL and EFL learners and can benefit educators and administrators in teacher training programs, in educational programs, and in achieving professional development both personally and institution-wide.

Global English Teaching and Teacher Education: Praxis and Possibility, edited by Seran Dogancay-Aktuna and Joel Hardman, describes how today’s English language teaching goes beyond the norms of English spoken and taught in native-English-speaking countries. Contributors use field studies and research to examine the increasingly global role of English language teaching and teacher education. Contributions from countries all across the globe display a variety of historical and theoretical perspectives on the roles and status of differing Englishes across societies.

Classroom Management, edited by Thomas S. C. Farrell, is the first of 15 volumes in the TESOL Classroom Practice Series (Maria Dantas-Whitney, Sarah Rilling, and Lilia Savova, series editors). Classroom Management acknowledges the wonderful range of diversity that language teachers now face in their classes and suggests ways that they can facilitate language learning and development rather than just manage it. This volume offers language teachers many ideas for preparing, organizing, and conducting their lessons and for supporting student learning in a range of contexts.

Order at www.tesol.org/bookstore
Spotlight on TESOL Communities

Global Partners: Yakut TESOL and TexTESOL V

What does a Russian region settled by Cossacks in the early 17th century have in common with a region in Texas settled by cattlemen in the 19th century? Well, there are several parallels, including a dependence on horses for livelihood and survival. There’s the centuries-old struggle against extreme temperatures, albeit opposite extremes. The most recent connection, however, is a formal agreement between the TESOL affiliates of these two regions to work together for their mutual benefit.

A formal signing in Yakutsk, Russia, on July 14, 2008, cemented the partnership between Yakut TESOL and TexTESOL V. Don Weasenforth’s (past president of TexTESOL V) representation of TexTESOL V at the 2008 Yakut TESOL Summer Institute represented an initial step in fulfilling the agreement, and Larissa Olesova’s (past president of Yakut TESOL) attendance at the 2008 TexTESOL State Conference strengthened the burgeoning relationship.

TexTESOL V is one of five TESOL affiliates in Texas. Created in 1979, it is the newest one, serving ESL and bilingual education professionals in north Texas, including Dallas and Fort Worth. Among its many distinctions, it will host the annual TESOL convention in 2013.

Yakut TESOL became an international TESOL affiliate in 2002. The initiative to open an affiliate for English language teachers in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia, in Northern Siberia) came from Yakutsk State University’s Department of Foreign Languages in Technical and Natural Sciences. The affiliate has grown to more than 300 members from almost all educational institutions of Yakutia. It is organizing the English Summer School for June 2009 and plans to invite a TexTESOL V representative.

In addition to committing to the attendance of representatives at each other’s conferences, the agreement entails professional development for teachers in both locations, both on site and through communication technologies. Web-based collaborative projects connecting students in both regions have already begun, and a long-term goal is the establishment of student and teacher exchanges.

At the 2008 Yakut TESOL Summer Institute, Don provided workshops to Yakutia language instructors, focusing on the use of instructional technologies. Together, Don and Larissa—with a colleague in Washington, DC—implemented such a project last spring with a focus on global warming. All three instructors are again collaborating on a similar project, focusing on the U.S. presidential campaign.

Larissa met with TexTESOL V Board members and other ESL and bilingual education professionals in the Dallas/Fort Worth area during the 2008 TexTESOL State Conference this past November. From these meetings we hope the partnership will grow to benefit both TESOL affiliates. For more information, check the affiliates’ Web sites at www.textesolv.org and web.ics.purdue.edu/~lolesova/yakuttesol, or contact past presidents Don Weasenforth (dweasenforth@ccccc.edu) or Larissa Olesova (lolesova@yahoo.com).
The 2009 Board of Directors and Nominating Committee Slate

The 2009 Board of Directors and Nominating Committee slate shown below has been posted.


President-Elect, 2009–2010 (to become President, 2010–2011)
Brock Brady
American University
Washington, District of Columbia, USA

Christine Coombe
Dubai Men’s College
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Board of Directors, 2009–2012
Elke Apelbaum Savoy
New York City Department of Education
New York, New York, USA

Maria Estela Brisk
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, USA

Maria Makrakis
Ottawa Catholic School Board
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Anne V. Martin
Lyndon Language Consulting
Fayetteville, New York, USA

Dudley Reynolds
Carnegie Mellon University Education City, Doha, Qatar

Lynn Stafford-Yilmaz
Avant Assessment
Eugene, Oregon, USA

Nominating Committee (2009–2010) Representing eight major groups

Adult Education Programs:
Gretchen Bitterlin
San Diego Community College District
San Diego, California, USA

Miriam Burt
Center for Applied Linguistics
Washington, District of Columbia, USA

Affiliates:
Suchada Nimmannit
Chulalongkorn University Language Institute
Bangkok, Thailand

Bruce Rogers
Independent Materials Writer
Boulder, Colorado, USA

Caucuses:
Shondel Nero
New York University
New York, New York, USA

Karen L. Newman
Ohio State University Columbus, Ohio, USA

Elementary and Secondary Education Programs:
Margo Gottlieb
The Center, Illinois Resource Center Arlington Heights, Illinois, USA

Cheryl J. Serrano
Lynn University
Boca Raton, Florida, USA

Higher Education Programs:
Dwight Atkinson
Purdue University West Lafayette, Indiana, USA

Karen Stanley
Central Piedmont Community College Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Intensive English Programs (IEPs) and Bicultural Centers:
Fernando Fleurquin
University of Maryland Baltimore County, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

George Scholz
U.S. Department of State Cairo, Egypt

Interest Sections:
Ulrich Bliesener
University of Hildesheim Hanover, Germany

Pindie Stephen
International Organization for Migration Makati, Philippines

Researchers:
Neil Anderson
Brigham Young University Provo, Utah, USA

Tom Scovel
San Francisco State University San Francisco, California, USA

Member Directory Enhanced
A new search option has recently been added to the TESOL Member Directory. Members may now search for other members by area of expertise. This option may be used to find someone to use as a speaker, to write an article, to discuss a topic on an e-list, and so on. Members self-select what they view as their own areas of expertise. TESOL does not represent or endorse the accuracy, reliability, or quality of the information provided by members.

To use the Member Directory, log on at www.tesol.org (username is your ID number; password is your last name unless you have changed it), then click on Communities, and scroll to Member Directory. The Area of Expertise category has been added to the Search by Category section.

Online Courses & 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 online discussion. For more information, e-mail edprograms@tesol.org.
Collaborative Partnerships Between ESL and Classroom Teachers

Helping English Language Learners Succeed in Pre-K-Elementary Schools
Jan Lacina, Linda New Levine, and Patience Sowa, Editors

The authors present narrative vignettes, prereading questions, and end-of-chapter case studies to share the experiences of exemplary pre-K-elementary ESL and classroom teachers who regularly collaborate for educational achievement of English language learners.

Order No. 394, 189 pp.
Member US$19.95
Nonmember US$25.95

Helping English Language Learners Succeed in Middle and High Schools
Faridah Pawan and Ginger Sietman, Editors

This volume features an anthology of collaborative practices that meaningfully bring together the best of subject matter pedagogy with the core underlying principles of second language learning and teaching. It is an ideal resource for use in pre- and in-service teacher education programs.

Order No. 462, 206 pp.
Member US$19.95
Nonmember US$25.95

Ways to Order:
Online: www.tesol.org/bookstore, E-mail: tesolpubs@brightkey.net
Toll-free phone: 1-888-891-0041 (in United States).
Local phone: +1-240-646-7037 Fax: +1-301-206-9789
Mail: TESOL, PO Box 79283, Baltimore, MD 21279-0283

Order online at www.tesol.org/bookstore

TESOL’s Language Curriculum Development Series
Four Resources for Teachers of Adult Learners

Curriculum is what happens among learners and teachers in the classroom. TESOL’s Language Curriculum Development Series provides real-life examples of how curriculum has been created and revitalized to meet the evolving needs of English adult language learners.

Planning and Teaching Creatively Within a Required Curriculum for Adult Learners
Anne Barnes and Helen de Silva Joyce, Editors
Order# 400, List Price: $39.95
Member Price: $28.95

Developing a New Course for Adult Learners
Marguerite Ann Snow and Lía Kambhi-Stein, Editors
Order# 295, List Price: $45.95
Member Price: $34.95

Developing a New Curriculum for Adult Learners
Michael Carroll, Editor
Order# 545, List Price: $39.95
Member Price: $28.95

Revitalizing an Established Program for Adult Learners
Alison Rice, Editor
Order# 448, List Price: $39.95
Member Price: $28.95

Order online at www.tesol.org/bookstore
The 43rd Annual TESOL Convention and Exhibit

will be held in Denver, Colorado in the United States. The convention will take place March 26–28, 2009, in the Colorado Convention Center.

REGISTRATION
Registration opens on December 1, 2008
Registration Hours:
- Tuesday, March 24, 3 pm–6 pm
- Wednesday, March 25, 7 am–7 pm
- Thursday, March 26, 7 am–5 pm
- Friday, March 27, 7 am–5 pm
- Saturday, March 28, 7 am–3 pm

Preregistration is highly recommended to avoid long lines at on-site registration; it is also less expensive than registering on site. Preregistered attendees can pick up their Program Book, tote bag, and badge at the registration counters located on in the lobby of the Colorado Convention Center. TESOL convention badges must be worn at all times in the exhibit hall and while attending sessions. The fee to replace a lost badge is $25. Pick-up hours are the same as registration hours.

REGISTRATION COST
Full pre-registration is $295 for members and $510 for non-members.

HOTEL INFORMATION
Hotel reservations will be available beginning December 1, 2008. Check the Housing tab of the web site on December 1 for a complete list of hotels.

PRE- and POSTCONVENTION INSTITUTES
Pre- and Postconvention Institutes (PCIs) are practical workshops designed as professional development opportunities and are offered Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday during the convention. PCIs are ticketed events and require separate registration.

JOB MARKETPLACE
Recruiters and job seekers from all over the world meet at the Job MarketPlace to fill a variety of English language teaching jobs: long- and short-term; teaching and administrative; public and private; primary, secondary, adult, and higher education. The Job MarketPlace will be located in the Hall B1 at the Colorado Convention Center.

For more information check out:
www.tesol.org/convention2009