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As we continue to unwind from the whirlwind Denver convention, we are proud to bring you a selection of articles from authors around the world who write about myriad teaching scenarios, learning methodologies, cultural considerations, and insights about English language learners (ELLs).

• **Communities of Practice:** Judie Haynes discusses strategies for helping students become good readers through both whole-class instruction and individual practice. Linda New Levine points out the school principal’s make-or-break role when it comes to effective staff support and development. Debbie Zacarian reminds us that merely writing words on a word wall does not provide the modeling needed for ELLs to learn the vocabulary needed to understand a particular concept. Ke Xu reflects on the role that teacher development plays in preventing EFL teacher burnout. Alvino Fantini explores how to combine big-C and small-c cultural activities to more thoroughly explore culture. Dorothy Zemach discusses whether it is better to provide students with a detailed week-by-week syllabus or one that is more of a loose outline that can adjust to what is actually covered in class.

• **Out of the Box:** Connie Johnson discusses her involvement in a community initiative to help a school for the deaf optimize its Mexican Sign Language and Spanish instruction. Naomi Ono LeBeau focuses on how ELLs address their teachers and offers suggestions on how to bridge cultural gaps between students and teachers. Mayella Sarli describes what she learned about parents’ expectations of their children’s teachers when she took the place of a much loved and respected seasoned teacher. Yilmaz Devrim investigates beliefs about communicative language teaching among a group of novice and experienced teachers in Turkey.

• **Portal:** Heather Torrie and Michelle Fiorito explain how utilizing subtitled foreign films in reading classes provides opportunities for language development and richer engagement with cultural topics. Susan Kelly shares her beliefs about writing as a creative process and shows how she helps students translate their beliefs into successful writing. Katherine Powell and Cody Kalina interpret the connection of constructivism with second language learning and teaching. Robert Wyss discusses the use of digital storytelling as a way for students to tell their own stories and scaffold their oral production.

• **Reference & Resources:** Traci Palmer Baxley highlights the benefits of a book that could be a good choice for college-level ESL methodology courses as well as content area courses that incorporate strategies for working with ELLs. Jennifer Bishop reviews a Web site that offers various listening activities and discusses the use of self-directed learning in multilevel ESL classrooms. Bryan Woerner reviews a financial literacy Web site and offers ideas on using its resources with language learners. Heather Torrie reviews two storytelling Web sites that provide authentic listening material for her adult ESL learners.

• **Compleat Links:** Christine Krieser and Mindy Kalchman describe how they use students’ knowledge of the sounds in their first language to build vocabulary in English. Joep Van der Werff, Kristan Taylor, Luis Domínguez, Leigh Ann Thelmadatter, and Miguel Cabrera present their various perspectives on working in the field of English language teaching in Mexico. Chiu-Hui Wu investigates how immigrant students in the United States perceive their immigrant status and how it relates to their experience in U.S. schools. Betka Pišlar offers a creative idea for an integrated project that not only accomplishes language learning goals but also increases students’ environmental IQ. Richard Firsten revisits a question about countable and noncountable nouns, explains the difference between *How about you?* and *What about you?*, addresses other perplexing grammar issues, and serves up a new Brain Teaser.

We hope you enjoy this June issue and look forward to providing you with a dynamic final issue in the fall.

Eileen N. Whelan Ariza  et@tesol.org
Helping English Language Learners Succeed in Pre-K–Elementary Schools
Jan Lacina, Linda New Levine, and Patience Sowa

In this volume of the Collaborative Partnerships Between ESL and Classroom Teachers Series, the authors give emphasis to collaborative partnerships for elementary school students. This book shares the experiences of exemplary ESL and mainstream classroom teachers who regularly collaborate for the educational achievement of English language learners.

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Stephen Stoyanoff and Carol A. Chapelle, Editors

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Richard P. Day, Editor

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In 2006, the late TESOL President Elliot Judd gave a presidential plenary at the annual convention in Tampa. In his plenary, Elliot identified 10 attributes of professions and analyzed where TESOL—the profession—stood at the time of its 40th anniversary.

He highlighted the fact that a profession (1) has a body of knowledge, (2) has a prescribed regimen of licensing for members, (3) sets a code of ethics and standards, (4) has authority, (5) has autonomy, (6) has power, (7) has status and prestige, (8) is altruistic and serves the public, (9) is a full-time lifelong commitment, and (10) forms professional associations.

The first two—body of knowledge and regimen of licensing—stand out to me, and without them, the remainder don’t matter.

As a field, we have a body of knowledge that is continually growing, and researchers in the myriad areas of study are continually pushing back the frontiers of knowledge about language learning and teaching. Knowledge is disseminated in teacher education programs, through publications, and at conferences and meetings.

Regarding a prescribed regimen of licensing for members, we have a mixed record. There are many fine teacher education, certification, and licensing programs with very high standards. However, we also know that there are less-than-stellar programs promising to send their graduates into a world of fun and adventure teaching English around the globe. Sadly, there are language programs that will hire people with little or no training or qualifications. Too many people still think that if you know a language, you can teach it. We must find a way to disabuse others of this mistaken notion. We must find a way to take action, and I welcome your thoughts and ideas.

We can be proud of the spotlight that TESOL shines on the professionalism of our field. As I mentioned in my column in the March 2009 issue of Essential Teacher, TESOL’s position papers are respected as statements made by the profession, and they are highly respected by decision makers. My challenge to all members and TESOL entities still stands: Send me ideas and content for more position papers.

When we set high standards, we must live up to them. TESOL and its affiliates provide a multitude of opportunities through conferences, meetings, online courses, publications (books as well as serials), and ongoing professional discussions among members of interest sections. The online TESOL Resource Center is a growing source of new information, and contributions to this refereed repository are encouraged (www.tesol.org/resourcecenter).

As a profession, I believe that we have struggled with our identity because others haven’t yet accorded us the status we have earned. However, sometimes we may not be sure ourselves of our identity, or we may undervalue who we are and what we do. I would like us to challenge ourselves to drop a collocation that I have heard too frequently: “I just teach.” The subtle but powerful message that this statement sends to others denigrates who we are and what we do. To teach English well takes patience, fortitude, good humor, wisdom, and a great deal of knowledge about education, language, language learning, methodologies, culture, and technology. “I teach”—spoken with confidence and dignity, and without the apologetic just—is a powerful statement of our belief that education, and language education in particular, opens doors for students and makes the world a better place, and that is a lot to be proud of.

Mark S. Algren
President, 2009–2010  president@tesol.org
In the March 2009 issue of *Essential Teacher*, I discussed using the reading comprehension strategies of visualizing and making connections with English language learners (ELLs). Teaching these strategies helps to greatly support the most important skill of an effective reader: comprehension.

In my experience, it is highly motivating to tell ELLs, “This is what good readers do, and now you are going to learn how to do it, too.” As I stated in my previous column, ELLs also reap the benefits of participating in whole-class instruction while individually practicing with books that are on their English and reading level. In this column, I present two additional reading comprehension strategies that help ELLs become better readers: asking questions and inferring.

**Asking questions.** Good readers always ask themselves questions before, during, and after reading. For example, in a sixth-grade social studies unit about the U.S. Civil War, students were reading a nonfiction book, *The Underground Railroad* (Bial, 1995). The teacher, Mrs. Clark, questioned students about the term *Underground Railroad*. She modeled “I wonder” questions for them, for example, “I wonder why this family is running away? Were they afraid?”

Vanessa, an ELL in the class, wondered how a railroad could be underground. She knew the meaning of the words *underground* and *railroad* but had difficulty with the concept. By listening to the questions that other students asked and reading a nonfiction book at a lower reading level, Vanessa was able to understand much of the work in the classroom.

Students cannot ask questions about a topic for which they have no schema. Hyun Jae, another ELL in Mrs. Clark’s class, had only been in the United States for 9 months and had not previously been able to participate in the social studies class. At home, he read an entire book about the Civil War in his native language, Korean. In class he read an easier book in English on the same topic that his classmates were reading about: *Escape North! The Story of Harriet Tubman* (Kulling, 1999). This background information gave him a way to develop the schema that he needed to understand the activities and discussions in the social studies classroom.

The important point is that the ELLs in Mrs. Clark’s class were able to ask questions about the reading that were on the appropriate English language level for them. They were able to follow much of the class discussion and pose simple “I wonder” questions such as “I wonder why this family is running away? Were they afraid?” Also, the ELLs were able to participate because their teacher had made a point to teach her students about how to respond to “I wonder” questions. Hyung Jae and Vanessa were able to draw from her modeling examples.

Because many of her students did not have sufficient background knowledge about the Underground Railroad, Mrs. Clark worked with her class to develop a question web (a semantic web with a question in the middle). In this instance, the question was “What is the Underground Railroad?” She provided students with picture books and Internet resources. Using this information, they worked in groups to generate questions. At the end of the class, students brainstormed questions based on the information they had learned and posted them on the question web. As students began to find answers to questions, the responses were written on the answer side of the web.

ELLs need to know that good readers ask questions while they read. They need a great deal of support from the teacher and will be more likely to succeed with this strategy if they first read books and practice with a buddy or partner. ELLs may not be able to ask questions about
the author’s language or vocabulary in the same way that proficient or native English speakers can, but they can begin to question, and this habit will improve their capacity for understanding and thus support them in becoming more proficient readers of English text. It is important to emphasize with ELLs that they need to voice what they don’t understand and use reading strategies to figure out answers.

**Making inferences.** Good readers read between the lines. Much of what an author conveys in English is not directly stated; it is implied. ELLs need to learn strategies for inferring meaning, which can be a very difficult task for them. As teachers, we want them to develop critical thinking skills, interpret the text that they read, and draw conclusions. These skills must be explicitly taught, and doing so takes time and practice.

First, teachers need to model a frame to help ELLs express their ideas. Phrases such as I predict, my guess is, I think that, my conclusion is, and I infer that help them voice their inferences.

In Ms. Menzella’s second-grade class, students were discussing a poem that describes an animal and were asked to make guesses about what animal they thought was being described. Karim, an advanced-level ELL, said, “I infer that the animal is a whale.” When asked why he thought that, he replied, “My schema tells me that it must be a sea animal. I know a lot about whales, and this sounds like a whale.” Ms. Menzella asked Karim to point out what words in the poem made him think of a whale, and he gave her the exact words from the poem. His response was charted on a copy of the poem displayed on the classroom’s easel.

Thus, Ms. Menzella checked Karim’s understanding by asking him for a rationale for his answer. ELLs especially need this modeling from the teacher as well as their peers, with a clear demonstration of how the inferences are made. They need multiple and ongoing reminders to infer information.

Teaching ELLs to ask themselves mental questions as they read helps them learn how to infer meaning from the text. With modeling and much practice with texts that are commensurate with their level of English proficiency, ELLs will become more successful readers and greatly improve their reading comprehension.

**References**


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**HOME ROOM**

**It’s the Principal!**

by Linda New Levine

Next to the classroom teacher, the school principal has the most influence on the education of the students in the school. Principals affect student achievement in many ways, but mainly through the relationships they develop with the teaching staff. Effective principals are supportive of their teachers in many ways:

- providing material support (e.g., copy machines, paper, supplementary texts to support instruction)
- arranging schedules that allow teachers to plan together for instruction and student support
- using observations as opportunities for teachers to learn what they are doing right and offer help in areas where improvement is needed
- promoting cooperation and collegiality among staff
- modeling educational leadership to inspire staff
- modeling respect for different points of view
- complementing staff when warranted
- supporting teachers as educated professionals when parents make unwarranted demands
- supporting teachers as the authority in the classroom with unruly students

Yet I have worked with principals who unwittingly did great damage to the culture and morale of the schools in their care through actions such as these:

- favoring top-down management with little input from staff
- cultivating relationships with a few staff members and freezing others out of the collective conversation
- withholding material support (e.g., ample classroom space, furniture) from certain staff members
- using observations as opportunities to criticize rather than help staff grow professionally
- modeling division among the staff by encouraging gossip and tattling
- providing little or no educational leadership

Mrs. J is an example of a principal whose leadership damaged the morale and culture of her school. She was
young, intelligent, attractive, and dynamic. The staff welcomed her with open arms. It was her first time as principal, and I’m sure it was a difficult learning experience for her. Our school had a large population of children receiving free or reduced lunch. More than 40% of the children came from bilingual homes, and many of these were actively involved in the process of learning English as a second language. Mrs. J was unfamiliar with English language learners (ELLs), although most of the teachers on staff were skilled in working successfully with them.

Mrs. J dealt with her uncertainty by concentrating on school management. She made most decisions on her own and rarely consulted staff about any of them. Faculty meetings were opportunities to listen to her talk about management concerns.

She also focused on standardized test scores, which were a cause of concern. With a large ELL population, our school strove especially hard to compete with the other four elementary schools in the district. I began to realize that Mrs. J saw the ELLs as a threat to her efficacy as a leader. When teachers began to volunteer after school to help ELLs in the newly formed Homework Club, Mrs. J ignored the project and failed to praise these teachers’ efforts.

Eventually, she found comfort in a small segment of the school staff, befriending these teachers while ignoring or openly criticizing others. These disruptions in personal relationships caused hard feelings among staff members and began to deteriorate the collegial atmosphere that had existed prior to Mrs. J’s arrival. Staff began to have the attitude of “every man for himself,” which caused the school to lose sight of its common focus and common goals.

In earlier years, with Mr. F as principal, the staff felt more relaxed. Teachers were sure of their standing with him, and he related well to most of the staff. Although Mr. F was a managerial leader, he also led the way to educational reform and professional development for teachers in his building.

Mr. F recognized that the school’s ELLs required special teaching and learning strategies to be effective, and he provided workshops on these topics during the school day so that all teachers would participate. He was a cheerleader for motivated and hard-working staff members and consulted with the faculty on many schoolwide decisions. On the other hand, he ignored teachers who were not contributing to the common effort and criticized those who were hostile to his suggestions during teacher observations, collecting their lesson plans routinely and scheduling repeated observations.

Mr. F encouraged teacher collaboration, requested staff members to observe each other, asked for staff to volunteer for team teaching, and praised those staff who responded positively to his leadership in developing new reading programs for the primary grades. Under his leadership, many teachers on the staff flourished; those who didn’t requested transfers to other schools.

My first principal, Mr. P, was the one who had the greatest effect on me as a teacher, and I was lucky to work with him when I first started teaching. We taught in an inner-city school with a large African American population in a depressed economic area. Most of the teachers on the staff were White, and many were Jewish. Mr. P recognized the cultural disconnect between the teachers and the students in his school; he took the initiative in helping all of us learn about each other and understand the cultures of our students.

Mr. P tried many things to broaden our cultural perspective. He rallied the entire staff to eat out at a soul food restaurant in an African American neighborhood. He taught afterschool courses to new teachers to help them negotiate the many problems of inner-city education. He inspired us to attend weekend meetings, or retreats, at family-style hotels in the Catskills, where we got to know each other better and developed the trust necessary for collegial teaching. In this way, Mr. P helped us develop a close-knit school culture that was supportive and nurturing, especially to new teachers. His praise was hard earned but gratefully received.

Without Mr. P’s guidance, I doubt that I could have been successful in those early years or that I would have known that there was more for me to learn. His model of educational equity stayed with me for the next 27 years of my career. How fortunate I was to have worked with him as my first principal and not my last.

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Principals affect student achievement in many ways, but mainly through the relationships they develop with the teaching staff.
When Mrs. Moyner began planning her math lesson, she remembered what a colleague had told her about visibly displaying the vocabulary words that she wanted the students to learn: English language learners (ELLs) would need a visual display to learn and retain the math vocabulary.

Using the teacher’s guide from the math textbook that she was using, Mrs. Moyner made a vocabulary list that included the following words: ratio, equation, percentage, shrink, and stretch. Confident that she had the key words that she needed to teach her lesson, she wrote these five words on the board and began creating the problem sets that she would use to teach the unit on fractional ratios.

When the lesson began, Mrs. Moyner referred to the vocabulary list. She told the students that the “word wall” provided them with the vocabulary that they would use. She reviewed the meaning of each word and asked the students to copy the words and the associated definitions in their notebooks. She then modeled aloud the first problem set. She wrote the problem on the board and modeled aloud how she solved the problem.

She concluded the modeling activity by asking her students whether the solution was less than or more than the original number. In response, several of the ELLs and other students were not clear about the meaning of the phrases more than and less than. Referring to her word wall, Mrs. Moyner realized that it did not actually reflect the key phrases that were needed in her class. She wasn’t sure how to handle the dilemma and worried that her students would not learn the math concepts as a result.

Mrs. Moyner viewed word walls as the construction of important or key vocabulary words, that is, single vocabulary words. Like her, many teachers tend to create vocabulary lists as collections of single words. Ideally, these single-word lists connect to the lessons and content being studied. The content that we as teachers want students to learn, however, is not always single words. Rather, our intent is that students will be able to use vocabulary in context about the content.

Think about this question: What are the key terms, words, idioms, and phrases (TWIPs) that your students need to learn and be able to use in order to be successful in the content area that you are teaching? Thinking of the TWIPs captures what we as teachers truly need students to learn. Many of the phrases and idioms that we use to teach content are implied and not directly taught. For example, Mrs. Moyner assumed that her students understood the meaning of the phrases less than and more than. She had not thought to include these phrases as she assembled her word wall. She used the key terms that were listed in her teacher’s guide to plan the lesson, but it had not included the type of TWIPs thinking that was needed to successfully complete the lesson.

Identifying the TWIPs that will be used is a good means for determining what students need to learn, and this process is a good means for securing and displaying the language that is needed in school. It also helps reduce the number of implied U.S. cultural terms that often inhibit learning.

The following guide is intended to help teachers become familiar with the process of developing and displaying the list of TWIPs.

**Planning the Lesson**
1. Preread text that students will read.  
2. Select TWIPs based on the following two levels.
   - **Level A**: a small number of useful TWIPs that students would benefit from knowing for this subject matter study and other school contexts  
   - **Level B**: important TWIPs that are needed for students to learn the present subject matter (but are not likely to be used in other contexts)
3. Design learning activities and lessons that focus student attention on Level B TWIPs in context.
4. Provide continued opportunities for students to meaningfully learn, practice, and use Level A and B TWIPs in context (as many as 12 times) beyond the specific lesson(s). Pairs and small groups are the most effective participation structures.

**Preteaching Activities**
1. Select activities that will help students use and learn Level A and B TWIPs:
   - Model aloud using the TWIP in context.
   - Engage students in paired and small-group activities and tasks using TWIPs.
   - Use pictures, role-plays, guest speakers, field trips, and so on to extend authentic use of TWIPs.
   - Create a word wall of the TWIPs (as a list or via concept mapping).
   - Display the word wall at least until the unit or theme is completed.

2. Assign homework related to in-class activities that require the TWIPs to be used authentically.

Identifying the TWIPs that students need to use the language of content involves much more than displaying a single word. When we think in terms of the expressions that we want students to use to listen, speak, read, and write about content, it makes us more intentional about the displays or word walls that can be used to support the process.

**During the Lesson**
1. Support content learning by referring frequently to prelesson vocabulary work.
2. Use graphic organizers as needed to scaffold content learning and language use.
3. Integrate instruction into at least two learning channels (e.g., auditory, visual).

**After the Lesson**
1. Select activities that provide students with multiple opportunities to continue to use Level A and B TWIPs (e.g., card games, Venn diagrams, adapted TV game shows such as Password, word boxes, flash cards). Require students to use the TWIPs in their writing, as appropriate.

See also “Bridging the Gap: A Study in Phonological Consistency,” http://www.tesol.org/et/.

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**MULTILINGUAL MOMENTUM**

**Unleash Your Power From Within**

by Ke Xu

Last summer, on my trip back to China, I had a chance to chat with a few EFL teacher trainers in Nanjing. One of the hottest topics we talked about was how to most effectively strengthen teacher development and prevent EFL teachers from job burnout. According to Wu and Yang (2008), 85.1% of China’s primary and secondary EFL classes have more than 40 students in each class. Super-size classes of 60 or more constitute 27.3% of the total. More than 42% of primary and secondary EFL teachers have to teach 6–12 periods (45 minutes each) every week, and 20% have to teach 13–16 of those periods a week. Imagine the homework teachers have to grade every day!

On top of this, 35.2% of these teachers have to work as the class head teacher (which mixes the roles of student supervisor and advisor). And 23% have to work extra hours teaching other subjects as well.

Of China’s primary and secondary EFL teachers, 75.7% are women and 83.9% of them teach at the elementary level. In Beijing, the percentage of female EFL teachers reaches 89.5%. In a culture where married females usually perform a greater share of the household chores, apart from their already heavy responsibilities in childrearing, we can easily imagine the challenge that China’s female EFL teachers have to meet every day.

Given these statistics, and considering the teaching and cramming ethos of a school system driven by a daunting national college-entrance exam, it is not surprising to hear that teachers are often too busy, if not too exhausted, to be enthusiastic about teacher development.
too busy, if not too exhausted, to be enthusiastic about teacher development. Within the routine of teaching, teachers’ attitude toward teacher development is often, “Why bother?” or “What now?” Which suggests negative attitudes toward the new theories and practices that China’s teacher trainers introduce regularly.

“They are too good to be used in my classroom,” teachers often say. So what do teachers really need to prevent them from burnout? What is the best way to unleash their power from within?

Among many possible solutions, the best, I believe, should be found by teachers from within themselves rather than from outside influences. For many years, as we teacher trainers focused on what teachers want or what they lack, we occupied ourselves in the frantic search for what we believed would best suit their needs. Seldom did we give thought to the natural talent and resources that teachers already possess.

As human beings, each of us has the power to tap into our innate reserves of talent, energy, imagination, focus, and grace. Much like an iceberg floating in water, we have been using only about the surface 3–4% of the total power available. There is great potential in the untapped part of the iceberg hidden under the water’s surface. The question is: How we can awaken this hidden power that’s already within us, unleash it, and share it with other human beings?

To be successful language teachers, I believe we need to cultivate the following attitudes to unleash the hidden power within us. Be proud of yourself and what you can do. Cherish whatever you have; be confident about yourself, your understanding of your teaching context, and your students. Appreciate your awareness of your own culture and the difference between your culture and the target language culture. Recognize your keen sense in predicting when and where your students will encounter problems and your innate ability to pinpoint the exact cause of language learners’ problems.

It is perhaps every nonnative English speaker’s dream to be able to acquire native-like fluency in all aural and oral skill areas. It is of essential importance, however, to understand that few can reach that level in reality. But this should not be a reason to get discouraged. Don’t be ashamed of what you were born with, including your accent. Be proud of it, as are the French. Remember, Einstein spoke with an accent but rose to world fame in spite of it. This is not to imply that pronunciation is unimportant. But more important components make a great teacher, components that certainly outweigh what you lack when you compare yourself to a native speaker of English.

What you need to do is to find out who you are and what you can do. The books and journal articles you read, the workshops you attend, and the lessons you observe should help you not only find out about new theories integrated into classroom else-

Identify all the alternative solutions available to the problems you face, and make your own decisions.

where, but also find out about yourself—to examine your own teaching model and teaching style, your approaches and techniques in light of new research, and to reflect on your own teaching from new perspectives. Identify all the alternative solutions available to the problems you face, and make your own decisions. When you have established a positive image of yourself, you can tell yourself and everyone around you, “I can do it!”

Listen to your heart, and follow what it tells you. Determine what you really want to achieve, and go for it so that you can live your life while being true to your deeper self instead of chasing things in life that you were never meant to go after. Be yourself because you can never be someone else. Don’t be dazzled by other people’s models; establish your own. If you need to borrow something from others, pick those ideas that best fit into your own teaching context and that can make best use of your own strength, talent, skills, and background.

With all these ideas taken into consideration, you are ready to shine and be the teacher you were meant to be!

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Language educators often distinguish between big-C and small-c cultural activities. Big-C activities explore areas such as literature, music, and art, whereas small-c activities address behavioral and interactive aspects of communicating. Both are important to teaching ESOL, whether addressing the culture of native English speakers or that of others, such as Spaniards and Germans, who learn international English for use as a lingua franca to communicate among themselves. In either case, the question arises: What is the best way to combine both areas for a more complete exploration of culture?

Many activities can be used to explore both types of cultural activities. However, a culture “map” helps teachers select appropriate activities, track them, and ensure their interrelatedness for a more thorough exploration. Culture maps have been used in fields such as anthropology and intercultural communication for many years. One well-known example appears in Edward Hall’s (1959) book *The Silent Language* (pp. 174–175). It is a two-dimensional chart that lists 10 primary message systems in the left-hand column and five cultural systems across the top. This reduces the grid to 20 boxes that can guide choices when investigating cultural areas (see The NAPI-KEPRA Framework).

Adding historicity at the bottom provides an important new dimension. It suggests that culture areas be viewed not only in terms of their present status (synchronic), but also through time (diachronic). Doing so enriches investigative tasks by considering areas in these terms: how they were, say, 5 or 500 years ago, or how they might be in the years ahead.

This abbreviated framework, known as NAPI-KEPRA (using the first letters of the givens and systems), serves as a guide for systematically visiting and revisiting the target culture and deepening learner understanding and involvement at each stage. It draws on students’ current knowledge and points to further research by exploring available resources (in EFL contexts) or visiting the community (in ESL contexts). In this way, students engage with target language speakers outside of class through passive activities (if students have low-level proficiency) or more active activities (if they have intermediate- to advanced-level proficiency).

Culture exploration can be approached deductively or inductively. In a deductive approach, give students the NAPI-KEPRA framework beforehand to guide their investigation. Explain how the framework serves as a culture map by reviewing the givens on the left and the systems, processes, or organizations across the top. Select several areas of the grid, and provide examples for each. For example, investigating host culture family relationships involves the box where People and Kinship intersect, religious accoutrements involve Artifacts and Religion, and a local youth club involves People and Associations. Check students’ understanding by having them generate additional examples.

Then create teams of three or four students, and have each decide which area(s) they wish to investigate, where, and how. Have the teams brainstorm strategies for finding out what they want to explore through passive, observational approaches (if they have low-level proficiency) to more active, participatory approaches (if they have intermediate- to advanced-level proficiency). Have students write and practice asking questions they might pose in the

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**The NAPI-KEPRA Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Givens</th>
<th>Cultural Systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Environment</td>
<td>Kinship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information/Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Historicity (i.e., +/- time dimension)
target language. Then have them discuss how their approach, style, and language level may affect the task and the results they obtain.

Once students complete the field experience and return to class, have the teams prepare reports of their findings to present to the entire class. As each team reports, check off the boxes they address on the framework (drawn large on a flipchart). This will track which cultural aspects have and have not been explored at this point and suggest areas to explore the next time around.

If an inductive approach is preferred, have students explore the community before you present them with the NAPI-KEPRA framework. In other words, leave the task open-ended the first time around, and construct the framework later during their presentations. For this purpose, have a blank grid drawn on a flipchart. Gradually fill in areas as they are presented, and then explain what each box means at the end. This will help clarify what was investigated and what was left out and serve as a guide for the next round of explorations.

In a debriefing session, discuss the following:

- content (What did they find out?)
- process (How did it go? How did they feel?)
- framework (What did they investigate? What didn’t they investigate? Why?)
- etic versus emic perspectives (What did they report about the target culture vs. what natives might report about themselves?)
- students’ level of knowledge (How might they go on to probe the culture more deeply?)
- contact with the host culture (What are the possible interests or reasons students might have for entering this culture? What is the degree of possible entry?)
- students’ self-identity vis-à-vis the target culture?
- students’ motivations (integrative vs. instrumental) for entering the target culture
- students’ approaches and speech style (How does their level of proficiency influence contact?)
- problem areas and additional language needs for the next phase

Here are a few additional suggestions:

- Students with low-level English proficiency can explore the community by conducting observational activities. Students with mid to high levels can take more active roles.
- Adding historicity, that is, past or future dimensions, to the framework makes the task more challenging and requires use of past and future tenses.
- At advanced levels, lead a discussion on related topics such as definitions of culture, cultural components and interrelatedness, historical and geographical dimensions of culture, etic and emic perspectives, cross-cultural contact, entry options and consequences, individual motivations for learning the target linguaculture, cultural comparisons, and culture bumps.

In the end, culture maps help enrich the entire language experience for students and ensure their attention to multiple aspects of the culture of English speakers.

Reference

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and then allotted roughly a week per chunk of material. About a week after I had passed out this syllabus to my classes and started teaching, a young woman approached me after class. “I need to know the dates of all your quizzes and tests,” she announced. “They’re not here on the syllabus.”

What could I say? I didn’t even know myself when quizzes would be. To stall, I pointed out the date of the final exam (set by the university) and the week during which I’d scheduled the midterm. “Yes, but what day is the midterm?” she demanded. “Wednesday,” I replied with what I hoped was enough confidence to cover the fact that I’d made that up on the spot.

She wrote it down. “And what days are all the quizzes? I need to know so that I make sure I come to class on those days.” Ah, so that was it. I knew she would not be put off by some pedagogical statement such as “I will give quizzes once I determine that the class has mastered a chunk of material.” So I went with the answer that had worked before and said, “Wednesdays. Every week,” rashly committing myself to therefore writing, administering, and marking 60 quizzes every week.

She walked away satisfied, and I went off to find another French teacher and look at her syllabus. It was a thing of precision—not only were all quizzes and tests clearly marked, but the material that would be covered in class on each of the 64 days of the semester was written down. Even the page numbers were written down.

I asked the teacher what she did if, for example, students were scheduled to cover pages 91–95 on a certain day but didn’t get beyond page 93. She couldn’t quite grasp my question. Whether most students were lost or not. After all, if you didn’t get to page 95 on Tuesday, how would you start with page 96 on Wednesday? The whole plan would unravel.

I could see my student’s point and the point of a detailed syllabus. If a student has five midterms, it’s important to know how many of them fall on the same day. If a student is making choices about which days to attend class (which, as much as it irritates me, is their prerogative), it’s important to know what’s happening in each class.

But when thinking about the syllabus, the broader issue is a more philosophical question: Does a course exist as something independent that marches on its own schedule and into which students must fit? Theoretically, then, a course could move more quickly with some groups and more slowly with others. Theoretically, then, students in two different sections of the same course could cover different amounts of material.

I had two French 101 classes, which met daily, and I did everything in my power to keep them on the same schedule, for my own convenience. But as had always been my experience when teaching two sections of the same ESL course, the classes were not really even, and one pulled ahead. I’m sure if I’d given them both a document that explicitly specified which pages and which bits of language would be covered each day, I would have kept those two classes more together. But would that have been the best way of serving the students?

I realized how fortunate I’d been with the flexibility of my ESL courses. Of course, each course had goals and objectives and was intended to cover a certain amount of material. However, I’ve never taught under an administration that would have (to my knowledge, anyway) disapproved of my supplementing a class with additional material or spending more time in an area of difficulty if the students in front of me merited that treatment.

I don’t have an answer to which is more important, the predictability and accountability of a tightly structured syllabus or the flexibility of a more open one. It’s hard to even discuss it without saying, “Well, it depends on . . . .” However, I do think it’s something that each teacher needs to think about and, if feasible, that teachers need to discuss with each other and their administrators. Once you can articulate your own beliefs, you will be better able to reach the compromise that best serves your situation, yourself, and your students.

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Many years ago, I became interested in helping my EFL students in Mexico who I thought had some sort of learning problems. I began by reading anything I could find concerning different kinds of learning disabilities, their diagnoses, and potential treatment. Eventually I became a quasi-expert and began to present my findings at local and, later, national conferences. I discovered that I was not the only person interested in helping physically and cognitively disadvantaged students learn a second language; many other EFL teachers had encountered students with problems and also wanted advice on how to help them.

My interest continued to grow when I noticed that my university had blind students but lacked the infrastructure to help them, such as elevators or teacher training on instructing physically impaired learners. Students informed me that some teachers had even denied blind or deaf students access to their classes. For more than two decades, I have explored this critical issue in various Mexican institutions and in published literature, only to find that the situation is the same for students with disabilities in most Latin American counties.

The School for the Deaf

As my awareness of the extent of these critical educational concerns grew, one of my colleagues in the Language Department at my university, Amanda Holzricher, a psycholinguist, began to offer Mexican Sign Language (MSL) classes to interested BA and MA applied linguistics students. In looking at MSL in second language acquisition, she soon found that there was a great need for MSL as a first language in the local deaf population. Later, she founded a small school in a local church where MSL as a first language and Spanish as a second language (SSL) literacy skills were taught to the deaf. She instructed MSL not only to deaf children and adults but also to their parents or other hearing caretakers.

The fifth article of Mexico’s Constitution of the National Secretariat of Education states that for students to fulfill the requirements to receive a BA, they must complete a total of 480 hours of community service. Dr. Holzricher requested to be assigned a community service project so that students could assist her in the deaf school. Unfortunately for this school, Dr. Holzricher was also a dedicated researcher in signing as a first language and accepted a position at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, a renowned undergraduate school for the deaf and hearing impaired.

Students informed me that some teachers had even denied blind or deaf students access to their classes.
After she left for Gallaudet, students continued to approach me about completing the community service project that still existed between the school, Los Angeles Hablan con las Manos (Angels Speak With Their Hands), and our university. I felt helpless when I told the students who wanted to assist the deaf community that I was not qualified to lead such a project because I could not sign. Eventually, I questioned whether it was really necessary that I be skilled in MSL in order to enable interested students to help the school. I decided that it was not, and so I made my first connection with the school.

First Contact
An applied linguistics undergraduate student who worked at the school when it was housed in the local church told me the school had been moved to a vacant floor of a building owned by the county government, which it was allowed to use free of charge. I requested the contact information of the person in charge so that I could ask permission to visit. When I spoke to the maestra (teacher/director), I discovered that she was the mother of one of the students from the original school initiated by Dr. Holzricher.

This mother had learned to sign in order to communicate with her son. She continued with the school because of her desire to help other parents and deaf adults and children learn MSL as a first language and then to facilitate SSL literacy skills. She informed me that the school had been forced to leave the building that the county had allowed it to use because “someone” wished to rent the space. She said they were presently in a national government building that housed the Integrated Rehabilitation Center (Centro de Rehabilitación Integral; CRI), which offers services for children and adults with disabilities.

During my first visit to the school in the CRI, I found a one-room space approximately 4 meters x 3 meters (13 feet x 10 feet). The room contained two bookcases (filled with free books that the Education Secretariat had sent, which were of little use for this population), one small table, a teacher’s desk, one whiteboard, four chairs, a window that could not be opened, and boxes full of pictures and school supplies. In other words, there was not much space.

Luckily (or not), there were only three students left, who received instruction from the teacher/director and one teacher’s aide. The aide was deaf, but could sign and read lips, and had some oralization skills. Dr. Holzricher’s original students had gradually left the school because parents were not convinced that the teacher/director was sufficiently trained to manage alone.

In spite of the physical space constraints, my first observation was that the students were actually doing some learning. One of the students, a woman in her mid 40s, was copying words from a text into a notebook or working on basic math problems. An 18-year-old woman was reading a children’s book in Spanish. And a young boy of approximately 8 or 9 was passively watching his mother, the teacher/director, as she spoke with me.

The teacher/director told me that the middle-aged woman had arrived at the school several months earlier, lacking any sign language or literacy skills in Spanish. She had been deprived of schooling due to her deafness and had been kept at home until a friend of her caretaker had heard of the school. She was making slow progress in becoming bilingual with MSL and Spanish literacy skills.

The 18-year-old woman who had started the school with Dr. Holzricher had learned MSL as a first language and subsequently Spanish reading and writing skills as her second language. Presently, she was most interested in learning English as her third language, but no one could help her.

The teacher/director then explained her own son’s story. She had been pregnant with twins but miscarried at 6 months. One of the twins died, and the other survived but was discovered to be deaf when his oral language skills did not develop. When the mother heard of the school and Dr. Holzricher, she enrolled herself and her son to learn MSL.

She was convinced that this was the only manner in which her son and the other students would acquire the necessary academic skills to succeed in having a “normal” life.
primary school, he would have been passed on from grade to grade until he reached 12 years of age, at which point he would have been given his primary certificate without the ability to read and write in Spanish or to communicate with his family.

Community Service Students
After I reopened the community service project with the school, university students began to volunteer to help. I soon had five student volunteers, which was more than the number of deaf students enrolled. One student volunteer, L., wanted to begin learning MSL at a cultural center in a nearby city on Saturdays while also working several hours a week at the school. Another, J., who was studying communications, worked one semester at the school and then decided that she could help the school more by making a documentary about various schools for the deaf and the different methodologies they employed.

Another volunteer, A., had elementary knowledge of signing, and due to her studies in the applied linguistics BA program, she was assigned to help the 18-year-old student with literacy skills in English. The last two student volunteers to join the project, F., a psychology major, and P., another communications student, both chose to provide individual help to the son of the school’s teacher/director, who, in addition to being deaf, also had motor control problems.

The volunteers who have been working at the school for approximately one and a half semesters have all learned sufficient MSL to help the deaf students with their Spanish or, in the case of the 18-year-old, English literacy. Other university students want to volunteer for the project, but due to space restrictions at the school, I told them to wait until some of those who are presently working complete their 480 hours of service. All of the community service students have expressed that they chose this project because they wanted to make a difference in people’s lives and not just work in a company to complete their community service requirement. They envisioned themselves helping those who needed it most.

Conclusion . . . for the Moment
I check in with Los Angeles Hablante con las Manos approximately once every month to see if I can help in any way. For example, I bring recycled paper to write on or donate flash cards or other materials and resources I receive from attending various language teaching conferences. My university gave all staff members frozen turkeys for Christmas, so I took mine to the head teacher at the school to prepare for a Christmas party that she was planning there. I also am requesting that university officials allow the donation of a used computer so that the deaf students can have visual input with a computer program that one community service student has offered to design.

I do not want to paint a dismal, negative picture of Mexico and its educational system. This type of situation is common in most countries. It is an unfortunate fact that good support for people with disabilities is encountered in the minority of the world’s societies.

Actually, I am not unlike the community service students that I direct. I began this project as a concerned EFL teacher and coordinator of BA and MA programs in applied linguistics, yet I discovered that I don’t have to know MSL in order to coordinate volunteers who are interested in making a difference in the quality of life of the disadvantaged. I have jumped out of my box and am enjoying the leap.

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See also “Different Voices From Mexico,” http://www.tesol.org/et/.
Sometimes a friendly gesture can have unintended consequences, especially when communicating across different cultures. ESL teachers who insist on being addressed by their first name might be fostering a cultural conflict with their adult students. I understand that being on a first-name basis is supposedly more friendly and informal, and being addressed as “Teacher” seems downright impersonal. But I discovered from a class of adult basic education (ABE) students that being addressed as “Teacher” is actually a sign of respect and perhaps more conducive to learning.

At the end of class one day, a student said, “Teacher, when we call you ‘Teacher,’ you are never upset. But the other teachers get angry. They think I’m rude.”

Because I grew up in Japan, I was conditioned to call teachers “Sensei,” a highly respectful term that is also used to address doctors and professors. That’s why I’m comfortable being addressed as “Teacher.” Instead of being impersonal, it enables students to feel more comfortable with me, comfortable enough to raise the issue of how to address teachers. This comment launched a freewheeling discussion among the students in my class, most of whom were newcomers from various countries in Africa and Asia.

One Somali student said with an upset tone, “When I called my teacher ‘Teacher,’ she didn’t respond to me.”

Another said that the teacher yelled at her, saying, “‘Teacher’ is not my name! I have my own name!”

One Oromo student from Ethiopia said, “My teacher wrote her first name very large on a piece of paper and taped it on her chest for the rest of the class.” My students all looked disgusted, shaking their heads.

My students said that teachers misunderstand what they mean with their formality. They said that they feel bad when they call teachers by their first names because it sounds disrespectful. This is totally the opposite of what U.S. teachers think. My Somali students repeated that they call teachers “Teacher” out of respect. Many cultures in the world, including Japanese, follow that style.

When my students brought up this issue, I understood how they felt because as a nonnative English-speaking (NNES) teacher I had gone through this cultural transition myself. It is hard to forget my first cultural shock as an ABE teacher in the United States. Honestly, when a student first called me “Naomi,” I was shocked. Even though he was a good student, I felt like I was being demeaned.

I asked my administrator and ELL leader for an option because they advocated using first names for teachers. They said that I could ask my students to call me by my last name if I felt more comfortable that way, but they discouraged being addressed as “Teacher.” Both of them said that many teachers prefer to be called by their first name because it sounds friendlier. Sounds friendlier to whom? They didn’t notice that they were explaining their opinion from the Western teacher’s perspective rather than the non-Western student’s perspective.

I eventually decided not to use my last name because I didn’t want to be the only teacher who did so. I didn’t want my colleagues to think that I was an arrogant teacher who prefers to be called by my last name. But I never objected when students called me “Teacher.”

The discussion on this topic that I had with students in my class made me aware of the importance of understanding the issue from the students’ perspective. Learning English is a big challenge for adult newcomers, especially because they are simultaneously trying to adjust to a foreign culture. Although I studied English for many years before I moved to the United States, it did not prepare me for dealing with mainstream U.S. culture. I found that I, along with other NNES teachers, tend to sympathize with the cultural struggles of newcomers. I have come to believe that effective teaching requires understanding their cultures and being aware of communication gaps.
As I mulled over what I had learned about why students preferred to call me “Teacher,” I came up with six pieces of advice that I try to follow when I teach.

**Watch Out for Cultural Hegemony**

All teachers are in positions of power and privilege, whether you are a White native-English-speaking (NES) teacher or an Asian NNES teacher with an accent, like me. As Rothenberg (2005) says, “when it comes to privilege, it doesn’t matter who we really are, but who other people think we are, which is to say, the social categories they put us in” (p. 104). Therefore, when we as teachers project our ideas, we have to be sensitive to how they are received by students.

We teachers also need to be aware of the cultural hegemony we establish in our schools. Erickson (2007) defines cultural hegemony as “the established view of things—a commonsense view of what is and why things happen that serves the interests of those people already privileged in a society” (p. 51). If you are blind about your privileges, you won’t notice when you are in conflict with the cultural presuppositions of your students. The risk is that “students whose lives are not affirmed by the establishment seem intuitively not to accept hegemonic content and methods of instruction and that they often resist, consciously or unconsciously, covertly as well as overtly” (p. 51).

We have to remember that because we are in positions of power, we may unwittingly block communication in ways that negatively affect students’ attitudes about learning.

**Collaborate With NNES Teachers to Better Understand the Issues of ESL Students**

NNES teachers have the advantage of understanding the privilege issue of both the English language and the target culture. It is ideal for NNES teachers and NES teachers to have more opportunities to discuss various privilege issues and share perspectives with each other in order to understand the cultural and linguistic obstacles of adult ESL students. Administrators should be encouraged to recruit NNES teachers as great resources at schools where students are learning English and how to get by in the target culture.

**Keep an Eye Out for Nonverbal Messages**

ESL teachers are language teachers who have the purpose to teach verbal messages. Nonverbal messages tend to be ignored in ESL teacher education. As the oldest form of communication, body language conveys many messages. An understanding of nonlinguistic factors, such as facial expressions and silence, will help teachers “listen” to what students are saying nonverbally. Teachers need to perceive students’ feelings carefully and learn how to respond to nonverbal messages.

**Communicate With Students and Give Them More Space**

Once you notice anxiety on students’ faces, you need to develop appropriate strategies to create a fair learning and teaching culture. Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis clearly describes the importance of the learning environment for effective teaching. Krashen (2003) explains that if the acquirer is anxious, has low self-esteem, does not consider himself or herself to be a potential member of the group that speaks the language, he or she may understand the input, but it will not reach the language acquisition device. (p. 6)

Each student comes to school to learn English; this is their highest goal. Our responsibility as teachers is to create the best environment for them to learn.

If students refer to us as “Teacher,” they are trying to communicate with us. It seems to me that we should feel good about newcomers addressing us this way. It is a great first step because it signals respect. Teachers who have cultural privilege may simply need to consider being more lenient and humble.

**Build Trust With Students to Set the Stage for Discussing Issues**

Students and teachers need to trust and respect each other. Once students feel respected by teachers, they open their minds and teaching becomes more fun. When my students started to talk about the cultural reasons for calling teachers “Teacher,” it gave them an opportunity to teach me. They were excited about explaining their cultures. And when I explained how teachers are
respected in Japanese culture, the students enjoyed listening to me. We took turns talking about teaching and learning in each country.

We also discussed how biculturalism is important for us to survive in U.S. culture. For example, to be respectful parents at a K–12 school, they have to call their children’s teachers by their last names. And I told them that once we get to know each other much more and a friendship develops, we may feel comfortable using first names.

If you need to talk about sensitive topics, start with something positive about students’ culture. If you build trust, you can bring up any subject. If you are upset about students’ viewpoints, you will thwart the purpose of using first names to build a friendly relationship.

**Stay Abreast of the News and Current Events in Students’ Home Countries**

Teachers who teach ESL students need to tune in to the news media to update their knowledge about what is going on in students’ home countries and keep in mind that many students are victims of violent events. I often meet students who tell me how terrible their lives were before they came to the United States. In the first year or so after moving, many adult ESL students are busy with settling into life in a new country. They are eager to study English, but the reality that they face in the new environment sometimes makes them feel depressed or disappointed about life in the United States. I always feel that they have more to teach us as teachers than we have to teach them as students. When I teach newcomers at beginning and low-intermediate levels, I think that sincere conversations with them are the key for successful teaching and successful learning.

We ESL and ABE teachers and administrators are lucky to have the opportunity to learn and enjoy life with students from all over the world. Let’s not cling to a small aspect of U.S. culture, whether it is how we are addressed by students or something else, if it is not conducive to student success.

**References**


When I first began teaching in 2003, I started out as a teacher assistant to a pre-kindergarten teacher, who we’ll call Mrs. X. She ended up retiring during the school year, subsequently placing her class in my hands. I knew that I had big shoes to fill because Mrs. X was greatly loved by the students’ parents.

Parents as Foes

Within the first few months of the school year, Mrs. X informed all of her students’ parents that she was retiring and I would be taking over her class. So the parents were informed from the beginning, but they had a hard time adjusting to the concept that Mrs. X would not be their children’s teacher. Some would constantly ask me or call the school to find out where Mrs. X was and when she would be back.

When Mrs. X was around, many of the parents were very pleasant toward me. However, once Mrs. X retired and I became the teacher in the classroom, I realized that some of these parents were not as friendly as I had originally thought. During my first month of teaching, I had one set of parents who were particularly unhappy that Mrs. X had left. They questioned my ability to teach as well as she had. As a result, they began to criticize my every move. These were parents whose older children had previously been in Mrs. X’s class, and they wanted their other children to be taught by her.

I was a new teacher taking over someone else’s class, so I needed to find a way to make this class mine. However, as I explored my new teaching behaviors, parents wanted to know why I did not act like Mrs. X or continue the same routines as she had done. They expected less structure and more coddling, as opposed to a highly structured learning environment. I tried to explain to them that I would keep the old schedule similar for the students’ benefit but that I needed to create my own classroom climate. I did not want to live in someone else’s shadow.

I was a young, energetic person who wanted to do her best to teach this class, and I felt that these parents were making it difficult for me. I was constantly being criticized and reminded that I was not Mrs. X. As a new teacher, there were times when I felt inexperienced and began to believe that I was not doing a good job. I would ask some of the parents if they felt that their children were learning. They would admit that they were in fact learning, but they would have preferred that Mrs. X had stayed on to teach their children.

Parents as Friends

I did, however, have some parents who were quite supportive. They respected me not only as an individual but...
as their children’s teacher. They did not see someone who was young. They saw someone who was excited and wanted to teach their children. I remember I had a student named Vic, whose mother was required to come to school with him because he had a medical condition.

She was my rock. She was open to having a new teacher for her child, and because she was with me every day, she constantly gave me the encouragement that I needed. She talked about the students’ achievement, the classroom time, and my creative attempts to engage these learners. To my recollection, she was not aware of what was occurring with the other parents, but I knew that because she was with me every day she knew the type of teacher I was: not necessarily an experienced teacher, but still a good one. I still feel that if Vic’s mother had not been with me during my first year of teaching, I would have had a much more difficult time.

Learning From Both

In some strange way, I am glad that all this scrutiny happened during my first year of teaching. I felt that if I was able to get through it, then I could become a great teacher one day. Because I was in my early 20s at the time, I still had the notion that I wanted everybody to like me. So I did take it quite hard when the students liked me but some of their parents did not. I guess I was asking for too much. I just saw how much they all loved and cherished Mrs. X, and I desired that recognition and support as well.

I have learned that it is not primarily about the parents; it is about the students. I needed to make sure that my job as a teacher came first and that my students were getting the best education that I could give them. Even though I had a couple of parents who were not too happy with me being their children’s first school teacher, I also had a few who gave me some of the respect that they had given Mrs. X.

These were parents who would constantly bring me lunch because they said I never ate enough. They would make me gifts such as scarves (I received four hand-knitted scarves that year) so that I would stay warm and not get sick. They would invite me to their homes for dinners or parties because they said that I was an important person in their children’s lives and they wanted me to get to know their families. In retrospect, my first year was not a disappointment.

I remained a pre-kindergarten teacher for 4 years. Last year, I made the leap to kindergarten. I have encountered some parents with whom I have had great relationships and some who have made me go a little crazy. However, the different relationships that I have had with my students’ parents have taught me how to handle situations better and to have realistic expectations for myself, my students, and their parents. I realized that no matter what type of class I have, I will always have a few parents who are not going to like me or my teaching style. Hopefully, more parents will focus on and be grateful that I taught their children how to read, write full sentences, add and subtract, and so forth.

I have come across parents who want to feed me, others who love to
clean my classroom, and others who just want me to disappear. Some are willing to share the responsibility of their children’s learning, and others want to blame the teachers if their children do not learn.

**Including Parents in Children’s Education**

Parents are their children’s first teachers. As a teacher, I am not trying to take their place; I am just trying to assist their children in becoming good students and learners. I, like many teachers, have been in school for many years studying how to be a good teacher and how to teach students effectively. I am not doing it for the pay, because even though we teachers have the hardest job in the world, we are not put on a pedestal. I teach because I want to help these young minds learn about new and different things.

Even if some teachers do not want to admit it, we need the help of parents. If we really want students to succeed, not only in their grade level but in their lives, then we need to find a way to work with their parents (Padgett, 2006). Some parents will collaborate and cooperate with teachers while others will expect teachers to do all the work. The parents who expect teachers to do all the work in their children’s education will also usually expect teachers to discipline students for home-based behaviors as well. Unfortunately, one or two of these parents are usually associated with any given classroom.

Research has shown that the more involved parents are in their children’s education, the more their children will succeed in their education (Garrett, 2008). Children need to see and hear in their home life that education is important (Cordry & Wilson, 2004). The earlier that mom, dad, or both work with their children in terms of learning, the easier it usually is for children to learn and retain information that makes the teacher’s job much easier (Anderson & Howland, 2008). Children are done a disservice if they are exposed to a home life in which education is not a priority. This makes it difficult for teachers who have to try to teach them and keep them motivated.

If parents become our foes, what are we as teachers supposed to do? Good teachers should not judge students because of their parents. Teachers should be able to separate the issue and try to teach students regardless of what their parents are like.

I am not here to judge parents. I understand that they are doing the best they can, but I am also trying my best. It only takes one teacher to make a difference in the life of a child, and I know I strive to try to make a difference. If at the end of the school year one parent comes up to me and says, “Thank you for all you have done,” and means it, I know that I had a successful year no matter what else occurred.

**References**


Almost all English language teachers worldwide are familiar with communicative language teaching (CLT), a method with revolutionary ideas regarding the importance of communication in language learning classrooms. Following the emergence of this method, it began to spread all over the world because it represented the new and was promoted as a reaction against traditional language teaching approaches. CLT has been the dominant English language teaching method in inner, outer, and expanding circles of English usage (in regard to Kachru’s [1985] classification regarding the spread of English), impinging on language learners, teachers, and teacher educators in some way or another.

Despite the popularity of CLT in the past three decades, some research studies suggest that difficulties in applying CLT in peripheral areas of English usage are inevitable if it is not adapted according to local needs (e.g., Chick, 1996; Hu, 2002). Yet teachers in various teacher education programs in most countries have been inundated with CLT techniques.

In reality, can teachers be sure that CLT is an effective method all over the world and is appropriate for all educational contexts? Once they have completed their preservice education, do teachers change their minds regarding CLT and realize the inappropriateness of the method in various ways when they become more experienced in language teaching over the years? If so, is it possible that new teachers are being set up to fail by giving them tools that must be abandoned in some instances and modified in others?

With all of these questions on my mind, I decided to probe the beliefs of experienced and novice teachers regarding the application of CLT in Turkey, a country where English is used as a foreign language.

Finding Participants for the Study

According to Richards and Lockhart (1994), teachers base their decisions and courses of action on their values and beliefs. In other words, their values and beliefs bridge the gap between their decisions and their ideas about learning and teaching. Taking this notion as a reference point, I wondered whether novice and experienced language teachers’ beliefs are different from each other in terms of conducting communicative classes. Novice teachers are generally young and energetic, new to the profession, and waiting for a chance to practice the techniques they have been taught. However, as it was with many teachers, including me, some of the techniques and strategies that novice teachers thought to be effective become subject to severe criticism as the teachers become more experienced.

During the initial years in the profession, the innovative techniques of CLT seem attractive, but it is possible to observe those tools failing in real classroom contexts unless they are adapted according to local needs. This very dilemma, which I have experienced in my professional life, was the rationale for conducting the present study. More specifically, I wanted to observe whether only some of my colleagues and myself experienced the failing of CLT’s groundbreaking tools or there were others out there who had also had this experience.

I started the study at the beginning of the academic year, and I collected data from novice and experienced nonnative-English-speaking teachers at a privately funded university in Istanbul where I used to teach academic writing. The administrators in this university’s intensive English program had determined that CLT was the method of choice. There were nine novice teachers in the institution, and it was their first year of teaching. To have an equal number of experienced teachers participate, I contacted many and chose the first nine who agreed to take part.

I wanted to use a concept-mapping technique to see the teachers’ beliefs graphically represented in relation to each other. Thus, I gave them each a blank piece of paper with the topic “Communicative Language Teaching in Your Educational Context” written...
in the middle and asked them to generate ideas about the applicability of CLT. After gathering the data, I used content analysis to identify the teachers’ beliefs.

**Novice Teachers Believe CLT Has Many Advantages**

When I started to examine the novice teachers’ papers, I noticed that their beliefs centred mainly on the key components of CLT. They mentioned various components of the method as advantages, though the original question was related to what they thought about the applicability of CLT in their educational institution. The novice teachers highlighted the importance of authentic materials, student-centred classroom instruction leading to learner autonomy, real-life contexts resulting in contextualised lessons, and pair and group work enhancing language production. Even though five novice teachers stated that they favoured the method, it was obvious to see that the rest also favoured it based on their wording of some aspects of the method as advantages. What this said to me was that all of the novice teachers were ready to use the techniques that their education had equipped them with.

**Experienced Teachers See a Mismatch Between Context and Method**

The beliefs of experienced teachers were rather different from those of their novice counterparts. When I looked at the experienced teachers’ papers, most had nearly no white space left; they had much to say on the topic at hand. In discussing the applicability of CLT, they grouped their reflections into categories such as sociocultural considerations, educational culture, education system, curriculum, and pacing.

All of the experienced teachers mentioned drawbacks in implementing CLT in their educational context, the most important of which was the mismatch between the educational theory behind CLT and the educational culture in Turkey. The educational system in public and many private institutions in Turkey is teacher centred, based on memorisation and deductive classroom instruction. This same structure applies to English language teaching in general. Although students who are enrolled in some private educational institutions might be subject to more communicative teaching techniques and applications, this is the exception in Turkey.

The experienced teachers stated explicitly that CLT, being a modern language teaching method imported from the West, is contradictory to Turkey’s educational culture because students require explicit grammar instruction. Some of them also mentioned student resistance towards communicative activities as another obstacle for CLT. Rather than adopting CLT as the sole method of English language teaching, they highlighted the necessity of adapting the method according to the needs of their educational context.

In terms of practicality, the experienced teachers mentioned the difficulty of applying CLT in relation to their loaded curriculum in which students have 1 year to reach the level of English language proficiency required to successfully complete the Intensive English Language Program. Teachers are supposed to teach English through CLT, but at the end of the year the students have to take a standard proficiency exam that is not, as most people in the profession think, communicative at all.

During classes the teachers did not have enough time to apply communicative activities because they had to maintain a certain pace. Also, some teachers pointed out that creating context by explaining the meaning of a word or an abstract concept might be time consuming as compared to providing translation.

**Where Do We Go From Here?**

The underlying motive for most administrators in private institutions to implement CLT and advertise it to parents as a magic wand is quite understandable: They would like to attract more parents and gain more student enrolment.

All of the experienced teachers mentioned drawbacks in implementing CLT in their educational context, the most important of which was the mismatch between the educational theory behind CLT and the educational culture in Turkey.
However, the question of why CLT is promoted by most language teacher education programs remains unanswered. Some teacher educators might possess a misconception that language teaching methods imported from the West are modern ideas spreading from the centre to the periphery, as stated by Kramsch and Sullivan (1996). By this rationale, CLT is thought to be modern and preservice teachers need to learn about modern teaching techniques and methods. By doing so, they might begin their “individual enhancement” with doors opening to “possible futures” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 7).

On the other hand, equipping preservice teachers solely with the techniques of native speaker–based methods like CLT will blind them to local contexts, causing them to spend a few years realising that the reality specific to each local context is rather different than what they learned at university. Therefore, I propose some suggestions to decision makers in teacher education programs not only in Turkey, but also elsewhere, because these programs should endow their preservice teachers with tools to support them, not to fail them.

The most significant issue regarding providing preservice teachers with versatile tools is analysis of local context, yet the main concern of CLT is to enhance communication in the classroom through communicative activities. Bax (2003) cites this as the major difficulty of CLT, focusing on communication and methodology rather than context. As my data reveal, when teachers get more experienced over the years, their beliefs regarding CLT change to a great extent. So rather than throwing novice teachers head first into their initial teaching assignment and expecting them to find their own way within the local context, I believe administrators in teacher education programs should pay more attention to realities within local contexts and equip prospective teachers with tools that empower them to teach most appropriately and effectively.

Another significant issue regarding language teacher education is pedagogical. Rather than taking CLT for granted and educating preservice teachers with so-called modern techniques, there needs to be a “visible pedagogy” (Bernstein, 1990, p. 73) with clearly defined teacher roles and techniques so that new teachers can help accelerate language learners’ process of meaning making in another language. By providing new teachers with explicit instruction in their roles as well as teaching techniques that will effectively serve the local context, teacher education programs would achieve an expeditious change, which is the most crucial educational objective. The added benefit would be that young and energetic language teachers will not have to spend years realising the inappropriateness of the tools they learned in their preservice training.

References

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When asked how they could improve their language skills in a second language (L2), most learners would answer that they need to “read more!” At the same time, media and technology tend to dominate the time and minds of students. Therefore, in an effort to champion creative methods that encourage reading in the L2, we have found a way to embrace media rather than ignore it. Specifically, we have begun integrating authentic media into our ESL/EFL reading classes through the use of subtitled “foreign” films; that is, films produced in languages that our students do not speak or understand.

The idea of using subtitled films to develop L2 language skills, such as reading fluency, lexicon, and grammatical knowledge, is not entirely new. In the past, we occasionally used English language films with the sound turned off and the subtitles turned on, but we wanted something to hold students’ attention for longer than a short segment of a “silent” movie.

So we came up with the idea of using foreign films in our reading classes. This would enable us to show an entire film with English subtitles, providing the music and sound effects for the complete video experience. We have found that using foreign films in this way provides opportunities to present thought-provoking ideas that interest students more than a text might.

Sample Films
We have been selective in choosing films that have sufficient depth to engage students more fully in reading and film-related activities and to stimulate critical thinking and cultural awareness in our predominantly Chinese ESL learners. Language in film provides ideal opportunities to look closely at how natural language is used to express ideas for meaningful purposes. Here are some of the films we have used with positive results:

• Life Is Beautiful (Benigni, 1997). This romantic yet tragic Italian-language film depicts a father’s ability to use humor to protect his son from the harsh realities of a Nazi concentration camp. Many themes arise, such as family, parenting, and attitude toward hardship as well as how love, imagination, and courage can conquer problems. The film presents opportunities to build language activities related to the historical background of World War II and how it affected European geography.

• The Kite Runner (Forster, 2007). Set in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion, this Persian-language story centers around the friendship of two young boys and depicts profound issues such as social class, cultural traditions, love, family, honesty, and integrity—all of which serve as excellent topics for discussion and activity. Additionally, educational issues can be developed around global or regional geography, history, and politics.

• Nose, Iranian Style (Oskouei, 2006). Through interviews and depictions of surgical operations, this intriguing Persian-language documentary reveals the growing trend of plastic surgery in Iran by presenting facts and attitudes among Iranian men and women about the popularity of rhinoplasty. Numerous discussions and activities can be built around cultural standards, trends, social attitudes, politics, religion, and history.

• Goodbye Lenin! (Becker, 2003). In this German-language story, a teenage boy tries to protect his mother from the news that the communist regime of East Germany has ended because she is recovering from a stroke and cannot handle trauma. In many creative and humorous ways, he recreates the world of East Germany inside their apartment. Viewers are exposed to varying types and consequences of love and commitment, which can be used creatively as activity and discussion topics.

Language in film provides ideal opportunities to look closely at how natural language is used to express ideas for meaningful purposes.
**Previewing Activities**

Internet-based research and minipresentation activities have worked successfully in our courses. Student pairs or groups conducted research on assigned film-relevant topics and created Microsoft PowerPoint presentations (and handouts) for their peers. For example, for *Life is Beautiful*, students researched historical aspects of the Nazi regime, including the World War II timeline, statistics relating to the Jewish (or Italian Jewish) population living in Europe and those who were executed, political or geographical changes before and after World War II, and the effects of World War II on the German economy.

**Viewing Activities for Reading Fluency, Lexicon, and Grammar**

To help students work on their reading skills while watching films, we developed worksheets that students completed in sections between scenes. Here is a sample question from our *Goodbye Lenin!* worksheet:

After her husband left, Alex’s mother became a _______.

a. political activist  
b. passionate crusader  
c. radical politician  
d. depressed mother

A related technique is to show selected scenes twice. After the first viewing, we discussed the main idea, and the second viewing allowed for more of a focus on specific language used in the scene or dialogue because students were more familiar with the scene.

**Grammar and vocabulary development.** Subtitled foreign films can also be used to focus on vocabulary and grammar by extracting words or chunks of language from dialogue. For instance, we often stopped the film between scenes to discuss the meaning and use of idioms, phrasal verbs, and new vocabulary. Thus, students were exposed to frequently used lexical verbs, which are “more useful to students receptively and in production, whereas relatively rare words will prove less useful in earlier stages of language learning” (Biber & Reppen, 2002, p. 205). We compiled several uses of commonly used lexical verbs in various verb tenses (e.g., *say, get, go, know, think, see, make, come*) to draw attention to how frequently they are used to form idioms or in collocations.

Note-taking activities, in which students were asked to quickly jot down unknown words during viewing, were used for a multitude of follow-up activities such as working together to define words and choosing words from their “unknown” list to write on the board for group discussion on meaning and use or to create a weekly vocabulary list.

Finally, for focus on grammar, our worksheets included questions about grammatical patterns (e.g., how a character shifts verb tenses) to illustrate when or why verb tense shifts occur. Because grammar is in context, meaning takes precedence over or solidifies grammar rule knowledge. Teachers shouldn’t overlook the usefulness of attention to function words in reading (Field, 2008), so we created exercises that required students to watch for certain phrases, perhaps in a dialogue, and asked them to complete a fill-in-the-blank phrase with the correct preposition or article.

**Postviewing Activities and Expansion**

The postviewing activities we have found to be most successful are those
that help students think critically by synthesizing key ideas presented in the film, relating ideas to their own experiences, and expressing their ideas in the L2. For example, we asked students what they would have done in a particular situation or whether they support the decision that a particular character made. For instance, we had two writing prompts for *Goodbye Lenin!*

- In your opinion, was Alex right in hiding the truth from his mother? Why or why not?
- Imagine that you were in an accident and went into a coma for a year. What kinds of changes do you think could happen? How would you feel? How would you deal with the changes and the fact that you had missed a year of your life?

And here is a prompt that we used for *Life Is Beautiful*:

- In the movie, the father used humor and a positive attitude to help his son and protect him from the truth. To what extent (how much) does a person’s attitude affect his or her circumstances?

These prompts encouraged students to think about and respond to issues in the film while also integrating other language skills such as writing. We did not grade student responses. We commented and gave feedback on content to acknowledge effort and focus on strengths as well as ideas requiring further explanation or clarification or that appeared to be contradictory.

### Student Feedback

After our first semester of using subtitled foreign films in our advanced reading courses, we wanted to get student perspectives on both the usefulness of viewing subtitled films and the film-related activities. We asked them to respond to the question, “What are the benefits of watching subtitled films in the ESL reading class?” The feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

- It’s a fun way to learn vocabulary! There are many new words in the film, so we can take notes and write down the new words.
- It can improve our skill of catching main ideas.
- An interesting movie really helps us to learn more vocabulary. If we study words from articles, that can be boring because we just read without sounds or images. Watching a movie will be more active way to learn vocabulary.
- I think reading the subtitles can help us understand better what they are talking about in the film. As we are not native speakers, we cannot catch some of their words or sayings if we listen to native speakers.
- Each sentence has a key word—it helps us to understand the meaning because we can find the key word when we read.
- We learn to read faster because different from reading a book, every sentence of the subtitles just lasts a few seconds.

Students enjoyed this change of pace in the reading classroom—not only did they have fun watching films, but they also viewed it as a great way to build vocabulary and reading fluency.

Regularly incorporating foreign films into our academic reading classes has given us all a break from the routine reading of textbooks and articles while effectively developing students’ reading skills at all levels. With previewing activities, worksheets, and expansion and application activities, these particular subtitled foreign films allowed us to teach language skills and cultural awareness in an optimal and authentic way.

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Michelle Fiorito teaches EFL courses at Universität Ulm, in Germany.

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Writing is often viewed as a solitary endeavor, but it is not necessarily solitary. Woodward and Bernstein collaborated, as do most journalists to a certain extent. Professional and amateur writers flock to workshops where they exchange ideas, gripe about rejection slips, and realize that they are not alone. As a teacher who writes, I wanted my EFL university students to build community in order to help each other improve their speaking and listening skills while they developed better writing skills.

Parker Palmer’s (1998) words inspire me, and I want to live out his observation:

> Our knowledge of the world comes from gathering around great things in a complex and interactive community of truth. But good teachers do more than deliver the news from that community to their students. Good teachers replicate the process of knowing by engaging students in the dynamic of the community of truth. (p. 115)

Essayist and novelist Anne Lamott (1994) suggests that writers form groups because people are social animals. Addressing the proverbial budding writer, Lamott observes:

> All the while you are writing away, editing, revising, trying new leads, new endings, until finally, at some point, you want some feedback. You want other people to read it. You want to know what they think. . . . We want to talk with others of our species. . . . You have no idea whether [your work] sings to anyone but you. You wouldn’t spend a month on an oil painting and then mummify it. (pp. 151–152)

I agree. Students want and need to share their work, to come out of their safe hiding places and see what others think about their writing.

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I agree. Students want and need to share their work, to come out of their safe hiding places and see what others think about their writing. In my classroom, I encourage students to share their work with their fellow students in a cooperative environment where they learn from each other. I strive to build a community of truth in my classroom so that students can hone their writing skills in an atmosphere of respect, caring, and truth.

At Sogang University in Seoul, I often taught intermediate composition classes and an advanced writing class for freshmen who had lived overseas or graduated from a foreign language classroom. In addition, I taught the required four-skill freshman English classes that emphasized reading and writing while requiring that I not overlook speaking or listening. Our department strove to provide students with the opportunity to experience the messy, imperfect task of communicating in English after years of high school studying that usually favored grammatically perfect English. We wanted to move them from the “fishbowl English” that they studied for tests to the “open seas English” (Yoshida, 2001/2002) used to communicate ideas, emotions, and experiences. Communal writing activities helped me meet that objective.

To ensure that classes were engaging and addressed these EFL students’ needs as writers, I modified or developed a number of activities that allowed them to collaborate. I did not want my voice to dominate our lessons. I believe the activities that I describe in this article would work successfully in many environments, with upper-level high school students and adults as well as university students.

This I Believe

Edward R. Murrow, a broadcaster from the early days of radio and television, created a radio program called This I Believe, which invited people from all segments of society to share their deeply held beliefs. Recently, National Public Radio revived This I Believe, and each Monday it broadcasts a new essay.
At the Act One Screenwriting conference that I attended in 2005, each writer had to compose a This I Believe essay and share it with the class. Our director, Barbara Nicolosi, and a faculty member, Karen Hall, asserted that unless writers understand and can articulate their own beliefs and motivations, their writing would not ring true and would not reflect their best effort. Thus each session of the month-long workshop began with a writer stating a deeply held belief and sharing the life experience that proved its personal significance.

My admiration for my peers increased as I heard how each person had overcome and learned from adversity or how a careful observation of life had made them see people differently and more clearly. These brief essays, stated with sincerity and courage, transformed our group from a collection of writers from different generations, regions, and ethnicities to a community of writers.

Because this powerful experience helped me, I decided to use it in my classes with advanced EFL writers as well as second-semester freshmen whose English proficiency levels range from low-intermediate to advanced. I began by showing the students NPR’s This I Believe Web site and explaining its history. I then played a favorite example, usually Studs Terkel’s (2005) “Community in Action” essay because it emphasizes the theme of community. I continued by browsing the Web site and pointing out other examples, including “Unleashing the Power of Creativity,” by Bill Gates (2005), and “Growth That Starts From Thinking,” by Eleanor Roosevelt (n.d.). I also showed students how to search for more essays on the Web site by theme or author’s name.

For homework, I asked students to read and print out the information on writing good essays (This I Believe, n.d.). They then signed up for a day to present their essay to the class. Each subsequent class began with a student’s This I Believe reading. We learned about each other’s struggle to compete with a perfect sister, sudden fear when a doctor delivered a potential cancer diagnosis, and so on. These reverent readings were a beautiful beginning to the writing class and illustrated the power of the word. What better way to show that our writing can empower and transform us?

**Coffee House Readings**

When students completed a narrative assignment, they listened to each other’s work. If possible, I arranged for them to perform their readings in the English café on campus. Often students simply read in our classroom, and I allowed them to invite friends to the performance.

Sometimes nervous and giggly, sometimes confident and poised, each student went to the front of the room and read his or her story. As each story unfolded, the writer mesmerized the audience. The writer won them over and could feel it. The words held emotion, effect, and power—and in English no less. Many of these students had never experienced such a moment in school. Although they first had dreaded this activity, many came to appreciate the challenge.

**Brainstorming Sessions**

For persuasive writing, I held small-group brainstorming sessions during my office hours. These sessions were similar to a story meeting for a publication. Depending on the assignment, students came with three possible topics or an outline and thesis statement, and they got a chance to share what they were planning to write and why. Peers offered suggestions on how to strengthen a topic, where to get more information, or what questions the topic prompted in the reader’s mind.

By meeting in a small group, students felt less inhibited about speaking, and as writers they encouraged and supported each other. I conducted the sessions in an empty classroom or the university’s English café. Each group consisted of four or five students who were prepared to talk about their topic, why they had chosen it, and what questions they hoped to answer through the process of writing. To make sure that students had considered their topic, I required that they complete a worksheet asking them to state their thesis and preliminary supporting evidence.

One by one, students shared what they planned to write. Group members offered suggestions on how to make a paper stronger and asked questions that helped develop a thesis. Each student was encouraged to offer a comment during this phase, and because of the small-group they felt comfortable doing so.

I participated in the same capacity as the students, asking pertinent questions and sharing suggestions on what to explore, emphasize, or eliminate. Although I realized that as a teacher it was unrealistic to expect that students would not defer to me because I was older and had the grade book, I tried to facilitate...
and respond with questions rather than answers so that each student would get the most out of the experience. As part of the self-assessment, students had to send me an e-mail explaining how the group had or had not helped.

Small-Group Blogs

An avid blogger, I started a blog on books with a friend from high school (http://smkxingu.blogspot.com). Reading about her thoughts on books that she has read added an interesting dimension to our friendship. It also inspired me to shift from having a class blog that features all of our writing work to putting the students in self-selected theme-based groups and having them write and edit a blog about a specific topic.

In my content-based film class, we selected three genres: action, drama, and romantic comedy. Then each student joined one of the blog “staffs.” All students had to contribute to the blog each week, and each student had a different day to post so that there was new content each day. Each blog had an editor, who acted as a point person when the blog needed my help.

Having a common theme and a staff made the blogs more focused and dynamic. I gave students class time for story meetings and organizational planning. All blogs contained a sitemeter (see, e.g., http://www.sitemeter.com) that enabled students to see how many people were reading their work and from which country they accessed the site. For example, the “Popcorn on a Friday Night” writers saw that people from Argentina, Romania, Italy, Canada, Thailand, Norway, Croatia, the United States, and the United Kingdom read their writing.

Consensus Letters

When teaching students how to write business letters, I assigned them to pair up and collaborate as they wrote to a prominent politician, celebrity, or business leader. The recipient did not have to be a native English speaker, but could not be a Korean speaker; this requirement helped to avoid a situation in which students would naturally have used their native language. First, students decided on whom to write to and then had to agree on the content. The letter could not contain any statements that writers disagreed with or felt uncomfortable about. Thus students had to discuss and negotiate their message respectfully and tactfully.

I assessed the letters for proper format, word choice, organization, and grammar, and gave one grade to both students in a pair. Because they were required to find common ground in this writing assignment, students used English to learn about their partner, to express their own opinions, and to resolve conflict.

When students write collaboratively, classes are more engaging and lively because they learn as a community rather than as a collection of individual writers. Students have opportunities to reinforce their speaking and listening in authentic contexts. They leave class knowing not only how to write a good introduction or a satisfying conclusion, but also that writing is a source of connection, inspiration, and empowerment.

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Language development and the influence of genetics (nature) versus nurture have been debated, but the positive effect of a supportive and safe environment is evident. Creating a social constructivist environment is the best choice to teach language meaning, culture, and understanding with practical usage. There are different types of second or foreign language learning, but all language students have to learn vocabulary, grammatical rules, sentence construction, and culture for personal expression.

Knowledge of a new language involves making meaning and constructing new concepts that will be embedded in existing concepts or schemas, as described by Piaget (1953), the grandfather of constructivism. The process of incorporating new information into existing knowledge involves cognitive dialogue, social interaction, and culture (Vygotsky, 1934/1962). To teach using Vygotsky’s theories, educators must create an interactive environment where students feel safe to create meaningful dialogue, experience cultural understanding, and apply language usage.

Understanding Social Constructivism

Both Piaget (1953) and Vygotsky (1934/1962) believed in and helped form constructivism; however, their views on it differed. Piaget’s constructivism places great emphasis on the individual and how the individual interprets knowledge by building schemas to incorporate or modify into existing concepts (Powell, 2006). Vygotsky believed that students learn from cultural understanding, cognitive dialogue, and constructing knowledge through social interaction (Powell, 2006). These different theories led to the two forms of constructivism.

Social constructivism places more of an emphasis on the relationship between the individual and the societal aspects surrounding him or her. Cognitive constructivism focuses more on students’ ability to individually understand and construct concepts. The main differences come from how educators teach constructively, whether it is social or cognitive.

Vygotsky (1934/1962) would say that social interaction and culturally organized activities are necessary in the classroom for proper psychological development to occur. The teacher (who has more knowledge than the student) must be involved in teaching these activities, which results in forming the zone of proximal development in which the student learns with assistance; based on this, the student will later be able to complete the task or activity on his or her own. Therefore, students who learn in a social constructivist classroom will be engaged in activities, such as cooperative learning projects, in which the experience of working together enhances their relationship skills.

Although social and cognitive constructivism are different, there is one similarity: the way constructivist classrooms should be run:

Both Piaget and Vygotsky agreed that the teacher’s role was that of a facilitator and guide and not of a director or dictator. Piaget saw children gaining knowledge from organizing and reorganizing data and information they received. Vygotsky saw social interaction or collaboration as the chief method for learning and placed more emphasis on language development. (Powell, 2006, p. 54)

Both views of constructivism can be incorporated into the English language classroom and should be incorporated for the best development of students. Specifically, social constructivism can be quite useful in an ESOL classroom because students work together to achieve similar goals. However, constructivism should not happen in one or two of a student’s classes; it should happen in all of them. Constructivism can show students how to think critically, which is helpful not just in class, but in real life as well.

Language Meaning and Understanding

The components of a social constructivist environment include providing many group activities that allow students to experience personal and meaningful practices. When ESOL students learn through personal experience with cultural meaning, they will connect their new thoughts and emotions to feelings they know. They will create new meanings through usage or interactive activities with understanding of what was learned.
Educational psychology theorists depict language development as containing five major aspects: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Powell, 2006). Phonology is a sound system (phonetics) whereby sounds are put together to make words. Morphology is a process using accurate forms or parts of words such as suffixes (e.g., *ly*) or prefixes (e.g., *un*) to change meaning. Syntax is a way of putting words together to form phrases or partial sentences using grammatical rules. Semantics refers to putting words together to form meaningful sentences. Pragmatics is an application or use of sentences to portray intention.

ESOL teachers who support the language development process and do not demean mistakes are rewarded with students who expand their verbal interaction confidently. Meaning is personal, and the social constructivist environment must be comfortable, fostering self-expression without fear, barriers, or aversive judgments.

When an ESOL student experiences feelings of competence in language usage, he or she is apt to use English more often. Using language effectively is a complex endeavor in which the user has to put together thousands of words in a particular way and articulate them in order to be an effective communicator (Ormond, 2003). When learning a new language, one can experience some thoughts occurring in one language and not in the other because the culture is different. For example, Greek traditional celebrations involve being open and generous to strangers or feeling like close friends. The word *friends* (*phili*) in Greek means kiss, which implies more intimacy than in the English language, where personal boundaries are usually stricter.

Language learning or concept building occurs more effectively in a social constructivist environment because interaction facilitates the learning of dialogue, meaning, culture, and usage.

**Constructivist Dialogue and Culture**

When learning languages, students can apply knowledge and experience to alternate ways of thinking and cultural or societal connections. Bigge and Shermis (2004) point out that “Vygotsky thought that within human development, the two main lines—individual and cultural development—intersect. Thus the two aspects of ‘phylogenetic’ development are centered in language and thinking” (p. 127). These phylogenetic or evolutionary relationships of thinking in a new language imply learning nuances of expression.

Connecting word phrases to what is known allows ESOL students to form new concepts that increase with usage. An actor who learns a new play will read the scene repeatedly and study the character’s relationship of self to others while interacting; the same holds true for a new language learner. Similar to learning a play, in the process of learning a language, the total immersion of self into the new culture and behavior is inherent.

To create cultural understanding, one expresses new types of feeling and thinking. Gestalt psychology (thinking of the whole as greater than the sum of its parts) was popular in the early 20th century and was developed in response to the elemental or “atomic” type of psychology that preceded it (Bigge & Shermis, 2004). When expressing a phrase or sentence in a different language, one has to connect to the feeling of the whole pattern of expression rather than being stuck in the elemental or technical correctness of each word.

Communicating the new feeling in the appropriate context takes initial precedence over using the correct form of a word. Thinking and feeling in the new language gives students the ability to communicate and find comfort zones or confidence that increases with cultural dialogue and experience.

Teaching ESOL students involves individual internalization in different cognitive concepts. For example, a French ESOL student has to learn new English phrasing because the French put emphasis on oneself using self-reflective verbs. When a French person expresses a feeling with “MOI, je me sens vide,” it means “ME, I feel myself empty.” Most native English speakers do not discuss feeling empty or put such emphasis on self in a sentence. For French students, learning English implies learning a different way of internalization and intention.

Vygotsky’s theory says that “it is the internalization of overt action that makes thought; and it is the internalization of external Dialogue that brings
Learning English can be overwhelming and intimidating for ESOL students, but it can also be enjoyable when enhanced by social interaction in a supportive classroom.

the powerful tool of language to bear upon our streams of thought” (Bigge & Shermis, 2004, p. 127). Understanding language culture and internal thinking helps ESOL students when they construct new expressions.

Social Interaction and Practical Usage

The process of learning English and making meaning can be complex and challenging for ESOL students. Using language or words that symbolize meaning and concepts is a process that is both artistic and scientific (Ormond, 2003). A social constructivist atmosphere conducive to learning in a diverse environment helps teachers and students participate. Creating an atmosphere with activities that incorporate varied learning styles increases the chances of successful usage and second language acquisition. Such activities as watching English-language movies, reading poetry, or acting in dramatic plays facilitate ESOL students’ learning of vocabulary and grammar. In language development, it is evident that diversity implies a constructivist process that is personal and based on individual experience or background usage.

ESOL teachers who facilitate group projects and social interaction help build construction and thinking in students. The words that are put together to express personal meaning become more authentic and include total application of the culture. Wittgenstein (1953) states that understanding comes only after language use and using language occurs before thinking can be established. This implies that practice and usage create thinking and meaning. Student participation in a socially interactive, accepting, and constructive classroom promotes learning engagement by surrounding students with cultural activities that develop personal expression specific to the new language.

Learning a new way of thinking and perceiving can bloom in a social constructivist environment because students can express internal feelings without fear or embarrassment. Teachers need to encourage students to use language to overcome barriers and help decrease mistakes as confidence grows. Listening to dialogues and stories via tapes or readings can assist in the social concentration process. ESOL students could be encouraged to identify with music and dancing from their native countries, which helps them gain confidence, self-esteem, and self-acceptance. It is now possible to understand how social constructivism in the classroom can support ESOL students in their personal journey into the new world of English-language culture.

Learning English can be overwhelming and intimidating for ESOL students, but it can also be enjoyable when enhanced by social interaction in a supportive classroom. It is important to help ESOL students develop confidence and competency, and social constructivist teaching strategies can help. As students get used to the new feelings and ways of thinking in English, the bridge between their two worlds becomes less daunting and they can connect ideas and thoughts more readily.

References


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Cultural and Educational Pressure to Excel

In an article on the principles of teaching and learning, Brophy (1998) points out that “productive contexts for learning feature an ethic of caring that pervades teacher/student and student/student interactions” (p. 8). Establishing and maintaining a supportive classroom environment represents one of the most pertinent challenges faced by educators everywhere. However, in recent years, creating cohesive classroom environments has become an even more fundamental issue for language educators in tertiary-level learning contexts in northeast Asia.

Although Japanese, Korean, and Chinese learners are, as a rule, polite, friendly, and cooperative with their professors and teachers, they tacitly view the experience of formal classroom learning as one in which they are engaged in battle with their peers for a meager percentage of available top grades. Northeast Asians grow up in fiercely competitive test-based educational systems where the path to individual academic success is fraught at every turn by steep grading curves and relentless parental and societal pressure.

Throughout their youth, northeast Asian learners are burdened with other people’s (often unrealistic) expectations of them as they trudge onward and upward toward the single most important day of their entire lives: the day they sit for their college entrance exams. For many Asian students, their entire future is determined at a single stroke by their performance on the university entrance exams. Earning a degree from a top-ranked university in Japan, Korea, or China guarantees a top-notch professional career, enviable lifelong socioeconomic status, and the promise of enhancing one’s family’s social standing in the community.

On the other hand, failing to gain admission to a respectable university often means a life of hard manual labor and, in some cases, irreparable loss of face. Failure to excel academically has become a social taboo in northeast Asian cultures, one that sometimes leads to profound humiliation that Westerners can hardly fathom.

A Radical Change Is Needed

Under such intense pressure to stand out academically among one’s peers, these students are done no favors by the intensified dynamic of classroom competition in language learning contexts. Therefore, it is hardly any wonder that northeast Asian foreign language learners are reluctant to engage in communicative activities that require them to openly share their ideas, feelings, dreams, hopes, and fears with others. They find communicative classroom interaction unfamiliar and perceive it at best as a negligible step toward achieving the top grade. What’s more, open verbal in-class communication in English hazards the unwelcome risk of losing face in front of the teacher and fellow students.

Notwithstanding such formidable psychosocial obstacles, it behooves EFL teachers to establish learning communities in their classrooms that encourage students to embrace opportunities for communicative learning. Communication necessarily implies cooperation, and on this subject Brophy (1998) also claims that “students are likely to show improved achievement outcomes when they engage in forms of co-operative learning as an alternative to completing assignments on their own” (p. 27).

The crucial point to be emphasized is that cooperative learning ultimately hinges on students’ ability to relate to each other as partners, on their capacity for breaking the ice right at the start of the course, and on their willingness...
to continue relating to one another in noncompetitive ways throughout the semester. Northeast Asian students studying foreign languages must learn to make the radical shift from perceiving class peers as competitors vying for the precious and few hard-to-get top grades to valued partners participating in the overall shared effort of language learning.

In his discussion of the benefits of communicative language teaching, Brown (1994) claims that effective language learning requires cooperative, real-life communicative classroom interaction:

> Beyond grammatical discourse elements in communication, we [language teachers] are probing the nature of social, cultural, and pragmatic features of language. We are exploring pedagogical means for “real-life” communication in the classroom. . . . We are equipping our students with tools for generating unrehearsed language performance “out there” when they leave the womb of our classrooms. . . . We are looking at learners as partners in a cooperative venture. And our classroom practices seek to draw on whatever intrinsically sparks learners to reach their fullest potential. (p. 77)

### Digital Storytelling Shorts

Digital storytelling in the form of short film projects represents an approach to classroom interaction that specifically addresses the need for northeast Asian EFL university students to shift their perspective. This type of storytelling lowers their inhibitions about openly communicating in a foreign language and helps them develop rapport with one another as part of the greater goal of building a classroom community that promotes cooperative learning.

Students can benefit from digital storytelling lessons in several direct ways. They get a chance to introduce themselves to the rest of the class through low-risk activities. They can take their first important step toward building rapport with their peers, which will become an essential ingredient in all future collaborative class work (pair work, group projects, plenary discussions, debates, etc). They gain confidence in using the specific software needed to produce videos. They have ample opportunities to practice spoken and written narrative forms of English.

Incidental objectives for students include learning personal details about peers as part of the overall goal of building a classroom community and expressing creativity and self-reflection by composing narratives about themselves.

### A Technology-Integrated Solution

Over the years, many EFL teachers have required students to give oral self-introductions in English in front of the class, an activity that often results in awkward, sometimes embarrassing situations both for the presenter and for the rest of the class. Students nervously and mechanically recite memorized scripts containing what they assume the teacher wants to hear, often forgetting significant portions of their presentations. Some students resort to attempts at masking their anxiety behind comic relief, which often fails to provoke laughter from the class and usually makes the situation even worse.

Digital storytelling activities allow students to access Windows Movie Maker or Apple iMovie software to produce short filmed self-presentations (3–5 minutes long) as a fun and nonthreatening alternative to traditional student-fronted self-introductions. Students collect photos and then write, narrate, and produce their own self-introduction short film to present to the rest of the class at the beginning of the semester.

Teachers can personalize these activities by having students choose topics about particularly meaningful episodes in their lives: childhood memories, a favorite trip abroad, academic and career aspirations, hopes and dreams for their country’s future, and so on. Later in the course, pairs and groups can work together to make films with other aims, such as developing a creative ending to a story or rewriting the ending to a favorite fairy tale, novel, or movie. Social issues such as civil rights, couples living together before marriage, and mandatory military service can also be explored as topics for discussion and debate.

Northeast Asian students are well known for their proclivity toward all things technological. Therefore, digital storytelling serves the further purpose of enhancing student motivation to learn and practice English skills in the classroom.

Learners begin—right at the start of the semester—to overcome their inhibitions about openly relating to others.
My Experience With Digital Storytelling

My freshman English Academic Writing and English Academic Presentations classes at a top-ranked university in South Korea openly embrace activities and projects involving Web 2.0 and software technologies. South Korea boasts having more of its citizens with home Internet connections per capita than any other country in the world. Internet and software technologies have become emblematic of the country’s culture. For its part, Japan matches South Korea’s enthusiasm for high-tech gadgetry, as do an increasing number of people in all the major cities in China. Therefore, providing my northeast Asian students from these countries with the opportunity to extend their passion for technology to creative English projects makes sense.

As mentioned earlier, it is imperative that language learners be provided with opportunities to practice the target language in communicative classroom contexts. Digital storytelling offers students a low-risk means of introducing themselves to their classes and a safe way to build rapport with their peers, prepare and present English (target language) sentences in oral (narrated) and written (film script) form, and develop skill in using software tools that will be needed for other technology-based activities in the future.

In a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation, I take the class through each step in the process of using iMovie or Movie Maker software to research and produce video material. The effectiveness of assignments is enhanced when I go over practice examples with students before releasing them to work independently. The best digital storytelling Web site that I have come across in my research is DigiTales: The Art of Digital Storytelling (http://www.digitales.us), which contains sample stories that students can access, a helpful storyboard template, several links to resources, tutorials, and suggestions for peer review and commentary. Teachers might also consider modeling the activity by sharing a sample digital story film about their own life.

Benefits

One of the main benefits of incorporating digital storytelling short film activities into your course curricula centers on the creation of a supportive and cohesive classroom environment in which students feel comfortable sharing personal facts about themselves in a nonthreatening way. In so doing, learners begin—right at the start of the semester—to overcome their inhibitions about openly relating to others. And most important, they begin to view their peers less as competitors and more as partners who share the same language learning goals.

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Adult ESOL teachers are often asked to teach skills other than language, including financial skills such as writing a check, opening a bank account, or reading a paystub. Teachers are not always experts on such subjects because their natural tendency is to focus more on the language aspect.

Many ESOL textbooks provide lessons on these nonlanguage topics, but I find they lack authenticity in that the materials are oversimplified and do not match their real-world equivalent or they impose grammar or vocabulary that is not relevant to the task. However, authentic materials that are level appropriate are often hard to come by. In the case of authentic financial materials such as checks, paystubs, or account forms, the personal data that is shown on them could raise privacy concerns. This is why I instead use a wonderful site called Money Instructor.

Money Instructor is not an ESOL Web site. It is a site dedicated to helping instructors in general teach financial skills to all levels of students, including children and adults. What I find most useful are the sample materials. For example, you can print and cut out blank checks for students to fill out, and you can print out a paystub and go over the information on it as part of a work-related lesson. The materials are authentic enough without being too complicated and without running the risk of revealing someone’s personal information.

During one supermarket lesson, I used the printable checks and money along with fake sample credit cards I save from the offers I receive in the mail to practice the language skills needed to talk to a cashier. This helps students become familiar with not only the language they need in this situation but also the objects used so that they can easily remember what to say when they are at the grocery store. During another lesson on finding a job, I used the sample job applications to teach job-related vocabulary and help students organize the information they will need to have in order to complete any real-world job application.

Full lessons are also available on topics such as using cash versus credit cards. Even though the lessons were not designed with a language learning focus in mind, they are easily adaptable. For example, I adapted the lesson on using credit cards to teach reading skills, build financial vocabulary, and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using credit cards.

Some of the materials on Money Instructor are free, but most can only be accessed by becoming a member. You can try it free for a limited time, but if you choose to join, it is well worth the $29.95 yearly membership fee.

Money Instructor
www.moneyinstructor.com

Bryan Woerner works for the Center for Applied Linguistics and is a part-time teacher with the Alexandria City (Virginia) Public Schools Adult ESOL program, in the United States.
of different levels can use it at the same time, although they may be listening to different activities.

Overall, Randall’s ESL Cyber Listening Lab is professional and well maintained, although there are a few drawbacks. The division of the conversations into easy, medium, and difficult as opposed to proficiency levels makes it slightly harder for teachers to navigate when selecting the best activities to use with students. Students who find the easy conversations challenging might feel discouraged. Also, use of the information is restricted by copyright. The audio files are restricted to online listening and cannot be copied onto a CD or MP3 player, so people wishing to use the audio must have access to the Internet any time they want to use it. Although the activities on the Web site are not very interactive, creative teachers could come up with their own interactive activities to accompany those online.

Randall’s ESL Cyber Listening Lab has activities appropriate for all levels of learners, and many of the easy conversations could be used in differentiated lessons. The site is appropriate for the adults with whom I work. It could also be used with high school students, but the frequent focus on basic interpersonal communication skills makes the activities ideal for the adult education ESOL classroom.

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StoryCorps and Radio Diaries

Finding online listening material that is suited to your students’ proficiency level and age group and that matches your course objectives is sometimes tricky. Although there are plenty of ESL Web sites, I prefer to use authentic Web sites to help students develop listening skills and cultural awareness. StoryCorps and Radio Diaries are two sites that I consider valuable resources for intermediate- to advanced-level learners.

StoryCorps and Radio Diaries are both nonprofit projects with a mission to record and document the stories of everyday Americans. They are also broadcast on National Public Radio’s (NPR) Morning Edition and All Things Considered programs.

Specifically, the aim of StoryCorps is to record people, such as family members and friends, interviewing each other about personal experiences and events. The collection is hosted on the Web site, with a featured story on the home page. The site’s design is user friendly and clear. To listen to the stories, simply click on the “Listen to Stories” link on the left sidebar. From there you are taken to the main listing of stories, which includes a picture of the person or people giving their story, and, most important, an embedded audio player that plays the 3- to 5-minute interview right there in your Web browser. On the right side of the page, you can either type a keyword in the search bar or browse the interviews by topic, such as childhood, romance, work, or identity.

Although the transcripts are not available on the main StoryCorps Web site, they are available on NPR’s Web site (http://www.npr.org; search for “StoryCorps”). Initially, I find the story I want to use on StoryCorps, and then if I need the transcript I search for it by title on NPR’s site.

With a similar goal, Radio Diaries is a collection of longer stories, usually about 15–30 minutes, that give a personal glimpse into the lives and experiences of Americans. The site’s design is straightforward, with different categories of documentaries, including “New York Works,” in which people tell of their experiences in various jobs in the city; “Prison Diaries,” in which inmates talk about their day-to-day experiences; and “Teenage Diaries,” in which teens talk about the challenges they face in their everyday lives. Each story has a picture, a description, the option of listening with RealPlayer or as an embedded MP3 (which can also be downloaded by right-clicking on the link), and a link to the transcript.

I have found that these two Web sites provide stimulating listening material for the language learners I teach, who are college bound and usually 18 to 25 years old. The sites contain not only authentic language from native speakers but also content that serves as a springboard for developing critical thinking skills and cultural awareness. Furthermore, after completing listening activities, such as writing summaries and personal reactions, students can create their own material by recording their personal stories on similar themes, using StoryCorps or Radio Diaries as a model.

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Working in diverse classrooms, it is imperative that teacher educators equip students with theory, practical strategies, and classroom activities that will elevate students’ thinking and promote equity in the classroom. I believe that Strategies for Teaching English Learners is ideal for preservice teachers and is a great tool to accomplish these goals.

The book adopts a critical perspective that “asks teachers to develop a deeper understanding of the effects of culture and language on the success—or disenfranchise-ment—of minority students by school culture, curriculum, and instructional methods in order to promote social change toward increased social equity and social justice” (p. 7). Chapter 1 defines who English learners are and provides the necessary groundwork for teachers to meet these students’ needs. Chapters 2 and 3 concentrate on fundamental theoretical frameworks with a comprehensive focus on critical theory. Thus Strategies for Teaching English Learners has value not only in TESOL classes but also for other content area courses focused on producing teachers who are proficient in designing and implementing lessons appropriate for all students.

The book also contains practical examples, some geared toward teachers and others toward students. Chapters 4 and 5 give detailed descriptions of performance-based learning and learner-focused teaching. The text affords readers the opportunity to glean a surplus of information, but it is easy to follow and comprehend. Teachers will be able to apply the strategies directly to their practice without hesitation using the samples in the text as a framework.

Chapters 6–9 emphasize the importance of literacy instruction. These chapters not only focus on the reading and writing processes, they also give information on oral development, grammar, and the importance of allowing students to explore the fine arts to express themselves. Each chapter includes boxes that emphasize specific strategies teachers should address as they are instructing. In addition, each chapter includes a section titled “Practices for Teachers,” which includes practical ways that teachers can implement the ideas from the text in their classrooms.

It is essential that teachers create an inclusive classroom, one that fosters a community of learners through student discourse and acceptance of various cultures and value systems. Chapter 10 introduces culturally relevant practices by first defining culture and then listing various components that educators should be aware of, including beliefs, customs, and rituals. Chapter 11 focuses on the importance of discourse in the classroom and how “educators can affirm the voices that students bring to school” (p. 298). An introduction to various dual language programs is the focus of chapter 12. Chapter 13 discusses the various dialects in English and how people are sometimes discriminated against because they lack what some consider Standard English. Diaz-Rico states that educators should allow students to use their “nascent English” and funds of knowledge to assist them in creating a learning community. Educators should also recognize the importance of including the students’ support system in this community. Chapter 14 discusses ways to form a learning community within the classroom and ways to develop partnerships with families and the local community. Chapter 15 includes step-by-step instructions for service learning and designing a project-based learning lesson, graphic organizers to assist in the planning phase, and rubric samples for finished products.

Strategies for Teaching English Learners can benefit all teacher education programs. It can be used as a primary text for TESOL courses or a secondary text for content area courses in which incorporating strategies for English language learners is relevant and important.

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See also “English Lessons Combined With Environmental Issues,” http://www.tesol.org/et/.
Chuck Amorosino has announced his retirement as TESOL’s Executive Director, planned for March 28, 2010, at the conclusion of the 2010 TESOL Convention, in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. He will have served more than 11 years as executive director at the time of his retirement.

During Chuck’s tenure, TESOL has expanded its global presence and influences with cost-conscious electronic memberships, online distance learning, virtual seminars, worldwide symposia, and professional position statements.

With his team management approach, Chuck has helped TESOL as an association to focus on fiscal responsibility to ensure the association’s financial stability, especially during lean economic times.

TESOL President Mark Algren summarizes Chuck Amorosino’s years with TESOL with this statement: “Chuck’s tenacious manner, professional expertise, and passion for multicultural enrichment have certainly helped TESOL continue to grow as an influential global professional association.”

**TESOL Journal**

*TESOL Journal (TJ)* is a new refereed, practitioner-oriented electronic journal based on current theory and research in the field of TESOL. The goal of *TJ* is to provide an electronic forum for second and foreign language educators at all levels to engage with the ways that research and theorizing can inform, shape, and ground teaching practices and perspectives.

Margo DelliCarpini will be the first editor of *TJ*, scheduled to begin publication in 2010. Margo has worked in the TESOL field for the past 10 years and is currently an assistant professor of TESOL at Lehman College, City University of New York, where she teaches courses leading to ESOL certification in the Department of Middle and High School Education.

*TJ* invites you to submit previously unpublished articles on ESL, EFL, or English as an additional language that address research and classroom practices based on sound theorizing, grounded in thoughtful practice, and written in accessible and academic prose.

*TJ* also invites you to volunteer for the TJ Editorial Board. Editors will serve an initial appointment of 4 years.

**Submissions and queries should be e-mailed to TJ@tesol.org.** For detailed submission guidelines and to read about the journal and the new editor, Margo DelliCarpini, please go to www.tesol.org/TJ.
This past March, more than 5,800 professionals from over 90 countries came together at TESOL's 43rd Annual Convention and Exhibit, "Uncharted Mountains—Forging New Pathways," in Denver, Colorado, USA. Attendees participated in more than 1,200 sessions presented by upwards of 3,000 speakers and visited more than 100 exhibitors offering the latest products, professional texts, classroom resources, and multicultural instructional materials.

Despite the unexpected blizzard that hit Denver at the start of the convention, all those in attendance agreed it was a successful event. Said Convention Chair Gertrude Tinker Sachs, "With the help of so many, TESOL 2009 was a very dynamic and spirited conference from the beginning to end, with many uncharted mountains explored and some new pathways forged."

Educational, Career Development, and Networking Opportunities

Throughout the convention, attendees were able to participate in a variety of educational and networking events. In addition to the concurrent sessions available to all attendees, 490 educators participated in 35 Pre- and Postconvention Institutes that covered a wide variety of issues such as schoolwide strategies to promote achievement for English language learners, facilitating change in teaching practice, integrating peace education, intercultural communication strategies, coteaching for ESL and mainstream teachers, and implementing the PreK–12 English Language Proficiency Standards. In addition, more than 80 professionals participated in the TESOL Leadership Development Certificate Program workshops, covering a wide variety of leadership themes and skills from governance and advocacy to strategic planning and supervision.

New Events at TESOL

Featured at the TESOL convention this year was the new Experimental Session format. Presenters in these interactive, 2-hour sessions were able to present in an unusual format not guided by the familiar standards. A total of six Experimental Sessions were held covering topics such as arts and crafts, politics of the classroom, tolerance among teachers and students, and poetry.

The Electronic Village (EV) had a celebratory air as the Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) Interest Section, which hosts the EV, celebrated its 25th anniversary this year in Denver. Highlights included a special celebration of 25 years of the CALL IS and the latest in multimedia learning in addition to the regular CALL events.
Convention

Additionally, the “Breakfast With the Experts” session returned after a successful launch at last year’s convention. More than 20 TESOL experts hosted breakfast events covering topics as diverse as “Work-Life Balance in TESOL” and “Equity Issues Within Dual-Language Education.” Each breakfast was capped at a small number of attendees to encourage small-group discussion.

Plenary Sessions

Focusing on the new challenges and directions of second language education, a dynamic series of plenary speakers from around the world was arranged for Denver. Opening the convention was Allan Luke of Queensland University of Technology, in Brisbane, Australia, who spoke of policy priorities and the impact on linguistic and cultural minorities. TESOL President Shelley Wong of George Mason University, in Fairfax, Virginia, USA, addressed her cultural background and the impact that immigrants can have on environmental issues. At the Closing Plenary, Andy Hargreaves of the Lynch School of Education at Boston College, in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, spoke of “The Fourth Way” of educational change that can move the field ahead in innovation, inspiration, and sustainability.

TESOL Advocacy Leadership Recognition Honors

As part of the Opening Plenary, TESOL presented the Advocacy Leadership Recognition to two individuals who have in their positions outside of the TESOL profession supported and advocated for English language educators and learners. The U.S. Advocacy Leadership Recognition, presented to an individual nominated by the host affiliate for the convention, was presented to U.S. Rep. Jared Polis (D-CO) for his support of education and his work in founding the New America Schools in Colorado, which specifically serve immigrant students and English language learners. (Go to the TESOL Web site to see a special video greeting sent by Rep. Polis that was played at the convention.)

The Global Advocacy Leadership Recognition, presented to an individual nominated by a TESOL affiliate outside the United States, was presented for the first time to a pair of individuals rather than a single person. Nominated by the English Language Teachers Association of Macedonia (ELTAM), Zarko Hristovski and Goran Andonovski, who work as engineers in the business sector, were recognized for their support of ELTAM and for advancing the affiliate’s goals through their connections in the private and public sectors.

Convention Highlights Online

If you weren’t able to attend the Denver convention in person, you can catch up on the event with recordings of numerous sessions, including plenaries, that are available to members in the TESOL Resource Center (TRC) at www.tesol.org/ResourceCenter. TESOL convention presenters are encouraged to submit their papers or presentations to the TRC. For more information, contact resourcecenter@tesol.org.

“Re-imagine TESOL” in Boston in 2010!

It’s not too early to start planning for TESOL’s 44th Annual Convention and Exhibit! It will be held March 24–27, 2010, in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. The theme for the convention is “Re-imagining TESOL.”
The TESOL Doctoral Forum: Helping to Develop TESOL’s Rising Stars

A major goal of doctoral programs is to equip students with the concepts and skills necessary to become effective educational researchers. The teaching occurs in various methodology courses that students are required to take, but the learning occurs both in and outside the classroom—in student experiences from conducting research and interacting within a community of scholarly practice.

The Doctoral Forum at the TESOL Convention and Exhibit hosts a diverse assembly of more than 70 participants from institutions worldwide. During the 7-hour program, doctoral students can present their research and network with each other and with experienced TESOL researchers and educators to discuss their academic programs and dissertation projects.

Initial analysis of feedback from Doctoral Forum participants, gathered via an online survey for the past 2 years, provides valuable insight into the emotional and intellectual complexity of doctoral study and the importance of being able to collaborate with other students and faculty mentors. Participants suggest that the opportunity to present and discuss their research and to exchange ideas and experiences about doctoral study is invaluable to their development.

Because several academic departments provide funding only for presenters, we also recognize that presenting at the Forum allows many students to attend the TESOL convention. For some, this is their first introduction to the TESOL community at large. Additional findings are forthcoming and are intended to inform doctoral program development. For more information about the Doctoral Forum, please contact Dr. Joellen Coryell at joellen.coryell@utsa.edu.

Joellen E. Coryell, PhD
Assistant Professor of Adult Learning and Teaching
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Mabel Gallo Nominated as Argentina TESOL Honorary Member

The Argentina TESOL Board of Directors nominated Mabel Gallo as ARTESOL Honorary Member, March 20, 2009. Mabel was a founding member in 1987 and has helped organize every ARTESOL annual convention to date. She has remained active throughout the years in many roles, including as president and vice president, and has made an enormous contribution to the enhancement of the ARTESOL image. Mabel’s relentless support of ARTESOL encourages its members to engage in a search of alternatives for furthering the various interests of our profession.

The search for a new TESOL executive director will be announced soon. Information will appear on the TESOL Web site and in other venues. In the meantime, inquiries about the search should be directed to Jim Zaniello at Association Strategies, Inc. (ASI) by phone at 703-683-0580 or by e-mail at jim@assnstrategies.com. ASI’s Web site address is www.assnstrategies.com
**TECHOL Central Office Has Moved**

TESOL has moved to new offices. The new address is:

1925 Ballenger Avenue, Suite 550
Alexandria, VA 22314-6820 USA

Phone and fax numbers as well as mailing addresses for the TESOL Lockbox and BrightKey remain the same. Contact information is available at www.tesol.org.

**2010 Call for Member Resolutions**

Resolutions and/or reaffirmations may be submitted to the Rules and Resolutions Committee from the following sources: the Board of Directors (representing the general TESOL membership), an affiliate, an interest section, any standing committee, or a group of at least 10 members in good standing.

A proposed resolution bearing the signatures of at least 10 TESOL members in good standing must be received (not postmarked) by the chair of the Rules and Resolutions Committee by February 24, 2010.

Resolutions to be considered by the general membership at the Annual Business Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, should be sent to:

Allison Rainville  
Rules and Resolutions Committee Chair  
arainville527@gmail.com  

Please go to www.tesol.org : About TESOL : Governance for more information.

**Board Approves Position Statements**

At its meeting in March, the Board of Directors approved three new position statements for the association. The first, addressing the use of English entrance exams at schools and universities, opposes the practice of using such exams as the sole criterion for entrance into universities. The second, which calls for fairness and equity in ESOL program reduction, was developed by the Employment Issues Committee. The last, which opposes bullying and harassment in schools, was developed by the Diversity Committee. All three position statements are available online at www.tesol.org/PositionStatements.

**Online Courses and Seminars**

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

This volume in the TESOL Classroom Practice Series holds 16 narratives written by teacher–researchers. All have made inquiries into their own English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) practices. Their insights shed light on current ESOL classroom practice in teaching speaking and indicate the currents and directions in which the field might move. ESOL practitioners will find the descriptions of teaching practices in this book a useful guide for their own professional development.

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**Language Games: Innovative Activities for Teaching English**  
Maureen Snow Andrade, Editor

TESOL’s newest book uses language games to increase motivation, provide authentic and meaningful language practice, increase student engagement, and infuse the classroom with fun. This volume describes a variety of innovative games used today in language classrooms around the globe, reflecting different contexts and cultures.

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**Classroom Management**

Edited by Thomas S.C. Farrell  
TESOL Classroom Practice Series, Maria Dantas-Whitney, Sarah Rilling, and Lilia Sarova, Series Editors

Classroom Management moves away from the business connotation of the word management and explains the teacher’s job as facilitator rather than as micromanager of a classroom. This volume acknowledges the wonderful range of diversity that language teachers now face in their classes and suggests ways to foster language learning. This book offers ESOL students, teachers, administrators, and specialists practical strategies for enhancing their leadership performance.

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