Moving:

• The nomadic life of college EAP teachers
• Helping students adjust to new circumstances

• iLanguageing app for self reflection
• Added learner support for LearnIT2teach
• And lots more…
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Please, contact us ([editor@teslontario.org](mailto:editor@teslontario.org)) to let us know about upcoming events.
EDITOR’S NOTE

Each time I move, I’m reminded of how challenging it can be. When we moved from Japan 10 years ago, I found I had no driving record and no credit history. No insurance company wanted to insure me and no bank wanted to lend me the money to buy a car or even set me up with a credit card. And I was returning to my country of birth where I was proficient in the language and had family to assist me.

Just recently we moved again, this time just within Ontario. Nevertheless, it took a great deal of time and energy to organize and we’re still dealing with the aftermath. How difficult to pick up and set out for a country to which you have no links at all! How brave and resourceful ESL students in Ontario are!

In this issue of Contact, we consider moving. Jeff Brown lays out the situation faced by part-time teachers in Ontario’s college system who often find themselves moving like nomads from one school to another. Raj Singh gives us his insight into teaching English to students who have been moved into the Ontario Correctional Institute in Brampton. Catherine Dunn discusses helping international students who are moving between countries with different attitudes towards homosexuality. And Catherine Roach considers the special difficulties faced by low-literacy immigrants taking the citizenship exam.

We have three articles introducing apps and websites. Li-Shih Huang describes the use of the free iLanguageing app for self reflection in the development of oral communication skills. John Allan and his team have been working hard on adding learner support features to the LearnIT2teach courseware. And Svetlana Lupasco explains how she set up an ESL literacy blended online learning course for LINC learners.

Janna Fox introduces us to the new Canadian Association of Language Assessment and some of their initial studies. Sharifa Sharif gives us her perspective on the need for a wider variety of LINC programming options. And Imad Gburi helps us understand the dictogloss activity.

We have two book reviews: Adeesha Hack and Sharon Tan de Bibiana review The Checklist Manifesto, by Atul Gawande, and Angelo Di Giorgio reviews New Language, New Literacy: Teaching Literacy to English Language Learners by Jill Sinclair Bell.

We also have two lighthearted looks at metaphors for language teachers by Ben Shearon and Katherine Nelson Tanizawa. Finally, we have a special supplement celebrating Fran Marshall.

As always, we hope you’ll be moved to send us your submissions. In particular if you presented something at our recent TESL Ontario conference, we’d love to include a write up in the upcoming conference issue.

Brett Reynolds
editor@teslontario.org
**CONTACT**

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TESL ONTARIO NEWS

TESL Ontario wishes to congratulate the recipients of two TESL Ontario recognition awards designed to celebrate the excellence, commitment, dedication and compassion of individuals involved with the field of English language training.

- Sharon Rajabi, Toronto Catholic District School Board
- Marg Heidebrecht, Mohawk College
- Anne MacGregor-O’Neill, Toronto Catholic District School Board

Read more at TESL Ontario

LINC & ESL

Need for English language programs on the rise in Durham

“The programs are growing exponentially as more newcomers come to Durham Region,” says Cathy Condarcuri-Sain, co-ordinator for the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program at the Durham Catholic District School Board.

Read more at Durham Region

Union can’t understand cuts to language instruction

Peel’s public school board and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) remain at odds over cuts to English lessons for adult learners.

Read more at The Brampton Guardian

IMMIGRATION

Canadian immigration strike over

A union which represents Canadian immigration officers stationed at embassies and consulates around the world has come to a pay deal with the Canadian government after four months of industrial action.

Read more at Workpermit.com
Intake caps announced for Canadian experience class in 2014

The Canadian Experience Class (CEC) will be introducing a cap on application intake. From November 9, 2013 to October 31, 2014, a maximum of 12,000 applications will be accepted for review.

Read more at Canadavisas.com

LANGUAGE AND TEACHING

Why tough teachers get good results

I had a teacher once who called his students “idiots” when they screwed up. He was our orchestra conductor, a fierce Ukrainian immigrant named Jerry Kupchynsky, and when someone played out of tune, he would stop the entire group to yell, “Who eez deaf in first violins?” He made us rehearse until our fingers almost bled. He corrected our wayward hands and arms by poking at us with a pencil.

Read more at The Wall Street Journal

Bird study finds key info about human speech-language development

A study led by Xiaoching Li, PhD, at the LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans Neuroscience Center of Excellence, has shown for the first time how two tiny molecules regulate a gene implicated in speech and language impairments as well as autism disorders, and that social context of vocal behavior governs their function.

Read more at Science Daily

EF releases country-by-country English proficiency rankings

Read more at:

‘Flipped classrooms’ may not have any impact on learning

Professors at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, Calif. who are studying the effectiveness of a flipped classroom have bad news for advocates of the model: it might not make any difference.

Read more at USA Today
**USING A REFLECTION APP**

— *iLanguaging* — to mediate the development of oral communication skills

By Li-Shih Huang

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“We do not learn from experience..., we learn from reflecting on experience.”

*— John Dewey*

Metacognition is defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary as “awareness or analysis of one’s own learning or thinking processes.” We “metacognize” whenever we reflect on our thoughts, feelings, judgments, decisions, or actions, and, in so doing, evaluate their accuracy, effectiveness, and validity. The importance of metacognition and student learning was recently highlighted in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Lang, 2012), and a look into the literature indicates that metacognition is clearly one of the most intensively and extensively investigated cognitive processes in a wide range of fields, including psychology, neuroscience, education, and applied linguistics. How practitioners can engage learners in critical self-reflection, particularly through writing, is an area with a long history and a wealth of research. Yet, how to efficiently and effectively implement self-assessment and self-reflection to optimize students’ learning still eludes practitioners (Huang, 2011b).
The purpose of this article is to share a simple, field-tested task and a free tool that can be easily incorporated into the teaching of oral communication skills at any level. The task involves the use of a mobile app, \textit{iLanguaging}, which is freely available in both iPhone and Android versions. Instructors can use this tool to facilitate learners’ oral reflection after any speaking task, whether it is a presentation, an informal debate, a simulated negotiation, or small talk. The app embodies reflection through languaging (Becker, 1991; Swain, 2006), which is “the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language” (Swain, 2006, p. 98; see also Huang, 2011a). This tool, which is intended to facilitate learners’ task-specific, goal-oriented reflection, was created based on a literature review across disciplines on learner self-reflection in the process of developing metacognition in learning, as well as my research work in the area of self-reflection involving the use of multiple modalities (e.g., traditional written reflection, individual oral reflection, group reflective discussion, or computer-mediated reflection) (Huang, 2010, 2012). The questions built into the app and used to guide learners’ reflection drew from the levels of reflective learning framework put forward by such prominent thinkers as Mezirow (1991), Kember et al. (2000), and Peltier, Hay, and Drago (2005) and aim to promote autonomous learners in developing their strategic competence and oral language production.

**PROCEDURE**

First, download the \textit{iLanguaging} app and then use it to contact the app administrator to indicate your interest in incorporating the tool into your teaching. The administrator will assist you to establish a user ID and a password for each unique user, which can then be distributed to students before implementing the initial reflection task, and the students’ audio clips can be forwarded to the email account you set up for your course.

Next, ask students to download the \textit{iLanguaging} app, enter the user IDs and passwords assigned to them, and become familiar with the functions of the app.

The reflection task is best implemented \textit{immediately} after a speaking task and on a regular basis (e.g., weekly) over a period of time (e.g., a workshop series or a course) in order to reap the benefits. Reserve five to 10 minutes at the end of the class or a speaking task and ask learners to immediately audio record their thoughts about their performance of the speaking task by orally responding to the guiding questions prompted by the app. Note that learners will be able to either read or hear (by simply touching the microphone image) each question, record and listen to their own reflections after each question, and re-record or submit their responses in order to proceed to the next question.
CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

The inductive and recursive nature of reflection means that the outcomes of students’ learning through reflection are often not immediately apparent, and, as such, patience from the student and encouragement from the instructor are required. In addition, keep in mind that learners naturally have different levels of involvement when they engage in reflection. To promote engagement, take time at the outset to prepare learners to expect that the benefits of reflective learning may take time. It also would be helpful to share with students the benefits of engaging in ongoing reflection, drawing on the article by Lang (2012) listed in the References or the sample responses provided in the Appendix. During the process, link (anonymously or not, depending on the group dynamics) learners’ reflection to their performance in class. For more guidelines on the dos of reflection, refer to Huang (2011b).

Although using the iLanguaging app makes it easy for learners and instructors to implement reflection, contextual and individual learners’ variables are important factors to consider. Provide learners options to experiment with reflection tools so that they can discover their own preferences and the tools that provide the best mediational means for them to connect their own thoughts and actions. For those who do not have a mobile device, the guiding questions used in the app can be provided in print form (see Appendix A, followed by sample responses from a graduate-level student) and used to facilitate oral or written reflection. Whether they are app-mediated or not, the questions also can be used to implement pair or group reflection and discussion.

If it is not possible to set aside time for immediate post-speaking task reflection, videotape learners’ oral production and post them on a private YouTube channel with their permission. Request that learners view their own clips (i.e., a video stimulated recall) before they complete the reflection task via the app.

We have probably all been asked to reflect on our experiences through writing at some point or another in our learning journeys. And you may have asked your students to engage in written reflection as well. The next time you are thinking about asking students to reflect on their learning in writing, consider having students try out different types of reflection that may complement the goal of speaking skills development and help them identify more underlying thoughts, feelings, intentions, and actions. After all, as we all know, people can share their experiences in various ways other than writing.

1 Note that only the instructor and the student will know the user ID associated with the student’s name.
References


### Guided Reflection

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<tr>
<td>Creating</td>
<td>What should I do next? What steps should I take to overcome my speaking challenges?</td>
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Sample Responses from An Advanced-level Student Learning Oral Communication Skills

1. Remembering:
   - **What did I do to prepare for the speaking task?**: “I recorded my voice prior to the class and then listened to the recording. I have noticed that when I listen to my voice I can detect some problems that I cannot see clearly while I am speaking to people.”

   - **What did I do during the speaking task?**: “I tried to be effective in asking questions from my classmates not only to examine their ability to answer the questions but also to challenge myself to be prepared to address their questions.”

2. Understanding:
   - **What was important about what I learned today?**: “Discussion and negotiation skills are quite crucial in academic environment as well as professional settings. One of the most important things that I learnt within the last class was acknowledging the other party’s point of view although it may be against my point of view. I understood how a single matter can be perceived significantly different from various people perspectives.”

3. Applying:
   - **In my future speaking, where could I use what I have learned today?**: “I believe that in my future academic and professional career, I must have a great understanding of people’s positions about a subject and try to collaborate with them both in discussions and practices to come with solutions which are satisfactory to most interest groups.”

4. Analyzing:
   - **Did I see any patterns in what I did?**: “Observing myself from an outsider’s perceptive like seeing the video clip that I have been given is one of the most crucial steps to take. Then, I can understand what people actually see when I talk to them. Perhaps, the most evident pattern is my calmness during speaking. In addition, I think another that was evident in my speaking skills was acknowledging the other person’s point and present my point afterward. I also detected my collaborative attitude in collective discussions.”

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All these excerpts are unedited transcriptions of the learners’ comments, which are provided to illustrate their responses to the guided reflection questions. Learners were drawn from graduate-level English-as-an-additional-language students taking an oral communication skills course in fall 2012.
5. Evaluating:
   - What have I learned about my strengths and areas where I can improve?: “I have improved my listening skills and I tried to use it effectively in this class. I have realized that in order to respond to the other party’s comments, I need to understand that person’s ideas and great listening is quite helpful to do so. I need to improve my understanding skills to catch the speakers’ points more precisely.”

6. Creating:
   - What steps should I take to overcome my speaking challenges?: “I could see how I have become a better listener in course of the sessions. And I truly believe that I need to continue to work on these listening skills more. I must also prepare myself more effectively by attending to the language I use and practice with fluent speakers and strengthen my knowledge about the topic or subject significantly in order to be able to address most possible questions that arise by audiences.”

Author Bio

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The majority of ESL teachers in GTA colleges are contract (i.e. non-permanent) faculty. This is consistent with a province-wide trend across all colleges and college departments. In 2012, of 22,115 academic staff in Ontario colleges, 14,776 were non-permanent, or contract, faculty (Colleges Ontario, p. 10). These numbers reflect a trend that shows no signs of reversing. Contract faculty fall into three categories: sessional, partial-load or part-time. Sessional instructors teach 13–20 hours per week and can teach at any one college for up to a maximum of 12 months out of any given 24 month period. (Ontario colleges of applied arts and technology: Academic employees collective agreement (AECA), Article 1, Note B, p. 1 and Appendix V, p. 108). However, because departments do not want to risk triggering clause 2.03C of the Collective Agreement, which stipulates that a sessional instructor who teaches more than 12 months in a 24 month period must be appointed to a full-time position, sessional runs are generally restricted to 10 months (or five sessions) in a two-year period. A sessional instructor who “maxes out” (i.e., teaches the maximum number of sessions permitted within a 24 month period) generally has no other recourse than to move on to another college and teach there until hitting the maximum. Partial-load instructors teach seven to 12 hours per week (AECA, Article 26B, p.58). Unlike sessional instructors, however, partial-load instructors can remain at one college indefinitely without triggering clause 2.03C and, also unlike sessional instructors, they receive (limited) benefits as union members. Instructors teaching six hours or less per week at any given institution are considered part-time faculty at that institution (AECA, Article 1, Note A, p. 1). The pay rates for partial-load-college faculty (and the criteria for determining these rates) are outlined in the AECA (pp. 58–68). No such information is included for part-time or sessional faculty. Non-permanent teaching positions are assigned on a session-to-session basis (every seven to eight weeks), or, in some cases, a term-to-term basis (every 15 weeks). Clearly, language teaching practitioners pursuing their vocation in this particular context encounter a unique set of challenges and issues.

1 The most recent five-year trend at Humber College, to take one example, backs this up. In the five-year period from 2008–2013, the college increased its full-time faculty by 9.6%, compared to a 25.1% increase for part-time/sessional faculty and a 70.3% increase for partial-load faculty (Ciuciura, p. 1). Other colleges in the GTA reflect this trend as well. Thanks to Sylvia Ciuciura and Orville Getz of Humber College for help in obtaining these statistics.
Teaching on Short Notice

A sessional/part-time instructor generally receives fairly short notice of a teaching assignment. Typically, teachers are informed of their assignments three to four days before the beginning of a session; however, shorter notice—of, say, 24–48 hours—is not unheard of. Last-minute changes to assignments and schedules are common.

Given the structure of most post-secondary ESL programs, this sort of scheduling cannot be avoided. Often, the final enrolment is not settled until just before or even a day or two after the new session begins. As a result, programme managers have no choice but to resort to last minute scheduling. Sessional instructors often know that there is a chance they will have a teaching assignment; but there is also often some eleventh-hour waiting involved. Some sessionals may be fairly (virtually) certain that they will be teaching at a particular college in the upcoming session, but still realize that they will have to wait until three or four days before the start date to find out which class they will be teaching. Part-time teachers are often contacted during the first week of a session as the needs of the programme firm up. Partial load teachers (especially continuing ones) are generally informed of their teaching assignments further in advance, with up to two or even three weeks’ notice. However, the majority of non-permanent faculty in ESL departments are sessional or part-time instructors who will receive their teaching assignments only a few days before the session begins.

Teaching on short notice brings with it a number of challenges, both inside the classroom and out of it. First and foremost, there are obviously pedagogical concerns. How do you prepare to teach a course when you do not know what course you will be teaching? There are a few basic strategies for dealing with this situation. First, it’s important to familiarize yourself with the program curriculum of the department. Be aware of the progression through the levels, of the learning outcomes and objectives at each level. Most programs follow the same general structure, so there isn’t a big leap from college to college. A general curriculum overview will prepare you to put into context any class that you are assigned and minimize the “surprise factor”. Fortunately, most programs have a strong CALL component, with online resources and curriculum support for teachers. Unfortunately, a teacher new to a particular college will not always have access to this online material, but it is very helpful if accessible.

It’s advisable to have one-off introduction lessons for the first day of a class. Assume that day one will be chaos and confusion and make no assumptions about what resources will be available. Assume that the students will not have the required materials and that your class list won’t be finalized. It’s important to have your own day one lessons for all levels that include ice-breakers, practice activities and diagnostics. Any resources/materials that you have access to will, of course, make it easier; but, if nothing else, you’ll have something of your own to get started with. Having a well-stocked pedagogical “tool box” is crucial to teaching on short notice. Upon receiving your teaching assignment, you will most likely
have access to (at least) a course outline and a curriculum document of some kind. A sample syllabus may be available; you may be furnished with a textbook and a list of course objectives. This varies from department to department and nothing should be taken for granted in this regard. Be prepared to fend for yourself and be pleasantly surprised if your low expectations prove unfounded.

There are also non-teaching challenges involved here, mainly psychological. Simply put, it is rather stressful not knowing what you will be teaching until (at best) a few days before classes start. In addition, it’s necessary to accept the mystery of the hiring process. It won’t always be clear why you are or are not extended an offer. You will know whether or not you’re eligible to work a full sessional (again, the 12 of 24 formula applies), but there are no clearly articulated criteria for why some eligible teachers are offered a contract and others are not. Essentially, you have to be ready to teach on short notice and also be psychologically and economically prepared to not teach—a curious and somewhat perverse tightrope act that you simply have to accept and to which you have to become accustomed.

The Department and the Institution

While the various ESL/EAP programs have their similarities, they also differ significantly. These differences across departments can make life as a pedagogical nomad somewhat confusing. To begin with, there are administrative issues to be dealt with. In addition to the aforementioned mysterious hiring process, once you are hired, mysteries abound. Frequently asked questions: why is my step level different at one institution than it is at another? Why do I have the same step but a different pay rate? How are these things decided? Why do different HR departments require different documentation? The AECA can offer some help here, but not a lot. Ultimately, because there’s often simply no one around to consult and no time to find someone to consult, many questions will simply have to remain unanswered.

Additionally, there will be a myriad of departmental policies and procedures with which you will have to familiarize yourself. There are policies on where to sit (maybe you will have a desk, maybe not), on photocopier protocol (maybe a limit on copies, maybe a code), on how to submit grades, on how to deal with students placed in the wrong level, on how to call in sick, on which forms get submitted to whom and when. Policies and procedures tend to vary from department to department for no obvious logical reason.

Finally, related to the questions of step-level and step calculation (and remuneration questions generally), it’s important not to fall prey to what I call the “vocation evasion.” This is the never-overtly-stated but often-implied view that if teaching is your vocation (which it is), then it is mercenary and even crass (which it isn’t) to inquire about how much you’re going to get paid and when. This is important because, amidst the chaos and confusion of starting a new assignment with a new department, teachers often feel it is selfish of them to pursue these questions that pertain to their own basic well-being. Nothing could be further from the truth, and in no other job would anyone ever consider neglecting such matters.
The Students

Student issues can be challenging and complex because, well, people are challenging and complex. However, these are the issues that as a teacher you welcome because the students are the reason you do the work you do, and ultimately they make it all worthwhile. While no two individuals are the same, general student issues tend to be similar across institutions. For example, you always have to be aware of student expectations/needs versus curriculum expectations/demands. A particular challenge is the “hurdle mentality” that exists among many students. This refers to the thinking that the EAP/ESL program is simply something to be dealt with—a “hurdle” to jump over—before the students can get to what they really want to do: enter their “real” program of study at the college or university. The result is that many students do not take their ESL program terribly seriously. Yet, if they do not take their ESL program seriously and do not achieve the required entrance grade, they will not be able to proceed to their chosen real program of study. The challenge here is to help students realize that successful completion of their ESL program is not a technicality; it is the achievement of proficiency in a language and the acquisition of a necessary tool for their future studies and endeavours in life. In addition, cross-cultural issues and cultural shock are always a factor. Most teachers are accustomed to grappling with these cross-cultural issues. This doesn’t make the grappling any easier, but no ESL teacher should be surprised by these issues.

Student-centred issues tend not to vary greatly across institutions; nor, for that matter, are they issues that are different for non-permanent faculty than for permanent faculty. Everyone has to deal with these. However, a significant student-centred issue that does affect non-permanent teachers specifically is students’ attitudes towards non-permanent faculty. If students know or find out that certain teachers are not permanent, they might consider them to be of lower status and less qualified (than permanent faculty members) and consequently have less respect for those teachers. This does not happen often, but when it does, it contributes to the perception that there are two tiers of teachers. Students can have surprisingly strong opinions about this sort of thing and this too can impact what goes on in the classroom.

Looking Ahead

Article 26.10 (“Job Security”) of the AECA states that “Article 27, Job Security, has no application to partial-load teachers.” This is not encouraging. The AECA makes no mention of job security with respect to sessional instructors. In fact, the most recent AECA devotes a grand total of one and a half pages to sessional instructors, so not a great deal can be gleaned from this treatment. Ultimately, the simple fact is that, as either a partial-load or a sessional instructor, a teacher has seven or eight weeks of confirmed work. Hence there is no job security. This kind of ongoing unpredictability and uncertainty can obviously result

\[2\] Appendix V (pp. 108–110) focusses on sessional faculty (no pay scale included), while part-time faculty are mentioned in a note (Appendix V1, p. 110).
in a great deal of psychological stress. Given the current situation with post-secondary institutions, this cannot be avoided and, for now, is part of the job.

Clearly, there is a great disparity between the level of professional commitment required on the part of the teacher and the commitment to the teacher on the part of any given department. The likelihood of securing a permanent position is not very high. On the other hand, teaching on the “circuit”—moving from one college to another—will help you build a stronger resume. Additional academic credentials are always an asset and, if you are aiming for an eventual permanent position, an MA (in Education or Applied Linguistics) is required. Generally, teachers should always be searching for ways to develop academically as well as professionally.

On the topic of professional development, something which the beleaguered and overworked contract teacher must also come to accept is that none of this (adjusting to a new ESL department and institution, becoming familiar with a new curriculum and administrative structure, preparing to teach a new course on short notice even if at the same institution) formally qualifies as PD hours for TESL Ontario accreditation. This is clearly an injustice, for if this sort of intensive training does not qualify as professional development, it’s hard to imagine what does. Hopefully, dedicated contract ESL teachers can look forward to a time in the near future when this wrong will have been righted.3

Lest the picture appear too bleak, let me point out some positives. Ultimately, teachers love to teach; collaborating with students to help them reach their learning goals is a passion, a vocation. And, drawbacks aside, there is a wealth of teaching opportunities at GTA colleges. A teacher can work part-time at two or even three colleges at the same time, and program managers are often willing to accommodate special scheduling requests. For most teachers the reward—the source of fulfillment—is the work itself and the students. If you are willing to accept the nomadic nature of the work, there are still many rewards to be derived from the teaching itself. The opportunities for professional and personal growth are myriad. Among these opportunities is the chance to work alongside highly qualified and helpful permanent faculty. They can be a great source of support and a wonderful resource. Then, of course, there is the (quite extensive) non-permanent teaching community—one’s peers, who offer both professional and moral support. This is a close-knit community, and the contacts you make, the friendships you form, can sustain you through periods of uncertainty and instability. Many of the tips leading to new teaching assignments come from fellow contract teachers. They are always happy to share effective activities they’ve created or helpful resources they’ve discovered. And, perhaps most importantly, they are the most empathetic and effusive interlocutors when you need some good old-fashioned commiseration to see you through the day.

3 If TESL Ontario is indeed “a supportive community empowering educational professionals” (TESL Ontario, n.d.), then the time has come for this community to step in, acknowledge this situation and work with ESL departments to redress it, especially in light of TESL Ontario’s recent doubling of the required PD hours to 10 per year.
References


Author Bio

Jeff Brown holds an MA and a PhD in Philosophy, a post-graduate certificate in TESL, and is currently pursuing an MA in Applied Linguistics. Over the past 15 years, he has taught at a number of colleges and private schools in the Toronto area. Presently, he teaches EAP at Humber College.
INTRODUCING THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT/L’ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR L’ÉVALUATION DES LANGUES (CALA/ACEL)

Janna Fox, Carleton University

In this time of extraordinary economic pressures at all levels of Canadian education, the predominance of accountability agendas in educational policy, and the concomitant rise of assessment as the primary means to an end measure of educational quality, it has never been more important for those of us who work in language teaching and assessment fields to communicate, collaborate, and organize in order to insure that quality in language teaching and learning is achieved in real terms. We all know that evidence of such quality is never as simple as a test score or outcome measure, but it is up to us to communicate this information effectively to those who have the power to make decisions. These decisions directly impact what we do and how we do it in our language teaching classrooms; even more importantly, they impact the lives of our students who may be denied access to jobs, further education, or citizenship as the result of assessment practices.

These recognitions have long been discussed in informal conversations between language teachers and testers at conferences, on professional development days, and in staff rooms. But in 2008 at the 30th Annual Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC), in Hangzhou, China (25 – 28 June), a group of Canadian language testers resolved to turn these conversations into action through the formation of a Canadian association that would address assessment issues of particular concern to Canadian language teachers and learners. As a result, on May 26, 2009, I chaired the foundational meeting of CALA/ACEL in Ottawa. Throughout the following year, we elaborated the mission of our new organization and are now preparing for our Fifth Annual AGM during Congress (24 to 30 May, 2014) in St. Catharines at Brock University in connection with the Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics/Association canadienne de linguistique appliquée (CAAL/ACLA). We invite you to join us in St. Catharines for the CALA/ACEL colloquium and Annual General Meeting, to addresses issues in language assessment of direct interest to language teachers and readers of Contact.

In February 2013, we held our first election to form the initial CAAL/ACLA Executive Board of: Liying Cheng, Beverly Baker, Heike Neumann, and Christine Doe.
Membership in CALA/ACEL is free until December 31, 2013.

To join, simply fill in the online membership form at: http://www.emailmeform.com/builder/form/vE1NP9IYDtr1f1O, and visit the CALA/ACEL website at: http://post.queensu.ca/~chengly/CALAweb/index.html

As a CALA/ACEL member you will have access to the CALA/ACEL listserv.

We have much to share and discuss as we work together to promote best practices in language assessment.

CALA/ACEL members come from diverse academic and educational settings, across different levels of schooling and language programs; in governmental agencies (federal, provincial and local); in other professional associations; in both public and private institutions. We are also an affiliate of the International Language Testing Association (ILTA) and support ILTA in its efforts to ensure fair and ethical assessment practice. Visit the ILTA website at: http://www.iltaonline.com/

We hold our annual Colloquiums on issues in language assessment and our AGMs in conjunction with educational conferences of interest to our membership. In addition to CERA, we have direct links with the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE); the Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics/Association canadienne de linguistique appliquée (CAAL/ACLA) and TESL Canada.

Current Projects

In the section below, several CALA/ACEL members provide descriptions of current projects in language assessment of interest to language teachers and the readership of Contact.

1. Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) in Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs, the Ottawa Field Test
(Janna Fox & Wendy Fraser, Carleton University)

From 2010-2012, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) undertook an Ottawa field test of Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) in Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs. In order to investigate the impact of the PBLA initiative on LINC teachers and learners, results were drawn from focus groups and questionnaires, administered to teachers and learners participating in the Ottawa field test prior to the implementation of the PBLA and at the end of six and twelve weeks of experience with the PBLA. Results suggested that the PBLA promoted the use of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) by LINC teachers, and that there was a good level of consistency
(r = .79) in teachers’ (n=50) applications of CLB criteria in reporting on student language development. In other words, based on a standard of exact agreement, the teachers identified the same levels approximately 63% of the time. Given that most of these LINC teachers had received no specific rater training in applying CLB standards and such ongoing training is essential to achieving rater agreement, the consistency of the teachers’ assessment was encouraging.

In general, students in LINC programs were positive about their language learning experiences and enthusiastic about the introduction of the PBLA. Students’ responses to questionnaires about their learning in LINC classrooms before the introduction of the PBLA, six, and 12 weeks after its introduction were compared. There were statistically significant differences in students’ reports of: 1) increased amounts of time spent reflecting on their work; and, 2) increased review of class work they had produced. Further, the portfolio approach was appreciated by students who were required to move from one LINC program to another, as the portfolio was portable and contained consistent application of CLB criteria describing the students’ level of proficiency. However, there was also evidence that the PBLA was being used quite narrowly in some programs. Working portfolios, which accumulate on-going evidence of student work and become the locus of conversations about learning development between teachers and students, can support learning, reflection, and autonomy. They have been used for targeted instruction, which relates learning activities specifically to individual student needs (Fox, 2009; Fox & Hartwick, 2011). In many instances in the Ottawa field test, however, the portfolio was limited to the role of a showcase, housing rubrics and assessments – rather than being used by teachers and students in the on-going process of learning as a working repository of evidence of student development over time.

2. Post-entry diagnostic assessment of students-at-risk in university
(Janna Fox, Carleton University)

In 2010, the Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA) (cf. Elder & von Randow, 2008; Read, 2009) was adapted for use as a post-entry diagnostic assessment of first-year engineering students in a Canadian university, as part of a longitudinal study investigating the potential of diagnostic assessment to identify students-at-risk, provide support, and prevent failure. In the first year of the study, 489 students (50% of the first-year engineering cohort) were assessed with a modified version of the DELNA, which reflected the engineering context in: 1) tasks (the writing prompt used an engineering graph; mathematics diagnostic tasks were added); 2) raters (4 were drawn from engineering; 4 from writing studies). Raters were trained to use the generic DELNA scale and to write detailed feedback for students-at-risk. Students were emailed their results and invited to voluntarily discuss them with engineering and writing-studies peer mentors. Only 12 (2%) of 489 students sought additional feedback, including 3 (11%) of the 27 students who were identified at-risk. At the end of the year, 10 of the at-risk group had dropped out or were failing; 7 were borderline failures; and 10 were performing well. Amongst at-risk students
who were successful in their first year, 2 had sought additional feedback on their diagnostic assessment results from a special centre set up to provide them with support. Other key factors were: evidence of social networks, making connections with learning support, and strategic management of course demands. In the second year of the study, 899 students (95% of cohort) were assessed. While changes to the scale, raters, and tasks increased the consistency and quality of feedback, changes failed to resolve the problem of voluntary uptake. Only 33 students (4%) followed up on their results, although there is evidence that in 2 cases the support offered as a result of the diagnostic assessment process prevented students from dropping out of their program during the first term of study. Proposed revisions to the diagnostic process include embedding the diagnostic assessment process within a required course and providing on-going support within the context of the course. The implications of these changes are currently being investigated.

3. Language Assessment Development with Haitian Teachers
(Beverly Baker, McGill University)

English National Examinations in Haiti are very high stakes: students cannot complete high school or access higher education if they fail. In a country where fewer than 25% of students even attend high school, school completion is already a tremendous challenge. Unfortunately, serious problems in the basic construction of these examinations conceivably affect the pass rate.

A concrete way to improve the quality of these examinations is by training teachers in assessment, as teachers prepare and submit the National Examination questions. However, the great majority of these teachers have no formal training in teaching or assessment.

This project involves the co-creation of English examination questions with approximately 150 English teachers from the Northern Region of Haiti. While this project was primarily for teacher professional development, it did have an accompanying research component with the following research questions:

1. Do the new assessment items, created collaboratively between Haitian teachers and language assessment specialists, better enable valid interpretations of English as a foreign language in this context?

2. Are they sufficiently practical and culturally appropriate for the Haitian context?

Assisting on the project are Bachelor of Education students at McGill who volunteered to assist in the creation of draft assessment materials. In March 2013, after a brief workshop on the foundations of language assessment, Haitian teachers analysed and revised these drafts, suggesting changes to make them more appropriate for the Haitian context. The final versions will be presented soon to Haiti’s Ministry of Education for use as new English National Examinations. This project is being supported by the International Language Testing Association (ILTA) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
4. Using a large-scale assessment for diagnostic purposes in the language classroom  
(Christine Doe, Mount Saint Vincent University)

This project looked at the use of a large-scale assessment, the Canadian Academic English Language (CAEL) Assessment (Doe, 2013), for diagnostic purposes from three perspectives: the rater, teacher, and student (Doe, 2011). Of most interest to the TESL Ontario community are the teacher and student perspectives. Data collection strategies included interview and classroom observation data from one English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course instructor, and interview and open-ended survey data from 47 intermediate EAP students.

Two key findings were observed from the teacher perspective. First, the CAEL as a diagnostic assessment did map onto the teacher’s values and approach to classroom instruction. The diagnostic assessment process allowed the teacher (pseudonym, Diane) to “stay on track” and focus on the students’ learning, which she had highlighted as her main priority as a teacher. The use of the diagnostic feedback facilitated targeted work groups, so that the students could work with one another to focus on their strengths and weaknesses, thus, mapping onto Diane’s values of promoting student success in a collaborative university environment. Second, the diagnostic competence (Edelenbos & Kubanek-German, 2004) that the teacher exhibited throughout the course stemmed from her 6 years of teaching, but perhaps, more importantly her prior experiences of receiving diagnostic assessment feedback on students’ language ability. The teacher had previously been involved with other research studies that examined the instructional potential of diagnostic assessments (Fox 2009; Fox & Hartwick, 2011). A key finding observed from the student perspective was how the students’ definition of diagnostic assessment, and the benefit it had for their learning, evolved over the three-month course. A possible explanation for the shift in thinking was due to the students’ experiences with the focused sessions based on the diagnostic feedback. The findings support Willam’s (2010) argument that in lieu of experience, teachers need to be trained on how to implement and use formative assessment practices, and in this case, diagnostic assessment results. Similarly, students need training on how diagnostic feedback can be useful for their learning. The approach taken by the teacher was unique to her and would most likely differ from other teachers, even within the same setting. That being said, the findings do highlight the challenges and benefits of incorporating large-scale assessment data for diagnostic purposes.

References


**Author Bio**

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Wendy Fraser is the director of the Canadian Academic English Language (CAEL) assessment. In addition, she is a PhD student in Applied Linguistics and Discourse Studies at Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

Beverly Baker is a Faculty Lecturer and Undergraduate Program Director in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University, Montreal, Canada. Her research activities include writing assessment, language assessment literacy, and critical approaches to language assessment development and validation. She is a member of the Executive Committee (2013-2015) of the Canadian Association for Language Assessment/l’Association canadienne d’évaluation des langues.

Christine Doe is an Assistant Professor of language assessment in the Faculty of Education, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Her research interests include examining the use of large-scale assessments for diagnostic purposes in classroom settings and language teacher training. She is a member of the Canadian Association for Language Assessment/l’Association canadienne d’évaluation des langues Executive Committee (2013-2015).
NEW LEARNIT2TEACH LEARNER SUPPORT FEATURES FOR BLENDED LEARNING

John Allan, New Media Language Training Inc.

The LearnIT2teach Project has worked since 2010 to develop LINC online English-language-learner (ELL) courseware and train teachers how to implement it in blended learning. Through the surveys and interviews that constitute the project evaluation, it was determined that ELLs would benefit from improved preparation for online or blended learning and improved access to support for common technology questions. The training and support the project provides to settlement language training instructors, is now provided to students through help and how to features embedded in the courseware.

This article outlines the new support features created for ELLs using the LINC Courseware provided by the LearnIT2teach project. These new tools for learners encourage and train them in using the online courseware, and provide instructors with resources to support learners. The resources are of two types: “Learner readiness” mini-courses at each LINC level are preparation for online learning, and “How to” and “Courseware Basics” blocks that provide just-in-time help when learners need it. (See Appendix for mentioned terms, websites, & software).

The LearnIT2teach LINC Courseware is a product of years of development of foundation resources, documents and policies. The courseware is built on the foundation of the Canadian Language Benchmarks, the LINC Curriculum Guidelines, and the LINC Classroom Activities Books (See Figure 1). The courseware includes more than 400 LINC E-Activities or LINC Learning Objects seeded throughout. Additional social-constructivist activities and the “NanoGong” speaking and listening feature add important functionality as well. When instructors implement the courseware, they add their own activities as well, and these become an integral property of a personalized course.

Instructors must attend a Stage-1 training session and enter the online Stage-2 course before they can use the LINC Courseware with students. Many instructors elect to start or complete Stage-3 of the LearnIT2Teach training to take greater control of the LINC Courseware in order and adapt it to their own use. The additional support features detailed below will make the going-live process easier for instructors and learners.
Two Types of Help

Learner Readiness Courses

Instructors are now invited to make the process of blending LINC Courseware with their teaching routine more efficient with a Learner Readiness course. The Learner Readiness courses are each designed for specific LINC levels. Instructors are advised to complete a Learner Readiness course from the student perspective before taking their students through a Learner Readiness course. Under a teacher’s direction, newcomer learners should expect to take three one-hour periods to complete a Learner Readiness course. When they complete it, students will have a practical understanding of and experience using the LINC Courseware features at their LINC level. To accommodate diverse learning styles, each lesson has a print option for those who wish to have a paper copy during the lesson.

Each Learner Readiness course has a common structure, beginning with “Getting Ready to Learn Online” and progressing to “Edlinc, The Basics” and “Reading, Writing and Listening Activities.” Classes should proceed through these items together discussing technical and pedagogical elements as they are encountered. Students will appreciate this involvement as they build their confidence as blended learners.

The “Getting Ready to Learn Online” section introduces general concepts such as blended learning, LINC Courseware, and communicating with your teacher. It also offers tips for making the blended learning experience a successful one and offers advice on using this mode of learning to improve reading, writing, listening, speaking and vocabulary development.
In the “Edlinc, The Basics” section, students are introduced to the information-technology skills required to use the LINC Courseware. This includes features such as using the course calendar, changing a personal password, and editing personal information.

The “Reading, Writing and Listening Activities” section guides the students through practical activities that can include using a course glossary, taking a poll, participating in forums, completing wikis or generating a blog. In this section students experience the tools firsthand.

Speaking Activities can include using Skype for discussion or recording software called Nanogong to practice speaking. In the new learner support features, students learn about these features and practice the use of course tools ‘hands-on’.

**Help blocks**

Just-in-time help for learners is also provided. Each LINC courseware course arrives with two help blocks. These are the “How To” block and the “Courseware Basics” block. These blocks, detailed below, are designed primarily for students to use if they require independent assistance.

The “how to” block. The “How To” block is a resource that is available on every course within the edlinc.ca service. Instructors can hide this block based on their requirements. This help support contains specific assistance for LINC Courseware users with specific task-based issues. These are the topics covered in the block:

- How to complete a SCORM activity
- How to complete a SCORM listening activity.
- How to view your SCORM scores.
- How to use a glossary activity.
- How to edit a glossary activity.
- How to do a choice activity.
- How to do a NanoGong activity.
- How to post to a forum activity.
- How to do a blog task activity.
- How to use Skype activity.
- How to do a wiki task activity.

Getting access to any of these resources simply requires choosing them from a menu. The “How to” pages are LINC level appropriate. This ensures that students and teachers of specific LINC levels experience the technical assistance and language level that are level suitable.

**The “courseware basics” block.** The “Courseware Basics” block is a support resource that is available in every course within the edlinc.ca service. Instructors can hide this block based on their requirements. This block covers basic features that are necessary for students to negotiate the LINC courseware. The issues covered with this resource are...
normally experienced within the first few uses of the LINC Courseware. By selecting the Courseware Basics block, learners open a window and view a list of the available topics. These are the topics covered in this block:

- Using the course Calendar.
- About the Latest News block.
- Navigating through a course.
- Using the news forum.
- All about the Online Users block.
- Finding people with the Participants block.
- Changing a password.
- Enhancing a profile.
- How to contact the teacher.
- An explanation of the edline resources.

**Looking Forward**

The LearnIT2teach team is constantly working to upgrade services and improve the learning experience for LINC learners. The project is expanding across Canada in the current fiscal year. As well, the connection between project resources and the national digital repository for settlement language training, Tutela.ca, grows closer through uploading of resources and new launching training webinars for administrators on how to integrate into LINC settlement language training programs and manage it.

**Appendix: Terms, Websites, & Software**

- Blended or hybrid learning involves combining computer-based activities with face-to-face classroom methods and resources. In blended situations, instructors can facilitate learning in a computer room, assign learners online work to be completed outside of class or integrate computer technology into a traditional classroom; for example, by incorporating a TeacherTube movie into language lessons.

- edline.ca Edline is the name of the server that hosts the LINC Courseware. All of the live courses are hosted on edline.ca. [http://edline.ca/](http://edline.ca/)

- LearnIT2teach is available at [http://learnit2teach.ca/wpnew/](http://learnit2teach.ca/wpnew/)

- Moodle.org: A community where Moodle, a free web application that educators can use to create effective online learning sites, is made and discussed. [http://www.moodle.org](http://www.moodle.org)

- NanoGong: The Open and free Nanogong feature allows instructors and learners the ability to record and listen to audio within the course. [http://gong.ust.hk/nanogong](http://gong.ust.hk/nanogong)

- SCORM stands for Sharable Content Object Reference Model and is a technical standard applied to learning objects (individual units of learning) that facilitates moving them from one learning management system to another.
• TeacherTube: An educator and student friendly site for sharing educational videos, docs, audios and photos for classroom use. [http://www.teachertube.com/]

• Tutela.ca: CIC’s national digital repository offers learning objects and professional development options for language instructors across Canada. [http://tutela.ca/PublicHomePage]

The author would like to acknowledge project funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
DEVELOPING AN ESL LITERACY BLENDED ONLINE COURSE FOR LINC LEARNERS.

By Svetlana Lupasco

What do you usually do in the computer lab with the ESL Literacy students? Work on a Word document? Watch a video on Youtube? Play a game on a favourite website? How about setting up a course which is filled with students’ favourite activities that reinforce the classroom curriculum? How about having everything you need in one single place? Sounds good to me!

Three years ago something wonderful happened: by a stroke of luck I nailed a job as an ESL literacy instructor. Although the computer lab seemed to be a challenge in the beginning, it turned out to be a fantastic opportunity to grow as a teacher and explore the wonderland of the educational technology.

As a part of my Post TESL training, I have been creating a blended online course for my ESL literacy learners. It started with the idea to set up a course to support the activities we did in the classroom, but in an online format. Along the way, I discovered different ways to transform the classroom curriculum into student- and teacher-friendly online resources which can be easily modified, updated and adapted to the needs of the students. I have been building the course gradually by closely observing my students working on it and testing out the activities.

To any teaching problem there is a solution

One of the biggest challenges for me as a teacher is dealing with the continuous intake. At the literacy level, the gap between students who have learned the ABC’s, mastered letter to sound recognition and started developing initial reading skills and those who just arrived as a result of the continuous intake and haven’t had any exposure to the written text or schooling in general is humongous. This discrepancy leads to the so called “Matthew Effect”, which means that students with some reading skills read more and those with reading difficulties read less, and therefore are left behind (Hall, Hughes, Filbert, 2000). I have been looking for ideas how to accommodate those students as fast as possible so they do not feel frustrated and are able to integrate smoothly. I came up with two solutions.
Comprehensible input i+1 and an online course

The first solution was to tailor the class curriculum to the idea of “comprehensible input i +1”. Krashen says that if there is a rich source of comprehensible input present it will give students both fluency and accuracy (2004). The second solution was developing an online course that would target at all four skills with the main emphasis on reading to provide extra practice of classroom activities in a different format using a variety of media. I took the language and the activities that learners experienced in the classroom and transformed them into online exercises. As soon as I created an activity, I introduced it in the computer lab and observed the way students responded to it. Gradually, my course evolved as a student-driven one, as I listened to my students and tried to supply them with the activities and formats that they enjoyed the most and thus boost their motivation in the computer lab.

Ms. Lana’s Literacy

Ms. Lana’s Literacy is our online classroom. I chose the blogger platform because it is free, easily accessible and very simple in use. I learned about it during a TESL Toronto Tech Event. I set up different pages to organize the course and have been filling in the activities as language or needs emerged during the classroom practice. At the moment there are 9 pages: Home, Sight Words, Word Lists, Stories, Sounds, Quizzes, Canada, Videos and More. The Stories page consists of the stories that we create together in class. So far, I have been using “50 Storyboards”. First, I show students a board that consists of 6 pictures on a particular topic to elicit vocabulary. Then I help students put together simple sentences to make their own story. Finally, I transform it into an online exercise. Students are very excited to discover their stories on the blog.

The Quiz page consists of simple quizzes to check students’ comprehension. I use Hot Potatoes (it was a requirement of my Post TESL training) to create a set of quizzes for students incorporating video, audio, pictures and text. It can be downloaded from the internet to create different types of quizzes. The most popular quizzes in my class are ordering, matching, and drag & drop, but there are also gap fills, crosswords and others that can be used at higher levels. While working with the quizzes, students have to use the functions such as “check” to check their answers, “undo”, to correct a mistake, “restart” to repeat the quiz, and “hint” to get a prompt. I noticed that by using these features my students developed an awareness of the fact that they do not always need to ask the teacher to help them and that the learning can be done independently. While developing online materials, do not forget about the copyright laws and choose free images. I used both open source images and my own shots.

The Canada page is where students can learn more about our country. I was really surprised that I was not able to find any suitable videos about Canada for my class, so I decided to try to record some videos myself taking into consideration the needs and realities of the ESL
literacy learners. This is the beginning of a series of screencasts I intend to record about Canada. The Video page includes videos I collected from Youtube, Vimeo and some other sources suitable for ESL literacy learners. I also included a lot of nursery rhymes due to the fact that the majority of my students are mothers and I hope that they will be able to view the videos at home and sing along with their little or bigger ones. The last page is More where I include all the links I have been encountering and that are suitable for ESL Literacy and beginner levels (CLB 1 & 2).

**Web Tools**

While working on the course, I found some software that became our favourite. Sometimes it was recommended by my mentor or I discovered it on Twitter. Not all the software proved to be successful or useful; I have been trying many and gradually eliminated those that failed my students’ test. Quizlet.com is definitely a winner. My students love it. It offers images and audio, it has a very pleasant and ad-free appearance, it’s free for teachers, and it generates some high quality practice exercises; it’s also easy to use and the audio is very natural.

**Print option is gold**

I have learned many lessons while working in the computer room. One of them is that working with technology you always need a back up plan. What if internet is down, what if the server is on maintenance, what if there aren’t enough computers...? Initially, I decided to print out flashcards for students and use them in the situations mentioned above. But then, I realized that having printed flashcards in front of them while working on the spelling or matching exercises greatly enhanced the way students learned. The majority of my students prefer working on a quiz or task and looking through their print-outs at the same time. One of my major tasks in the ESL literacy class is to give my students some learning strategies so they are able to use them independently. This is one way to do it. Quizlet.com gives some options for how flashcards can be printed. I usually choose the largest text. I also print them double-sided on a stiffer paper and give them to students in class for review during independent activities.

SpellingCity.com is my personal favourite. It’s easy and quick and also generates a variety of games for further practice. I don’t use all of them, having chosen only some which proved to be the most popular with the students.

**One step at a time**

Literacy students easily get tired and frustrated working on computers, therefore I have been looking for ways to nurture their motivation. Due to the fact that my online course is closely related to our classroom practice, students feel very comfortable while working on it: the format is different but the language and activities are familiar. Sometimes, when
some of them feel that they need more practice with a topic or vocabulary during the class, I tell them that next time in the computer room they will focus specifically on the things that need to be developed.

Taking into account that it’s a literacy class, in the beginning I had to spend a lot of time with each student and teach them how to use the course. Some of them still need this guidance, but the majority of them have already developed a strong sense of autonomy and call me only occasionally if they have a major problem. I’d like to emphasize, especially at this level, developing learner’s autonomy doesn’t happen overnight: it’s a longer process for the majority of literacy students. What I know today, is that for some of my students this course fast forwarded the development of their ability to learn by themselves and manage their learning time wisely, skills that have been transferred to the classroom environment.

### ADDIE

The course has been continuously updated and refined as I have been adopting good practices in course design. Course creators should follow at least 5 steps which can be remembered as the ADDIE Model: Analysis (learning objectives are identified), Design (the looks and format are established–in my case, at this stage I choose the software (quiz, flashcards, word lists, screencast, etc) and type of the activity such as ordering, drag and drop, match, etc.), Development (the activity is developed), Implementation (the activity is given to students), and Evaluation (revisions are made according to students’ feedback - while students are working on the activity in the computer lab, I am closely observing them and take notes. I prefer making necessary changes as soon as possible and many of the sources that I have been using allow changes to be made easily).

### Lessons learned

1. Do not entirely rely on one single type of software: there is actually a very good possibility that one day you come to class and realize that all the features or some of them (usually sound or image) are not available at the time of the class. My solution was that I chose three different sites to work with, and in case one has a problem that day, there is always another one to back me up.

2. Always have a backup plan for days when your school’s server is on maintenance or WI-FI is dead. In this case I like using printouts that I prepare in advance.

3. Not everything I like or think is useful is liked or considered useful by the students. My solution: I do not have any expectations. Instead of expectations, I make sure to give students a choice of activities (in this case web tools which offer you a set of games to go with the main activity are very helpful). At the same time, teachers have to spend time and train students in how to learn using technology. They won’t learn it overnight, not all them, but with time they will find their own ways to learn best.
ARTICLES

References


[http://www.sdkrashen.com/Principles_and_Practice/Principles_and_Practice.pdf](http://www.sdkrashen.com/Principles_and_Practice/Principles_and_Practice.pdf)

Author Bio

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UNCOMFORTABLE CLASSROOM MOMENTS:
Managing Heteronormativity in the L2 Classroom

By Catherine Dunn, Humber College

It was one of those moments when sweat starts to trickle down your neck. A student was giving a presentation. I had encouraged the class to make their presentations engaging and entertaining and this student had taken the advice to heart. She had included pictures and jokes, all in good taste, which had the class interested and engaged. Then another joke flashed on the screen. And this one was homophobic.

I immediately tensed up. What should I do? Let it go? Make a comment? Throw myself bodily in front of the projector?

In the end, I spoke privately to the student after class and she recognized the problem and offered to apologize to the other students. This lead to a class discussion about issues of homophobia and what is considered hate speech.

Afterwards, a student offered his opinion on the discussion. He said “the information was so helpful but why didn’t you tell us this earlier?”

Why didn’t I?

Did I assume that my students knew this information? Did I impose my own world view on the class? Or was I afraid to venture into a potentially uncomfortable topic?

Nelson (1993, 2010) explores the experience of queer students in the L2 classroom as well as the experience of teachers.

She has found that language teachers often shy away from discussions of homosexuality or shut down such discussions because they are unsure what comments might be made and a desire to protect students who may identify as queer (2010). I have certainly avoided such topics for fear of what may be said and a lack of knowledge about how to deal with an uncomfortable situation.

However, Nelson goes on to point out that this “rendering of gay subject matter unspeakable in the classroom—especially if done on a routine basis, and without any explanation—runs the risk of alienating gay students and cutting short valuable learning opportunities for all students” (2010, p. 450).
The incident in my own classroom turned out to be a crucial learning experience not just for my students, but for me as well. I realized that by not addressing issues of homophobia frankly and transparently from the outset I had set my students up to fail.

I realized that I explicitly teach essay writing skills and grammar skills but had never taught the complexities of human rights in an academic setting. Since attitudes towards what is considered offensive vary from country to country this can be a minefield for students. By not providing this knowledge I did my students a great disservice, particularly for those planning to continue their education in Canada.

So on a practical level what can we do? The following is by no means an exhaustive list but it can be the basis for moving towards a more inclusive and comfortable experience for all students and teachers.

1. **Have clear policies**

   As my student so aptly pointed out, there is value in addressing the issue from the outset rather than dealing with problems remedially. If you teach at a college or university, most already have a code of human rights. However, this can be very dense and difficult to understand. It can be helpful to break it down into more accessible language both for staff and students. This information can be communicated clearly to students as part of their orientation to the school or program. A written pamphlet with a summary of the main ideas, definition of terms and a list of resources can also be helpful for students to refer to later.

2. **Follow up in the classroom**

   Often teachers begin a course by setting expectations and classroom rules. These rules will often include a note about respect. This is an ideal time for teachers to go into greater depth about what respect in the classroom encompasses. This could include a short discussion about racism, sexism and homophobia and the school’s policies on these. Another idea is to provide LGBTQ positive space stickers for classroom doors and explain the significance of these to students.

3. **Don’t shy away from uncomfortable situations**

   While these expectations may clarify issues for some students and teachers, they will not change beliefs and attitudes. In fact, they may bring some uncomfortable discussions to the surface. Teachers should be prepared to deal with these situations as they arise in a calm manner. Staying in an uncomfortable moment in the classroom, while unpleasant, is where real learning takes place. Ideally, teachers should receive human rights training that will provide them with the skills to address these situations. If this is not possible, a professional development workshop where teachers share experiences, discuss tactics that
Teachers worked and those that didn’t and brainstorm possible responses can be very helpful.

4. **Review the curriculum**

An important step is to examine classroom curriculum for heteronormativity. For example, a common topic of discussion in some L2 classrooms is dating, love or marriage. While this topic can be engaging and interesting, it can also put participants in an uncomfortable situation. If a student or teacher does not feel that they are in a safe space they may not wish to share personal information or discuss the topic at all. We should be aware of this as we plan lessons and develop curriculum. Ultimately, curriculum that examines issues of human rights and equity can be incorporated into programs at all levels.

**Concluding Remarks**

Providing a safe classroom environment is essential if students are to question, investigate and learn. However, for a student or teacher who identifies as LGBTQ or as an ally, the L2 classroom can be a frustrating or even intimidating place. There are steps we can begin to take to rectify this situation and the first one is being aware that it exists. From there we can work with colleagues to establish clear policies and guidelines as well as to develop ways of addressing the issue calmly and effectively in the classroom.

**References**


**Author Bio**

Catherine Dunn is an instructor in the English Language Centre at Humber College. She has taught in the college system, at private language schools and in the Ontario Secondary System for the last five years. She hopes to pursue further studies in the relationship between social acceptance and language acquisition.
CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP:

The Non-Literate Learner’s Dilemma

Catherine Roach

This article is about the newcomers I teach who have had little to no formal education in their home country. In Canada, newcomers are classified as non-literate learners when they come from a literate society, but they themselves are unable to read and write in any language. I taught literacy-level students for over five years and have observed firsthand the obstacles they face when learning to read and write in English. Furthermore, I suggest, most people, including Citizenship judges, are unaware of the challenges an adult non-literate learner encounters when attempting to read for the first time—never mind the daunting task of passing the Canadian Citizenship test. Because of these challenges, I believe that non-literate learners should be exempt from taking the standard citizenship test. Instead, a special provision should be in place that recognizes their inability to pass the standard citizenship test.

Attaining Canadian Citizenship

In order to become a Canadian citizen, permanent residents generally need to show English or French language proficiency at the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) level 4 in speaking and listening. They also need to pass a test that would require them to negotiate, even if you knew the answers. “Ability to speak English or French, and at least a grade 12 education are specific requirements for immigrants to Canada under the point system. These are of course NOT requirements for refugees” (Sadoway, 2010). Nor are they requirements for family-class immigrants.

My students who have attempted to gain citizenship have initially been given a written test, but citizenship officials may invite them to retake the test orally if there is cause. Judges may even grant an exemption, but this appears to be very difficult to obtain (Sadoway, p. 7). In my experience, non-literate students tend to fail both tests. In one example, a female who has been attending ESL classes for over 4 years has attempted to pass the test 3 or

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4 times and has failed each time. Recently, she has attempted the test again and we are waiting to hear about the results. Another student who has been attending ESL classes for over 3 years and has failed both the written and oral test expresses her discouragement to me—she was advised by officials not to return and retake the test until she has reached CLB level 5. She seems to be frustrated and concerned because she is very happy to be in Canada and really wants to become a citizen. Although there is an appeal process (see Community Legal Education Ontario, CLEO, 2012) it is a complicated process.

From my observations, I would not be surprised if many non-literate level students give up trying to attain citizenship. Sadly, students half-heartedly joke that they will have to wait until they are 55 in order to become Canadian citizens—not that funny though considering some of the students are in their 30’s.

There are some very important advantages to becoming a Canadian citizen. Unlike permanent residents, citizens are able to vote in an election, may be considered for a government job, and/or to obtain a Canadian passport, and cannot be deported unless the citizenship was obtained fraudulently. Moreover, as I witnessed at a citizenship ceremony, becoming a Canadian is a sought after and exciting event—an important event in a courageous journey. Mayank Bhatt (2011), an internationally trained journalist from India writes of “the excitement and apprehension of applying for Canadian Citizenship”—“to become a citizen of Canada is a dream that many nurture for a long time, even before they reach Canada.” Furthermore, when discussing his apprehension about failing the citizenship test, he states, that he would be “devastated” (p. 44).

**Challenges the Non-literate Learner Experience**

The ability to study and learn is a skill in itself and takes time to cultivate. Since many of the students I am discussing have not experienced a formal educational environment, they must learn basic study skills, such as, classroom etiquette, holding a pencil correctly, handling paper, writing on paper, how to write on the line—how to print. Many non-literate learners must learn to review their work, come to class on time and complete homework assignments. All of these new skills take considerable time to acquire.

Although learning to read in adulthood is not impossible, it can take a very long time.

**What can English teachers do?**

The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration now presents its study and preparation guide, *Discover Canada*, in audio format on its website. English teachers may wish to use this guide in their classes and to help literacy learners access this useful alternative to the printed guide.
Learners may not know of their right to receive accommodation, in particular to do an oral test. English teachers can inform them of the need to make specific requests in writing (ironically) and to provide evidence of need for accommodation.

If accommodation isn’t enough, learners may request a waiver, which can exempt them from the language requirements, the citizenship test, or both. Again, this request will need to be made in writing and supported by evidence. In part, this evidence may be provided by the ESL teacher through attendance records.

If these applications are not granted, the learner may need legal help. Legal Aid Ontario (at http://www.legalaid.on.ca/en/) is a good resource, and ESL teachers can help their students access their services.

References


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LINC AND LEARNING DIVERSITY

By Sharifa Sharif

The LINC program embraces a widely diverse student populace who not only bring their various cultures and past experiences to the classes, but also carry multi-layered learning backgrounds and abilities. Although the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) document and its accompanying assessment tools allow us to place students according to their language levels from 1–7, other aspects, such as learning styles and abilities, call for additional classes and classifications beyond the existing levels.

According to existing CLB and LINC assessment tools, students either succeed in achieving a benchmark and move up or repeat the level. In a few special cases, a student is unable to achieve a higher benchmark despite many repeats in the same level. These fossilized students don’t show steady and satisfactory progress in learning English, but they may demonstrate positive changes in their learning perceptions and social behaviour. They keep making the same grammatical mistakes and maintain the same limited and blocked vocabulary and sentence structure, but they do gradually adapt to their new social setting and develop critical thinking skills. This development does not reflect a typical standard for language learning progress, but it does indicate enhancing of social and communicative skills—hence improved settlement. These students need a different learning setting which would address their mental health and learning issues, not a regular low level language class.

In the way that LINC Literacy addresses a major aspect of LINC students’ issues, a new structure is needed to render a holistic approach to addressing cognitive, aptitude, and mental health issues among LINC students, a program or programs which can accommodate traumatized or slow-paced learners, where the focus is more on settlement and social skills as opposed to language. Assessment for such a program would evaluate students’ social, mental and cognitive engagement in Canadian society and educational systems. For example, an aloof and withdrawn student who begins to share stories and actively participate in class discussions and activities could be seen as having made improvement and as being successful. Many students could join such a program and enjoy progress and promotion instead of lingering on in LINC classes, semester after semester.

A new program in LINC may not seem feasible given the budgetary issue; however a new angle to assess some special cases is both needed and doable.

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Sharifa Sharif is an Afghan-Canadian independent consultant/Expert on Afghanistan culture and society, mainly in the field of women, culture and development. Dr. Sharif has worked in the areas of adult education, women and development, community development, journalism and politics in Kabul, Canada, India and Prague. She has also worked as a journalist in the Afghan Service of the Radio Free Europe in Prague. Sharif has also worked with President Karzai as his Advisor on International Affairs and Media Advisor to his Chief of Staff in Kabul, Afghanistan.
TEACHING AT ONTARIO CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTE

with a focus on English classes

By Raj Singh, Ontario Correctional Institute

Ontario Correctional Institute (OCI), located in the City of Brampton, is a provincial, correctional facility for adult males, who are serving sentences of up to two years less one day. Its treatment-based model provides approximately 200 residents programs of rehabilitation, such as Anger Management, Intensive Substance Abuse, and Relationships Without Violence, among many others.

Teaching English in a regular high school has its challenges and corresponding rewards; this interlinked pair also exists at Brampton Education Centre, the school at OCI, though with several differences. One striking difference is that little or no time is lost to classroom management. This is partly so because living in a correctional facility allows residents much time to look inwardly, and think about what they want to do with the rest of their lives. Many, who genuinely want change, figure out that education can be a means to avoid their current circumstances in the future. An upshot of this realisation is that, as residents accept responsibility for their own learning, they naturally reject impediments to its progress, vis-a-vis poor classroom habits. In general, residents who apply for school possess a fair bit self-motivation, so the most problematic part of learning—the genuine want to learn, is already at work in their minds by the time they arrive for their first lesson.

Maintaining this level of motivation is another issue in itself, but this is just one of several challenges that teachers must manage, whether teaching on the inside or outside. The matter of motivation needs a bit more explanation: in the same way students in regular Grade 12 are teenagers with teenage issues, residents at OCI are essentially prisoners with prisoners’ issues. One of the mental hurdles that residents must overcome before they apply for school is, how much of their weakness, in terms of school work, should they expose to their peers? Though the natural tendency is to minimise this, it becomes an impediment to learning, and residents who are frank with themselves acknowledge this. Those who remain motivated and complete their studies, share some common traits: they all dropped out of regular high school; believed that they didn’t have an aptitude for school work; spoke openly about particular areas of their academic weakness; listened well; and went after their lessons with an almost dogged tenacity. Brampton Education Centre had several graduation ceremonies during the last school year, and my usual surprise as I gather their papers to submit for the OSSD, is the latent power of the last three traits.
The levels of English that I teach range from Literacy & Credit Recovery (LCR), to Grade 12; generally, most residents begin with LCR, and progressively work towards Grade 12. A reason for this strategy is that a majority of residents left school about ten to twenty years ago, or more. For many, the social skills that classrooms require have long slipped away; for most, English classes are associated with memories of it being a tough subject, accompanied by low marks. Given this situation, the methodology that I use to teach the early stages of LCR focuses on a dual approach which involves reading comprehension and grammar. It’s hard to overstate the importance of this elementary pair, since learning is largely rooted in the degree of our reading comprehension.

The reading material that residents use to provide context for this skill have a comfortable start point; its diction is simple, but the storylines have adult realism: uncertainty involving the start up of a new business, fears about retraining for a new career, shoplifting, alcoholism, mid-life crises, adultery, and others. In general, the narratives do not overtax residents’ imagination or patience because their life experiences assist comprehension. Of course, learning up to this point remains untested, but as residents attempt to express what they believe they’ve learnt, that is, transfer what’s inside their minds to the outside, via writing, grammar becomes critical. Somewhere about this point, it becomes self-evident that English has at least two grammars, one for speaking, the other for writing; further, that their speaking grammar has a tendency to sneak into their writing. Here’s a common situation: residents, usually with an odd smile on their face, would ask me to check their work. Intuitively, they sense that what they wrote, doesn’t quite match what they had in mind. It’s in instances like these that the necessity of proper grammar skills sells itself to residents, so lessons on parts of speech and tenses naturally follow.

There are both credit and non-credit classes. When students have successfully completed the preparatory, non-credit work for English and Math they move on to credit courses which count towards OSSD. Doing Grade 12 work also helps to give residents a large boost in their confidence about academic capability. This is an area that a significant portion has very little experience with.

In the early part of Grade 12 English, residents would have studied several figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, irony and idiom. This area of study is worth the time because many stock phrases have become an almost integral part of everyday speech, and tend to show up in their writing. Their usual surprise is that they unknowingly use this language regularly. I’ve learnt a few new ones too, including: the five finger tax, an idiom for stealing. In general, a good understanding of how figures of speech extend thought becomes critical for reading comprehension, and this manifests itself as we move on to more complex pieces like Shakespeare’s Sonnet 29.
A little past midway in the course, residents have studied Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* and *Hamlet’s* or *Claudius’* soliloquies. The grittiness of the novella and play is easy for residents to wrap their minds around, at the literal level; I suspect that their maturity and the grittiness of their own lives help too. However, always lurking in the background of their questions, writing and assumptions, is the sense that these are just pieces fiction, something to read and write essays about because the course requires it. Given this, I’ve reflected that English is generally taught through fiction, (and students realise this too); hence teachers should thoroughly justify its use with students. I believe that residents would benefit from such justification because it would provide a way for them to come around to the awareness that the greed and uncertainty of real people are as real as Claudius’ and Hamlet’s respectively. Further, we can use the play as a vehicle to thoughtfully consider the effects of too much, or too little of such human qualities, and so learn beyond the literal level.

So far, residents have responded well to the justification of fiction I’ve provided; evidence of this exists in the depth of their inward reflection, and this reveals itself during discussions, questions and consequently their writing. Looking at the larger picture, that of a school within a treatment-based, correctional facility, I’m optimistic that some degree of thoughtfulness will remain with OCI residents after release, and in some positive way, have a bearing on their thoughts and subsequently their actions.
**Dicogloss**: Collaborative construction of knowledge

By Imad Gburi

*Dicogloss* is a variation of a dictation in which learners are required to reconstruct a short text they have listened to, and then “in small groups, the students ... pool their resources to reconstruct the version of the original text” (Wajnryb, 1995, p. 5). It is not the traditional procedure of having students regurgitate in writing words the teacher reads off a script and assessing their success across the accuracy of their spelling. Conversely, dicogloss is a creative variation of dictation with benefits that transcend the limits of discriminating auditory input and interpreting it into graphic symbols conforming to the rules of English spelling.

There is a plethora of literature on the history of dicogloss and its potential for igniting the acquisition processes. First and foremost, it is good to know that this communicative task draws on the principles of task-based language teaching (TBLT). Quite similar to TBLT, dicogloss aims to engage language learners in interactionally authentic use of language through performing a communicative task that requires working collaboratively to accomplish the outcome of this task. It is a very interesting combination of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is, as such, a holistic task that engages language learners in a learning experience that centres on a content/text employed to teach a linguistic feature implicitly. This feature could be vocabulary, grammar, or any other aspect introduced through content relevant to learners’ interests. Dicogloss thus is a learner-centred activity that capitalizes on learners’ motives for embarking on the language learning journey. Prior to proceeding with other pedagogical values, let’s briefly see how it is done.

**How**

Use or simply create your own passage that embeds the grammatical form you intend to emphasize. The length and complexity of the text should be tuned to students’ level. A typical dicogloss task has four stages. First, in the preparation stage, students brainstorm possibly unfamiliar vocabulary items that appear in the text. This review will help students notice how these vocabulary are used in a meaningful context. It will also help make the overall meaning of the reading passage more comprehensible. Then, the dictation stage follows in which students listen carefully to their teacher read the text through once at a normal speed. Instructors can read more slowly or pause longer, a discretionary decision determined by the level of students’ proficiency. Read the text a second time. This time,
ask students to take notes as they listen. Then, the reconstruction stage, here students, in pairs or groups, work together for approximately 15–25 minutes to reconstruct the text from their shared resources. This is the collaborative stage when students interact, pool their information, and consider best options to accomplish the goal of the task. The final stage is the correction and analysis. Groups present their co-constructed version of the original text aiming at grammatical accuracy and cohesion. Recreated texts can be used as springboards for discussion, correction, and analysis for other groups to refine their own texts in light of shared discussion and scrutiny. This stage is usually extended to teach the grammatical form in question explicitly. The text exemplifies how this form functions in a meaningful context.

**Why**

A dictogloss task is believed to provide conditions necessary for second language acquisition (SLA), such as meaning negotiation and interaction. Shehadeh (2005) argues that interaction facilitates SLA through “the opportunity for both the provision of comprehensive input and the production of modified output” (p. 21). In a dictogloss, learners are required to work collaboratively in order to achieve a specific goal: recreation of texts. Sharing notes, which might be chaotic in the initial stage, and pooling resources to coherently and cohesively organise ideas, generates plenty of learner-learner interaction. Interaction comes in terms of meaning negotiation, recasts, and comprehension checks.

Considering possibilities to express meanings gives language learners a massive workout with language. As students stumble over utterances that might seem incomprehensible, they are prompted to tap into their knowledge of grammar, collocations, spelling, and knowledge specific to the content of the text. They are also stimulated to ask each other to repeat, modify, simplify, and/or consider alternatives. Besides driving the acquisition processes through maximizing opportunities to play with language, interaction is believed to aid learners in attending to grammatical accuracy. Interaction is believed to mediate learning of formal properties. Ellis (2000) notes that interaction provides language learners with opportunities to help each other “succeed in performing a new function with the assistance of another person and then internalize this function so that they can perform it unassisted” (p. 209), a process often referred to by Vygotsky as scaffolding (Raymond, 2000, p. 176). In other words, this peer-assisted performance helps learners consciously monitor the usage of a particular grammatical form, which may in turn help them establish a better control of this form.

The notion of conscious attention to form is widely accepted in SLA. According to Schmidt’s (1994) Noticing Hypothesis, a linguistic feature needs to be consciously noticed in order for it to be acquired (p. 17). Dictogloss offers learners the opportunity to refine their use of language by employing this principle. Reproducing texts requires a comprehensive analysis and correction of linguistic options. Struggling with formal accuracy in the reconstruction period makes grammatical features more noticeable. When learners collaborate to work
out their hypotheses of the form-meaning relationships, they actually use language to reflect on language, a process that can raise learners’ awareness of the gaps in their current linguistic knowledge.

According to Swain (1995), output makes learners more conscious of linguistic shortcomings that they need to manage. They start noticing the gaps between what they want to say and what they are actually able to say with the target language. This process makes them shift from semantic processing to grammatical processing for accuracy of production. Attempts to convey meaning may push language learners to test hypotheses with the target forms, receive corrective feedback from other interlocutors, and ultimately modify their utterances according to this feedback. This process stimulates learners to stretch their current language capacity in order to fill these gaps “enabling them to control and internalize linguistic knowledge” (p. 126). Swain calls the language produced as a result of this stretched ability the “pushed output” (p. 126). To summarize, dictogloss provides learners with opportunities to negotiate meanings, receive feedback, modify input, and pay attention to the formal properties of the L2.

Implications for LINC Instructors

The beauty of dictogloss lies in the ease with which it can be customized and appropriated to achieve a variety of purposes. It can serve to create a culture for reading and writing that engages all learners regardless of their proficiency. Reading and writing are usually perceived as laborious tasks by some learners, especially for low-ability ones whose limited linguistic resources hinder them from tackling extensive texts. Dictogloss is one possibility of establishing the reading-writing relationship and contextualizing the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) competencies in level-appropriate, easy-to-understand readings and topics that are especially relevant to newcomers to Canada. Therefore, besides being task-based, dictogloss can be a learner-centred, CLB-based activity—the three guiding principles of the LINC curriculum.

It can be also used to focus learners’ attention on aspects of aural input. The vast majority of learners in LINC classes received their initial language education in their home countries with minimal exposure to English. Their ability differentiate and analyse a continuous stream of sounds into its basic components is relatively low. To acquire a language, learners need to develop the ability to know where a word ends and where a new word begins. Otherwise, speech in that language would sound like a combination of unintelligible noises. Imagine yourself listening to the news delivered in a language you do not understand. More often than not, learners drop their jaws when they are told that the ‘fɒd əv bɛn’ they have just heard is no more than the ‘should have been’ they have always seen and found understandable when encountered in writing. Dictogloss can be used to help adult learners establish a meaningful connection between the picture, language in writing, and the sound, language in speaking. Dictogloss can serve as a context for reformulating learners’ perceptions of spoken English through raising their awareness of the interesting
English property of relatively low sound-letter correspondence. It is advisable to do this in the correction and analysis stage, the explicit instruction stage of the task. I have noticed that some students work out their own hypotheses about this phonological phenomenon when they compare their texts to the original text. They sometimes consult the teacher only to seek confirmation and/or further explanation.

On the other side of the ledger, dictogloss gives LINC instructors the flexibility to instruct a dry topic like grammar through a task that integrates receptive and productive skills, and through content that incorporates themes immensely important for the social, cultural, and economic integration into Canada. While totally oblivious to instructor’s intentions of teaching grammar, learners engage in an activity that requires listening to capture as much as they can in writing and using their collective notes to recreate a text that approximates the original text in meaning and accuracy. These texts can be used to draw learners’ attention to how a particular form functions in rich contexts. Indeed, these texts are springboards for using language to reflect on language while the primary focus is steered toward meaning.

Last but definitely not the least, dictogloss is cost-effective. Quite often, classroom activities require preparing and distributing multiple copies. With a bit of engineering, previously validated texts can be adapted to engage a LINC class in a motivating, thought-provoking learning experience that leaves no one behind. The same text can be recycled and reused to serve a variety of needs and abilities.

**Points to Remember**

Dictogloss was initially developed to make grammar teaching more purposeful and meaningful, and to help language learners become aware of their shortcomings and needs as they use their grammar resources to reconstruct a text. However, it draws on the premises of TBLT which entails primary focus on meaning, clearly defined communicative outcome, involvement of one or all the four skills, and no direct teaching of grammar before the task (Willis, 2005, p. 3). Instructors should avoid any explicit instruction of grammar in the preparation stage (first stage).

It is advisable to refer to grammar after the outcome of the task is accomplished. Furthermore, whether from a magazine, newspaper, book, or the LINC curriculum, the lexical complexity of the text should be adapted to learners’ abilities. Instructors should strike a balance so that learners do not find texts overly difficult or excessively childish. Modestly challenging contents can be more engaging.
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Author Bio

Imad Gburi (BA, MATESOL, TESL) has taught ESL, EFL, ESP, and EAP for the past 14 years in Ontario and Dubai. He’s currently engaged in an e-learning program where he provides CLB-based instruction. His main research interests are task-based learning, CALL, and how bilingualism impacts the cognitive development of learners.

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I teach in Japan, and my biggest hurdle as a language teacher is my students’ assumptions about learning.

Many students think foreign languages are subjects to be memorized and studied late at night. They listen carefully to their teachers’ explanations, craft beautiful notes with intricate colour schemes, and wonder why they still can’t catch the meaning of simple spoken questions or put their thoughts down on paper.

Languages are sports, not subjects. They cannot be taught, or learned. Instead, they must be practiced.

Language teachers aren’t really teachers, either (at least, the good ones aren’t). Rather they are coaches. They don’t lecture, they demonstrate. They don’t teach, they create training regimens.

Like in baseball, knowing the rules is just the first step towards being able to play.

Many students in Japan spend all their time learning grammar in classrooms. Imagine a baseball team that spent all its practice sessions inside, listening to the coach explain the rules. Players spend their time taking notes and memorizing positions.

Come game day, how are they going to do out on the field?

Let’s look at another team. The coach explains the rules, but only the basic ones, enough to let the players start. He demonstrates some basic skills, like throwing or batting. The players spend most of their time practicing, alone and with their teammates. Occasionally the coach gives individual instruction, pointing out useful techniques to players that need them. After a few months, they play the team described above.

Now move that to the classroom. The language teacher (coach) explains little, demonstrates when necessary, and encourages the students to practice, both alone and with classmates. Students work at developing fluency and automaticity, and learn how to study independently, where to find sources of input, and how to deal with problems.

The best language classrooms aren’t lecture halls where students sit attentively and write down discrete items to memorize later. They are noisy, chaotic places where students are practicing and refining techniques, wrestling with language, and learning how to rescue communication when it breaks down.
VOCABULARY IS YOUR MORNING COFFEE, GRAMMAR IS YOUR SUGAR

By Katherine Nelson Tanizawa

Do you ever feel lost, confused, headachy, unable to wrap your thoughts around things until that moment comes? Then when it does, you feel enhanced, empowered, and enriched for the day. “Was it that tall skinny triple-shot mocha latte with the dollop of whipped cream on top?” you wonder. Perhaps, but in the realm of language, it is most likely the power of vocabulary that acts as your morning coffee assisted by grammar as the sugar.

Vocabulary, like coffee, is a catalyst to ignite conversation or render arguments peaceful. Broadening your usage of words and adeptly deploying them gives you choices which can assist you to more readily participate in wider topics of discussion, adding variety to an otherwise bland experience. Brew a pot and people gather to sit and sip while the ideas flow.

Whether added or simply the organic caramelized sweetness of the roasted bean, sugar completes coffee. Like from one’s morning mocha spruced up with sugar, a sense of empowerment comes from vocabulary and the ability to manipulate it within the basic structure of the language. Grammar sweetens your articulations and smooths out the messages you drink in daily. Without it, something might be amiss. With it, meanings can be expressed and understood vibrantly, intelligently and effectively.

Along with this empowerment comes an elevated sense of command. You can take charge of the moment by efficiently manipulating what you say or write and how, allowing you to be as concise or verbose and as vague or specific as the situation requires.

Vocabulary is your morning coffee and grammar is your sugar. I will take a tall skinny soy mocha latte with a dictionary to go, please.

Author Bio

Katherine Nelson Tanizawa is a Japan-based associate professor, interpreter, editor, and writer with broad international experience spanning more than 25 years. She has a strong interest in language acquisition, education, academic admissions consulting and management.
THE CHECKLIST

By Adeesha Hack and Sharron Tan de Bibiana, George Brown College

*The Checklist Manifesto*, written by Atul Gawande, suggests how professionals can use checklists to ensure that all steps of procedures have been covered. In his book, Gawande classifies failures into two categories: mistakes of ignorance and mistakes of ineptitude. He shows how a step-by-step checklist from medicine is applied to other fields such as aviation and construction to help professionals in a variety of industries to manage complex and challenging situations like flight take-off and erecting high-rise buildings. Gawande claims that using checklists dramatically reduces mistakes such as flight disaster and building collapse.

Second-language instruction is neither life-threatening nor disaster-prone, and second-language learners are not patients. Rather, second-language learners aim for clear and accurate communication in their pathways to further education or career pursuits. Yet, the insights from Gawande’s books can also be applied by ESL teachers and learners.

This article will outline how checklists can be a valuable tool for educators to check their lesson planning, lesson execution and evaluation of students’ work, and for students to check that they have met the objectives of the lesson.

**What Checklists Can Do in Teaching and Learning English as a Second Language**

In his book, Gawande writes that checklists are simple, but they provide discipline and reminders to the users. Pilots are the main example of those who constantly use checklists to determine where the potential errors exist, but Gawande shows how more and more surgeons are using them. Even though the ESL use of checklists is not as dramatic, the purpose is the same: to identify problems and correct them.

Teachers can use checklists before, during and after a second language course - from planning to assessment. To ensure effective planning, checklists provide a starting point to guide implementation of a syllabus into learning activities and tasks. Educators utilize checklists for language needs assessment and analysis, diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment. After a course wraps up, checklists can guide teacher reflection of activities and self-evaluation of teaching.
Unlike an airline pilot with only seconds to spare, teachers and students generally have hours or days to review their checklist in order to sharpen up a lesson plan or produce an enhanced piece of work by focusing the user on key elements and systematically covering the items that teachers or students need to consider.

**Learner Checklists**

Many students already use checklists in the classroom to complete a variety of tasks, such as ensuring that main elements of the paragraph have been included. An example is appended. This particular checklist asks students to determine if they have written a topic sentence, main supporting points and details, and a concluding sentence. This checklist, nudges them to look once more at their transitions and sentence patterns, and perhaps notice something they had not previously. Additionally, writing checklists can remind students to review their grammar or to look for common errors.

Checklists can be used to keep students focused on particular tasks in all language areas. Even listening, which does not readily lend itself to checklists, can have associated checklists. For example, if students are listening to a lecture, teachers can provide a checklist that students can use to assess themselves. Points can include whether students were able to identify the topic and the main ideas, as well as whether they were able to focus throughout the lecture on certain tasks. In some cases, a checklist works more as a reflection rather than a determiner of points mastered. For example, students could respond to statements such as “I feel confident that I understood this lecture”, and “I feel that understood 50% of this lecture”.

With the rising popularity of online courses, checklists are tools to keep students on task and to ensure they have completed the weekly activities and assignments. Students who have taken an online class and even those who are veterans of online learning appreciate having an end-of-week checklist to determine if they have done all the required work. This simple tool should be an anchor in every course, online or face-to-face, to guide students throughout the term.

**Checklists for Assessment of Activities**

Many teachers use rubrics, which are essentially checklists, to evaluate students’ work. Certainly, checklists can be employed in a number of assessment activities to determine a student’s mark and ensure that a grade is not overly influenced by one or two noticeable factors. For example, elements to consider for oral presentations could include the following: pronunciation, tone, grammatical accuracy, body language, eye contact, organization, and content. While these are obvious things to look for, the teacher watching presentation after presentation can easily be distracted by content and forget to pay attention to one or two elements. The checklist helps us avoid this.
Further, unlike checklists intended for pilots or doctors, which may have only two or three options for eliminating problems, ESL checklists can have a range of choices and uses. The design of checklists will depend on the nature of the assessment or activity.

Teacher Reflection Checklists

Teachers often reflect on classroom practices to see what worked and what did not work in their lesson plans, delivery rubrics and other teaching material. Such reflective practice involves submitting practices to critical examination in order to become more aware of one’s own teaching practice (Farrell, 2007). Using teacher checklists is a tool to implement systematic reflection, and going through checklists before, during, and after course programming reduces problems with and enhances the effectiveness of such reflection. For example, Nikolic and Cabaj (2000, p. 175) present a checklist on classroom interaction and teacher skills in questioning which focuses on types of teacher questions. This checklist raises teacher awareness of which learners respond to questions and learner participation and responses in general. Then teachers reflect on factors influencing their decisions about learner responses such as non-verbal cues, classroom seating, wait time and listening.

For teacher checklists, it is important to select topics and criteria according to areas of personal interest and self-evaluation. This could cover elements of what to teach or how to teach. Possible aspects include planning, delivery, and evaluation. For instance, planning checklists on elements to consider when selecting textbooks are useful for beginning teachers and veteran teachers with a new level of learners. Moreover, delivery checklists on the use of corrective feedback support seasoned and new teachers seeking guidance and reflection in the area of instructional techniques. For example, a new teacher could use a simple checklist to determine if he or she has touched on all the points required for the day. Another possibility is to use a checklist after a lesson to establish if the lesson was executed well and that students responded positively. By designing a checklist to serve one’s own needs, teachers use checklists as tools for self-reflection and pinpoint areas for change in lessons and programs.

Creating Checklists

When designing checklists, Atul Gawande provides some guiding principles:

- list no more than nine items on one page;
- use bullets or numbers where possible;
- keep the font consistent;
- focus on the common problems;
- keep the language simple and precise.

Even though the above points were intended for medical checklists, they can easily be applied to ESL checklists in all skill areas by students and teachers.
Conclusion

Gawande suggests that checklists are an important tool and can be transferred to many fields of study. It is astonishing that the simple checklist can have a multitude of applications, from medicine to engineering to airlines and for sure, to education. Not only can it save lives, but also positively influence students’ progress. It presents a systematic approach to correcting errors and improving work. In short, checklists can contribute to effective second language teaching and learning practices.

References


Authors Bio

Adeesha Hack works at George Brown College’s School of English as a Second Language. She has fifteen years of teaching experience in Canada and overseas, and is currently the e-learning coordinator for the School of ESL.

Sharron Tan de Bibiana works as an OSLT instructor at George Brown College and Centennial College. She has many years of experience in teaching English for occupation-specific purposes and has taken part in a number of curriculum and classroom resource development projects.
### Checklist for Narrative Paragraphs

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>SELF</th>
<th>PEER</th>
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<td><strong>Organization/Format</strong></td>
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<td>some idea of my paragraph</td>
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<td>topic</td>
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<td>a topic sentence that defines</td>
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<td>the topic and controlling</td>
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<td>idea</td>
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<td>a body that indicates a series</td>
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<td>of events</td>
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<td>a concluding sentence that</td>
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<td>different words</td>
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<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
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<td>I have</td>
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<td>background information that</td>
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<td>identifies the characters and</td>
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<td>the story setting (place/date)</td>
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<td>a series of 4-6 events and</td>
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<td>not irrelevant events</td>
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<td>the story</td>
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<td><strong>Writing Style</strong></td>
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<td>I have</td>
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<td>examples and details that</td>
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<td>relate to one topic</td>
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<td>presented my information in a</td>
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**General Feedback and Tips**
NEW LANGUAGE, NEW LITERACY

Angelo Di Giorgio, Humber College ITAL

New Language, New Literacy: Teaching Literacy to English Language Learners by Jill Sinclair Bell. Published by Pippin Publishing, 2013.

The following textbook review and evaluation focuses on three main areas including the fit between the textbook and a language curriculum, the fit between the textbook and the reader/student, and the fit between the textbook and the teacher trainer. The report concludes with a summary and recommendation.

The Fit between the Textbook and a Language Curriculum

Jill Sinclair Bell’s (2013) book, New Language, New Literacy: Teaching Literacy to English Language Learners, is primarily directed toward language educators, ESL/ELL instructors, prospective teachers and those currently dealing with English language learners in a literacy context. The content contained within the text would be ideal within an adult learning/language setting focused on providing the necessary basics and fundamental strategies and techniques to prospective, newly certified and experienced language instructors looking for specialized skills. The book aims to increase awareness of the unique challenges found in the literacy classroom and provides a great primer on the specialized knowledge and skills needed to effectively engage and interact with literacy learners so they can successfully develop and build their reading and writing skills. In addition to integrating the text within a program of study for the ESL/language professional, the text can stand alone as it can be taught as a separate professional development course.

The book is conveniently divided into three major sections, namely, understanding literacy and literacy learners, deciding what and how to teach, and developing a successful and coherent program. Each section is subdivided into several chapters and includes a variety of topics that range from literacy and the adult learner to reading and writing strategies and culminating with lessons on planning and assessment. While the content proves to be most helpful and practical, some readers, particularly those with extensive literacy experience and exposure to multiple ESL settings, might find some chapters to be a quick and easy review. Regardless, readers are treated to a clear and concise guide that addresses the core literacy issues, highlights the many realities and challenges experienced by literacy instructors and students, and offers practical strategies and hands-on activities that can be integrated within the language classroom. In addition to the above, the book features two
appendices, one of which covers a variety of useful activities and the other providing an impressive list of print, video and online resources for both teachers and students.

Each unit and every chapter in the book highlights the reality of working with adult literacy learners while providing valuable insights, examples and strategies that can be taught and applied within a language curriculum geared toward prospective and in-service language/ESL instructors. For example, in chapter six, Sinclair Bell (2013) highlights and reviews the Language Experience Approach (LEA) as one method to help learners read for meaning. Decoding approaches are also included to help learners tackle unknown words. In addition, one will find strategies in chapter seven to teach writing that focuses on letter formation, content and sentence structure, and spelling. Such information is of great benefit to both prospective and in-service teachers who are seeking and/or currently working with literacy learners. Readers of the text gain added knowledge and a greater awareness of the specific challenges found in the literacy classroom. While there is a lot of useful and practical information to digest, it falls short by not including end-of-chapter summaries, and questions and/or activities for personal thought and group discussion. Despite these ‘shortcomings’, the fit between the textbook and a curriculum geared toward readers with a background and interest in language teaching for literacy learners is meaningful, relevant and most applicable.

The Fit between the Textbook and the Reader/Student

The book is well structured, well written, and easy-to-read. Sinclair Bell (2013) is engaging and informative, and yet maintains an open and honest perspective of the sometimes difficult realities found within the literacy classroom. Readers not only walk away with a treasure trove of ideas, examples and a greater understanding of how to teach literacy to English language learners, they are left feeling empowered, and armed with practical resources and strategies to create greater success within their classrooms. The suggestions provided in chapter eight, for example, on how to deal with challenging teaching situations including multilevel classes, working with seniors and reaching out to younger, disaffected learners are most insightful and provide readers with valuable tips and concrete strategies. Explanations are simple and clear, equipping readers with essential information to further develop and enhance their language teaching skills. While the content is matter-of-fact and concise, previous language/ESL training and knowledge would be an asset, although not necessarily required, as it can provide greater perspective and understanding. The book, however, is appropriate for prospective and in-service teachers looking to discover, review, refresh and/or deepen their knowledge and ability to teach literacy to English language learners.

Readers will also appreciate the many examples, charts and illustrations found throughout the text as they support the theoretical concepts and methodology used in the literacy classroom. To bring learning to life, chapter 11 provides readers with sample lesson
sequences that can be used in a workplace ESL class, an evening community class, and an adult day-school class. As noted above, readers will also find a separate appendix dedicated to useful resources that include a variety of activities such as “sort and match, “select and complete” and “alphabetical order”, all of which are visually laid out for greater clarity and understanding. Again, readers are provided with a wonderful array of adaptable exercises that can be used in different content areas as well as with different levels. The suggested activities and exercises provide a range of tasks and appeal to the needs of different language learners and learning styles. Sinclair Bell (2013) leaves readers with much inspiration and innovation in the practice and application of teaching literacy in the classroom. Just as helpful is the list of useful resources found in the second appendix. The author also compiled a variety of print, video and online resources that readers can access to deepen their understanding and make learning come alive.

Readers of the text will find the paperback book visually appealing, manageable to carry, read and digest. While there is no use of colour, the size of print is appropriate and includes a good balance of print and white space throughout the text. Given the above, the fit between the textbook and the reader/student is strong and presents a positive case for use within a language learning setting.

The Fit between the Textbook and the Teacher Trainer

The book is written in clear language allowing all teacher trainers to grasp the author’s intent quickly and easily. There is a reasonable fit between the content and the knowledge-base of most teacher trainers, although a certified ESL instructor would relate to the content more readily and be better prepared to provide additional background knowledge and experience to their students. Many teacher trainers will find the text useful to carry out the goals of teaching a specialized literacy course to prospective and in-service teachers, however, they may wish it were more teacher-friendly by incorporating end-of-chapter discussion questions and activities. Despite the lack of such, all readers will find the numerous examples and approaches to reading and writing most helpful and easily applicable within the literacy classroom. Most important, and as suggested by Sinclair Bell (2013), the examples can be adapted to cover a number of content areas and levels. After reviewing the many exercises, readers will be stimulated and inspired to come up with their own activities.

Because the text is neatly divided into three sections, teacher trainers have the opportunity to structure their course accordingly and give prospective and in-service teachers time to practice and review core theoretical concepts and applications. The appendix provides a great list of additional resources that readers can use to supplement their learning, including print and online resources for teacher reference. Some teacher trainers may find the need to deepen their understanding of issues related to literacy by taking on the initiative to
read and research specific topics, such as planning and assessment. Readers will find the list of print and online resources most helpful should they wish to deepen and extend their learning. While there may be learning gaps for some trainers, the content found within the book offers an exceptional primer containing essential content and knowledge that they can use to teach the subject of literacy. Given the structured format, clear explanations, vivid examples, and plentiful resources, the fit between the textbook and the teacher trainer makes sense and proves to work in their favour.

**Summary and Recommendation**

Jill Sinclair Bell (2013) presents readers with an overview of the issues, realities and rewards of teaching literacy to English language learners. The book is very well structured, easy to read and guides readers from the basics of understanding literacy to deciding what and how to teach and culminates with strategies on developing a successful and coherent program. Whether you are new to the language teaching field or an experienced ESL instructor, Sinclair Bell (2013) blends theory with practical ideas that can be easily adapted and presented in different content areas at different levels. The explanations and numerous examples found throughout the book help put things into perspective and stimulate readers to come up with their own ideas. Readers of the book will also appreciate the appendices containing impressive lists of useful resources for both teacher trainers and prospective and in-service teachers.

Given all of the above mentioned points, Jill Sinclair Bell’s (2013) book, *New Language, New Literacy: Teaching Literacy to English Language Learners*, is recommended and can be successfully implemented within an adult learning setting that is geared toward prospective, in-service and experienced ESL/language instructors looking to deepen their understanding and improve their knowledge and skills in teaching literacy to English language learners.

**References**

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

As you know, at the start of this summer, we lost a provincial and national treasure, our beloved Fran Marshall.

Who was this woman who so inspired us? Who was this legendary storyteller who made us well up in tears and also break out into peals of laughter? Who was this caffeinated energizer bunny who kept us on our toes and wide awake during her workshops and plenaries? Who was this YR & B woman that captivated our hearts and brighten our lives?

I have the pleasure of providing you with a glimpse into this dynamic woman. And yet, where do I begin to try and capture 80 years of the essence of Fran Marshall?

Well, here goes - I think I would like to give you an overview through telling you the tale of The Life and Times of Fran Marshall: a celebration of a joyous life (from an ESL/TESL Perspective).

I would encourage you to share, edit, revise and expand on the following chapters with your colleagues, friends and affiliates and continue to write the saga of The Life and Times of Fran Marshall.
CHAPTER 1 – Background, Facts/Details

Fran created and preformed many roles in our profession. I am sure that Fran was known to you in all in many of the following positions.

She was an independent ESL Resource Consultant, author of ESL reader-workbooks, ESL resource consultant, workshop presenter, faculty of education guest lecturer, demonstrator of model lessons, teacher of adult ESL learners at the Etobicoke Board of Education and founder and editor of an ESL newsletter, INTACT.

As a northern girl, Fran graduated from Nipissing U. Teachers’ College and held her OTC. She began her teaching career in the 1960’s by teaching language arts in middle school. Fran went on to be a consultant for CBC’s educational programme and there developed a “community helpers” series for the primary grades.

In the 1970’s, while in Toronto, specifically Etobicoke, Fran began to teach at Humber Heights – 2 days a week; Scarlett Heights – 2 nights a week.

Later, Fran moved to the Mimico Adult Centre where she became an instructor of all levels, as well as teaching TOEFL, Citizen Preparation and Creative Writing.

Fran retired on June 24th, 1998 - sorry Fran, did I say retired? – I meant graduated. This is when Fran’s ESL passions kicked into high gear. Luckily for us, she failed Retirement 101 spectacularly. For 15 years, Fran was like a comet streaking across the ESL/TESL horizon.

Besides the facts, what about the person?

Fran loved writing poetry and public speaking. Often the 2 were combined as Fran gave her speeches in rhyming fashion. As we well know – colleagues and students alike – Fran LOVED coffee which only enhanced her ability to rhythm and speak. At her “graduation” her co-workers anticipated that Fran would be the largest shareholder in Starbucks. Scrabble was another passion – in other words, anything to do with words captured Fran’s attention.

When Fran was a guest author in ESL classes, this is what they noticed about her.

- Fran loves coffee with double cream and double sugar, hates to cook, and is rich, young and beautiful!
- When I saw you in my class, I couldn't believe your age. You were very powerful and energetic. I want to know how to have such powerful energy. If I drink 40 cups of coffee every day, perhaps I can have it. Sunsim Kang!

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario
CHAPTER 2 - Students/Staff - What Fran meant to us and how she touched us all

Fran was that rare individual who could inspire students and colleagues alike. Her wit, imagination and creativity captivated all.

We talk about Edison as being the Father of Electricity, and then there is Mother Nature. Well, Fran was and always will be the mother and father of ESL in Ontario. I don’t think there exists a BF time in ESL – that is Before Fran. Small wonder, as she taught us every facet and level of ESL teaching in a way that was motivating, fun and full of joy.

In the TESL community, all of us had worked with Fran, been to her workshops, or used her materials. I doubt there is anyone out there in the field of adult ESL who does not know Fran.

With Fran, the 6th degree of separation is in place – everyone knows Fran or knows someone who knows Fran or has told, heard or used a Fran story.

In fact, news of Fran’s participation or arrival in an event would cause a stir among our ranks as well as in the classrooms she visited. At the mere mention of her name, we became as excited as children on Christmas Eve who had been told that Santa was coming. Our eyes would light up, and we would begin to exchange delightful stories about Fran.

My 2 favourites are the ones when she and Ross got locked into their hotel room in London and Ross had to climb down from the balcony to open the door. And there is the one when Fran had to drive with a car door that wouldn’t close and with broken eyeglasses (Blowin’ in the Wind).

The elements of her stories were hilarious in themselves, but in Fran’s recitation, they went from the sublime to the ridiculous. We would laugh so hard, tears rolled down our cheeks. The laughter lifted our spirits and warmed our hearts.

Besides her love of ESL, there are 3 other loves that I know of - Fran’s love of family and friends, her writing, and of course, the 3rd legendary one – her love of coffee. We all have great coffee stories of Fran to reminisce over – over coffee that is.

We all knew that that it was really 2 things that fuelled Fran’s energy – her joy of life and definitely caffeine.

Fran was the type of person who was always the consummate professional and hostess. Fran would notice new faces and be the first to welcome them and strike up a conversation.
IN MEMORIAM

She would do this in the classroom, conferences, meetings and workshops. After a conversation or even an exchange of pleasantries, you felt invigorated – perhaps it was the caffeine fumes she exuded, but I suspect it was the way she had in making all of us feel that we mattered and we walked away charged, a little taller and a little lighter in burdens.

Fran was also positive and encouraging to us as we made strides in our professional careers as well as with the creation of our books, materials and workshops.

I consider myself extremely fortunate that Fran agreed to be the editor of my books, *Language Profiles*. I was humbled by how much more she did for me besides being my editor when she went on to guide me through the process of registering my books, explaining how to publish them, and introducing me to Monika at Alpha Plus to help with sales.

Fran even went as far as taking my books with her to other conferences and publishers’ displays to market them. I know that she also did the same for others. We all benefitted from her advice and expertise.

Always the consummate storytelling writer, Fran added to our classroom resources: *Thirty Minutes to Review, ESL According to Fran* are 2 great examples. As Fran delved into tracing her ancestry, we all benefitted with her family trilogy of books about her Mother Lillian, her Uncle David and her Aunt Felicia, the last book which she finished in 2012.

Here are a few great examples of what Fran meant to the students and her colleagues:

My teacher seems to know the core truth of education. Her happy approach to everyday class life is unique. She has always minimized our deficiencies and encouraged our natural abilities. . . Another good example of her teaching method is dramatization of scenes. This is her magic touch. It sets our minds on fire, we are alert, involved in discussion and absorbed in material. My English teacher has two outstanding qualities, motherly warmth and a golden tongue. . . The affection in her eyes gives us assurance and dissolves fear. Through her eyes I see myself as capable, decent and destined for greatness. –Josef Suzko

Every new ESL teacher deserves the chance to be inspired and encouraged by you and every veteran basks in listening to you again and feeling reaffirmed and refreshed. I will never forget the first time I heard you at TESL Ontario. I was raving to my colleagues afterwards and saying to myself that is how I want to
IN MEMORIAM

Farewell Tour: British pop sensations Jean Spice, Fran Spice, Barb Spice and Mary Spice appeared for the last time last night at Mimico Leaf Gardens. Fran, a.k.a. Sassy Spice, and Mary, a.k.a. Zesty Spice, have announced they want to pursue solo careers.
IN MEMORIAM

You brought sunshine into the room the minute you entered. Your visit was not only educational, it was entertaining and a lot more. I wish I have the opportunity to meet you again. –Guat Ngoh

You are humorous and patient. You speak clearly, I can understand more. I have a deep impression from you. I’ll remember you forever. –Jane Lu

The nicest teacher in the world. I started to love you because you are more than a common teacher, you are my friend.
CHAPTER 3 - Professional Success

Workshops/plenaries and training sessions
Fran presented workshops, plenaries and keynotes across Canada at private schools, public and separate school boards, colleges and universities, TESL Ontario and the affiliates and TESL Canada. As if that was not enough, she trained EFL teachers from Korea.

- This Hour Has 30 Minutes: Time Management in ESL, Time Management in ESL – The Key to Success
- Best Practices to Motivate Multi-level ESL Classes
- Planting the Seeds in our Cultural Mosaic
- The Grand Finale, Let’s make the Finale Grand
- An ESL Survival Kit
- A Word from the Wise
- Best Practices to Motivate Multi-level ESL Classes”

Achievement Awards
For all her tireless work, compassion, and generosity of heart, Fran was duly recognized.

- Award of TESL Ontario Silver Pin (aka The TESL Ontario Distinguished Contribution Award) Designed to recognize and honour the significant long-term achievements and contributions to the advancement of English Language educators, the English Language training sector and/or TESL Ontario, November 2001
- Award for Creativity P/H/E/TESL Affiliate Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000
- Award of Excellence, Etobicoke Board of Education, 1996
- Culinary Award, for most original menus, 1998

CHAPTER 4 - Fran’s Idols & Our Idol
In interviews that Fran gave over the years, she was asked where she drew her ideas and creativity from. Time and again she mentioned her mother Lillian. In the Life and Times of Lillian she wrote an Epilogue of Love to her dear mother.

Fran also was also grateful for the steadfast and enduring support of her husband Ross, her daughters, her grandchildren and the rest of her extended family.
IN MEMORIAM

Fran mentioned also how she was indebted to Mary Hall for the years of being her computer/techy guru. Mary helped her with her books and the **INTACT** Etobicoke newsletter of years gone by. It was Mary who took all of Fran’s mementoes and tributes from ESL and TESL and created an e-scrapbook for Fran in her last year. It provided with a source of strength in her illness.

For her publications, Fran was unstinting in her praise of Monika Jankowska-Pacyna (AlphaPlus) for being her distributor as well as Thane Ladner. It was their efforts that brought the stories of Fran’s families into our ESL classroom, and for that, Fran was most thankful.

As for those in TESL/ESL that Fran most admired, it was Peggy Frederikse (Kinsey), Barbara Steen, Jean Hamilton and Renate Tilson. Their guidance, knowledge, support were above and beyond.

For myself, I am so appreciative, as I am sure countless others were too, that Fran failed Retirement 101 so miserably. In fact, in the years after her retirement, (oops!) graduation, I am sure that she influenced and had a positive impact on so many of us ESL professionals — far more than when she was gainfully employed in ESL (24 years).

Upon her graduation, Fran quoted George Burns “I have grown older, but I haven’t grown old.” How true! Sheer joy has no age.

Fran’s colleagues spoke about her as their “biggest cheerleader, always recognizing and celebrating each person’s individual qualifications and abilities” (Kathy)

Teachers globally wrote to Fran about how much their students and their students’ families connected to Fran through the tales of her family and how much they identified and loved them. One young ESL student (Grade 3) wrote to Fran about how much she enjoyed the *Life and Times of Lillian*. She would go into her mother’s backpack every day to look for the next chapter to read.

I know that in my case I have Fran to thank for getting my books *Language Profiles* edited, registered, published and distributed. I know that there are also others who Fran likewise took under her wing and encouraged us.
CHAPTER 5 - Family

Ross – also called Loss or Fran’s wife by ESL students

Ross is one lucky man – was married to Fran for almost 55 years. Ross belongs to that rare breed of men who encourage, support and cheer on the successes of their wives. Couple that with great fortitude, sense of travel adventure (aka chauffeuring Fran from top to bottom, side to side of Ontario) managing the finances (Fran throwing wads of bills and emptying her pockets onto a table) Ross was the perfect foil and lightning rod for Fran. At her “graduation”, from Etobicoke, Fran had this to say about Ross:

And to Ross – my best friend and partner in this almost 40 year trial marriage
You have been my PROZAC
When I have been depressed
You’ve tried to be my VALIUM
When I was overstressed.
Ross, I realize that you waited patiently for Benchmarks 9–12, and I have just this to say:
Long before Benchmarks evolved
We’d been dividing the tasks
One did listening, one did speaking
Who did which – need not be asked!

Ross returned the favour when he spoke about Fran:

Twenty-four years ago at Fran’s first ESL Christmas party, her first night school principal said, “If Fran is half as good a wife and mother as she is a teacher, you’re a very lucky person”. I certainly agree with the luck because Fran is a wonderful wife and mother, and maybe half as good a teacher. But, in talking to some of her colleagues, I realize that the word “half” should always be omitted. Fran does not do anything in halves, except ordering dinner. She does everything very well, except to take time to stop and smell the roses...

Andrea (daughter) and Richard (son-in-law)

Fran was extremely proud and close to her children. At Lori Ann’s passing, Fran celebrated her life by starting a memorial scholarship for Lori Ann. Fran referred to Richard as one “Whose accomplishments never end”. Fran counted Andrea as her confidante and friend – not all mothers and daughters share such closeness. At Fran’s graduation, Andrea said:
I’d like to pay tribute to my mom, Fran Marshal. ESL has been a part of her heart and soul for 24 years. She has inspired many students and colleagues and, in turn, been inspired by them. I would just like to say that I hope she will always remain YOUNG in heart and spirit, RICH in talent, and BEAUTIFUL inside and out.

Love, Andrea

At Christmas 2012, Andrea wrote a very moving letter to her mother about how Fran was such an integral part of their family and their lives.

Bradley and Kimberly Northcote

Fran adored her grandchildren. As she put it they would “always have centre stage”, that they had given her compensation for reaching her senior age”.

Memorable Quotes – A Word from the Wise (about Fran and by Fran)

“Finally, I like to share a cogent quote of Fran’s. She said that acquaintances asked querulously: “What do you make as a TESL teacher?” Her simple yet powerful reply – “I make a difference!” –Dennis James, 2009

“Fran Marshall- TESL Teacher Extraordinaire!”

“She is an ESL erupting volcano”;

“You give the energizer bunny competition”.

“YR & B = young, rich and beautiful”

CHAPTER 6 - Lillian and Fran, Mother and Daughter

As you all know from the *Life and Times of Lillian*, Fran’s mother was an immigrant child who was brought up to Toronto, with her siblings, from New York by her father. The children were then left in an orphanage. Lillian was then adopted with her brother by a farming family and the two children experienced a lot of hardships as they grew up.

It was this true life tale that had a profound influence on Fran who admired her mother for her strength of character. It was this tale that also touched so many of our ESL learners who could well relate to coming to a new land and starting with nothing with little or no family support, as well as their feelings of isolation.
Fran did an interview in May, 1996 (Peel/Halton/Etobicoke Spring Newsletter - by Bettie Baer) where she said this about her mother: “My mother was a survivor, always pleasant, always up. She would go on in spite of tragedy... Her genuine love of people from all backgrounds, all walks of life and all ages is a wonderful legacy she bequeathed to her family”. When Fran described her mother, she could have been looking in a mirror. What better way could a daughter honour her mother than immortalizing her in a book?

**CHAPTER 7 – The Grand Finale**

Here I bring my part of the *Life and Times of Fran* to a close. Yet, this marks the beginning of the tale for others to add to and polish with love and affection.

So, when you sit with your class and read over Fran’s trilogy of her family, or *Blowin’ in the Wind* or the dog story – you know the one – think of Fran animatedly gesturing the parts – and share with the class the remarkable story of the woman behind the stories.

And when you are sitting at a conference or workshop, think of Fran young, rich and beautiful, regaling you with her philosophy of life and her love of ESL.

So to Fran, aka Frank, aka YR & B, a “conscious teacher”, I promise you today, tomorrow and all the future tomorrows we will continue to tell your stories as we have always done. Your laughter, kindness and interest in others as well as your legendary energy and love of ESL will live on forever. As Andrea would put it, you will always remain “Young in heart and spirit, Rich in talent and Beautiful inside and out.”

I am sure that behind the Pearly Gates that you spoke about in your “graduation” speech, they are already telling your story. I know they are just as excited about you joining them as we were to share our lives with you.

I just hope that they remembered to have a big pot of endless coffee on hand.
APPENDIX 1 - books

Fran has left us a legacy of her books. Fran requested that her materials be made available free of charge to anyone who wanted to use them. After discussing this with her family (Ross and Andrea), we decided the best way was to have TESL Ontario post them on their website.

So, for those of you who would like to have copies of the materials below, they will be posted on TESL Ontario’s website free of charge to download and reproduce. If you are having problems finding these materials, please contact TESL Ontario directly.

If you do download these materials, perhaps in appreciation of this wealth of wonderful resources, a donation could be made to the Lori Ann Marshall Memorial Scholarship – see info at the end of this tribute.

Readers and Workbooks: (info included with book/material overview - from Fran’s CD’s)

Complete story unit lessons with guidelines for use containing vocabulary study, discussion questions, and related comprehension activities and writing exercises. The stories are real life experiences. They’re funny, tragic and moving. ESL Stories- Yours and Mine

ESL Stories - Yours and Mine:

- The Life and Times of Lillian
- The Story of David
- Felicia’s Story
- ESL According to Fran

Note: Ai Siok Lim Jones was so taken with the stories of Lillian and David, she translated them into Indonesian.

Teacher Manuals/Classroom Openers:

Manuals containing 30 minute opening activities to encourage adult ESL learners to speak, listen, write, and read in English as soon as they arrive in class.

- 30 Minutes to Review
- The Early Bird Special
- A Little Bit of Everything

APPENDIX 2 - Memorial Fund

If you would like to continue to honour Fran and her resources, you could make a donation to the memorial scholarship fund that she and her family set up for Lori Ann, her daughter, who passed away when she was in her 2nd year at Glendon College.
IN MEMORIAM

Lori Ann Marshall Memorial Scholarship - Glendon College, York University
(Awarded to a student with a chronic physical illness who has demonstrated financial need)

Check out http://friendsofglendon.com/node/101 for more info.

Cheques Payable to: Friends of Glendon College
Notation on cheque: Lori Marshall Memorial Bursary
Address: Glendon College, C 138 York Hall
2275 Bayview Ave., Toronto, ON, M4N 3M6
Attn: Fiona Kay

TESL Ottawa Fran Marshall Bursary

In honour of Fran Marshall, the Ottawa affiliate for TESL Ontario would like to establish
The Fran Marshall Bursary to deserving students within a TESL Ontario certified program
as well as C-TESL students from Carleton University or Algonquin College in Ottawa to
attend a TESL Ontario Conference.

SOURCES

I would like to thank the following for providing information, pictures and materials for
this tribute:

1. Mary Hall's e-scrapbook
2. Andrea Northcote
3. Ross Marshall
The same people who spend their weekends at the blogger reenactment festivals will whine about the anachronisms in historical movies, but no one else will care.

Source: http://xkcd.com/771/

Around three hours into the date, it became apparent neither of us actually knew sign language.

Source: http://www.smbc-comics.com/?id=1272
Dinosaur Comics

Adults think other adults are the best, teens know teens are the coolest, and kids posit that kids rule while parents, in comparison, drool. But you know who's REALLY the coolest?

Dang ol' BABIES.

You can take a baby, put it down in a room full of complete strangers making crazy noises, and that baby will do the following: presuppose those noises have meaning, INDEPENDENTLY INVENT THE VERY IDEA OF LANGUAGE, and then learn to communicate in that language. They will stone-cold deduce rules of grammar FROM OBSERVATION ALONE, and they'll do it way faster than an adult ever could.

But babies are stupid! They crawl off cliffs if given half a chance!

Absolutely!

our offspring are idiot savants who think "oh, lexical categories, I'll definitely come up with that idea ENTIRELY ALONE. Hahah oh no a poop came out, time to cry for six hours while simultaneously inventing subject-verb agreement." And they're coming up with these thoughts WITHOUT EVEN HAVING A LANGUAGE TO THINK THEM IN.

Meanwhile, I can't even think "I wanna eat meat tomorrow with Utahraptor" without literally thinking those words in my head like it's friggin' amateur hour.

*sigh*

(C) 2013 Ryan North


Syntax Tree

Exclamative-Clause
  /\                   /\                   /\                   /\
 Subj:NP   Head:VP    Subj:NP   Head:VP    Subj:NP   Head:VP    Subj:NP   Head:VP
   /\                     /\                     /\                     /\
 Mod:Adj   Head:NP     Mod:Adj   Head:NP     Mod:Adj   Head:NP     Mod:Adj   Head:NP
  /\                     /\                     /\                     /\
 /\                           /\                           /\                           /\
a      Head:N          a      Head:N          a      Head:N          a      Head:N
 /\                           /\                           /\                           /\
 Head:Nom  Comp:PP     Head:Nom  Comp:PP     Head:Nom  Comp:PP     Head:Nom  Comp:PP
 /\                           /\                           /\                           /\
 go        Head:P       by        Head:P       by        Head:P       by        Head:P
 /\                           /\                           /\                           /\
 Head:P  Obj:NP        Head:P  Obj:NP        Head:P  Obj:NP        Head:P  Obj:NP
 /\                           /\                           /\                           /\
 comp:PP  of            comp:PP  of            comp:PP  of            comp:PP  of
 /\                           /\                           /\                           /\
 funny things               funny things               funny things
Puzzle

**Telepathy**

In a series of experiments run in Carnegie Mellon University (Pittsburgh, USA) in 2010, volunteers were first shown some English words, while activity was being registered in different locations of their brains. Then the volunteers were asked to think of some other words from a preselected list of 60 words, while the researchers were measuring their brain activity again. Using the obtained data, the researchers were able to determine the words the volunteers were thinking of quite successfully. Below you can find some data on the activity levels for four brain locations depending on which word the volunteers were thinking of.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Location A</th>
<th>Location B</th>
<th>Location C</th>
<th>Location D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>airplane</td>
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<td>high</td>
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<tr>
<td>lettuce</td>
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<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>screwdriver</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same information is given below on six more words the volunteers were thinking of:
*bed, butterfly, cat, cow, refrigerator, spoon*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Location A</th>
<th>Location B</th>
<th>Location C</th>
<th>Location D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Determine the correct correspondences.

—Boris Iomdin

[http://www.ioling.org/problems/2013/i5/](http://www.ioling.org/problems/2013/i5/)