

English Language Learning Magazine

CONTACT

August 2012

- **Going Back to the Well**
- **Compassion Fatigue**
- **Good Reads**

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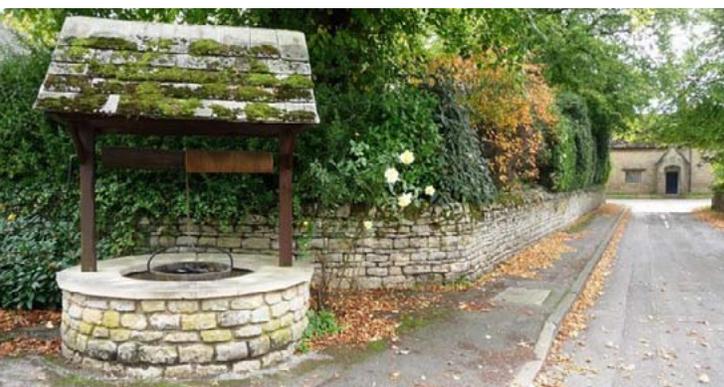
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Calendar

August 22-23	Engaging Learners: Through Critical, Creative & Collaborative Inquiry http://conted.oise.utoronto.ca/Institutes_and_Events.html
September 29	TESL Windsor's Fall Workshop http://www.teslwindsor.com/events.html
October 3	TESL London's Wine and Cheese event http://www.tesllondon.org/index.cfm?i=13738&mid=5&id=167145
October 5	International World Teachers' Day
October 11-12	Merry Wars: Stratford Festival Annual Teachers' Conference http://www.tflc.ca
October 11-14	CADDAC's 4th Annual ADHD Conference http://www.caddac.ca
October 13	2 nd Early Years Symposium: Play Based Approaches To Literacy And Numeracy http://conted.oise.utoronto.ca/Institutes_and_Events.html
October 15	TESL North York's Fall AGM & Mini-Conference http://www.teslontario.net/teslnyy/events.htm
October 19-20	Ontario Modern Language Teachers Association Fall Conference http://www.omlta.org/
October 25-26	Educational Computing Organization of Ontario Conference http://ecoo.org/conference2012/
October 26	TESL Peel-Halton-Etobicoke's AGM and Fall PD Workshops http://www.teslontario.net/phe/events.html
November 3-4	People for Education; Conference; http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/
November 4-10	ESL Week
November 8-10	TESL Ontario' 40th Annual Conference: "TESL Ontario at 40: Thriving, Excelling, Sharing, Leading" http://teslontario.net/conference
November 14-16	The Quest for Increased Student Achievement and Well-Being http://www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca/page.cfm?id=ITQ00015
November 16-18	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages; ACTFL Annual Convention http://www.actfl.org/
November 21-23	Ontario College of Teachers Conference Inspiring Public Confidence. http://www.oct.ca/conference/en/

Please, contact us (editor@teslontario.org) to let us know about upcoming events.



EDITOR'S NOTE

With this third issue done, I'm getting a good idea of how the entire year's schedule of publications will work and am planning for next year. It's hard to understand the workings of a magazine until you get to step inside and see how it's put together. Since most people will never get that chance, there are likely many misconceptions. Perhaps, then, it's a good time to draw back the curtains and show you what's been going on inside *Contact*.

Firstly, you may imagine that I have a form letter beginning, "Dear _____, Thank you for your submission, but I'm afraid..." It's not like that at all. In fact, we very rarely receive unsolicited submissions. Actually, a good chunk of my job involves asking folks to kindly share their writing with us and, consequently, with you. Moreover, we work with our authors to develop what they submit, and we manage to publish most of the material we receive.

Secondly, you may think that we're looking for quite academic, theoretical pieces. While we do publish these articles, TESL Ontario members have told us to prioritize practical teaching information, techniques and methods, lesson plans and classroom tools, and career advice. This matches my vision for *Contact* as a magazine for English teachers in Ontario and beyond, as opposed to a scholarly journal for researchers.

As you can see by the contents of this issue, we're trying to live up to your expectations. Chirawibha and John Sivell have written a very accessible article, "Sending them Back to the Well", which does a wonderful job of presenting a trove of teaching ideas and explaining why they're useful. We also get activity ideas from Anthony Zanzonico and Chris Madden, along with some practical thoughts about teaching speaking from Derrick Lee, an English-language learner.

Still very relevant to the classroom, Amir Azizmohammadi explains how writing teachers and writing students may be talking at cross-purposes when they talk about essays. Relating to managing a teacher's career, Stephanie Hooker looks at the idea of compassion fatigue and how to deal with it. We also have articles and reviews introducing various tools and materials. Cindy Moser introduces "Prevention is the Best Medicine", an 11-item toolkit containing everything needed to deliver instructional sessions on occupational health and safety and Workers' Compensation in Ontario. And Pat Campbell describes the Good Reads project, which got best-selling Canadian authors to write novellas for language learners. Finally, there's news and miscellany.

I hope you can see that this is your magazine, and there's a place here for your ideas and your writing. If you'd like to get something published, this is the place. We'll work hard with you to get it right. We need and deeply appreciate our authors. We'd also appreciate your suggestions about who you want to hear from and what topics you'd like covered. We want to begin publishing letters to the editor, but we rarely receive any. So write us and let us know what you think, about the articles, the magazine, the organization, and our teaching situation here in Ontario.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Brett Reynolds

editor@teslontario.org



CONTACT

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Contact welcomes articles of general interest to association members, including announcements, reports, articles, calls for papers, and news items.



Personnel

Editor	Brett Reynolds
EAB members	Bob Couch�ne Hedy McGarrell Hanna Cabaj
News	Elena Kuzmich
Webmaster	Kevin O'Brien
Design	Yoko Reynolds

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TESL ONTARIO

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Contact

TESL Ontario #405 - 27 Carlton St.
Toronto, ON M5B 1L2
Phone: 416-593-4243 or 1-800-327-4827
Fax: 416-593-0164
<http://www.teslontario.net>

Enquiries regarding membership or change of address should be addressed to the TESL Ontario Membership Coordinator at membership@teslontario.org.

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FINANCIAL NEWS

By Elena Kuzmich

Finances seem to influence falls and rises, successes and failures. Let us remember though, that money is only means to reach our goals. Apparently, Government of Canada holds the same view.

Good news comes first:

Near North District School Board Grant

“Nipissing MPP Vic Fedeli announced on January 19th, 2012 a grant of up to \$127,072 has been awarded to the Near North District School Board for delivery of its Adult Non-Credit Language Training Program for this school year.”

The program is proud of its recent initiatives: Newcomer Network (NNN) and North Bay & District Multicultural Centre which help the new immigrants adjust to the life in the Near North and appreciate the value of living in this region.

Congratulations!

<http://www.baytoday.ca/content/news/details.asp?c=45519>

Foreign Credential Recognition Loans Pilot

“In Budget 2011, it was announced that Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada would test innovative and sustainable ways to help internationally trained professionals cover costs associated with the foreign credential recognition process. The **Foreign Credential Recognition Loans Pilot** will provide funding to community-based partners—such as non-government and non-profit organizations—to increase their capacity to deliver financial assistance to eligible professionals.”

“**WIL Employment Connections** is receiving over \$880,000 to provide eligible clients with a line of credit loan based on their short-term training and certification needs. This project is expected to help over 100 internationally trained workers in London and other areas in southwestern Ontario pursue additional training and licensing exams.”

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-eng.do?nid=658369>

Now it is the turn of some bad news.

Palestine House Loses Funding

Canadian government is cutting “nearly \$1 million in funding to the Mississauga-based Palestine House, an educational and cultural centre established in 1994. The federal

money is not for the centre *per se*. Rather it is for English language training and immigrant settlement services, including skills development and daycare, for about 1,100 newcomers a year.”

Reportedly this is due to the centre’s political views, although the public funding is used only to cover settlement services, not the centre’s cultural activities. Twenty-one employees will have lost their jobs on March 31, 2012; a majority of them are **not** of Palestinian origin.

<http://www.thestar.com/opinion/article/1132117--hitman-jason-kenney-strikes-again>

OTHER NEWS

Study Permit Limits

“In an attempt to weed out ‘disingenuous’ international students, Ottawa plans to grant student visas and work permits to only those enrolling in government-accredited schools.

“The proposed regulatory changes would ensure that study permit holders are genuine students by requiring students to enroll in and actively pursue a course or program of study after arrival in Canada,” said Citizenship and Immigration spokesperson Nancy Caron.”

<http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/politics/article/1241802--canada-may-limit-study-permits-and-visas-of-foreign-students>

Call for Proposals

“Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has issued a call for proposals for language training and other settlement and resettlement services to help newcomers transition into their new life in the country. Various groups can submit proposals including non-profit organizations, businesses, community groups, and educational or other public Institutions.”

<http://www.workpermit.com/news/2012-08-09/canada/canadian-immigration-accepting-proposals-for-new-settlement-programs.htm>

Students Contributes to GDP

The federal government recently released a report showing that international students contributed more than \$8 billion to the Canadian economy in 2010, up from \$6.5 billion in 2008. In Ontario in 2010, long-term students contributed \$1.8 billion to the GDP, sustained 29,970 jobs, and contributed over \$200 million to government revenue. The report can be accessed at

<http://www.international.gc.ca/education/report-rapport/economic-impact-economique/index.aspx?lang=eng&view=d>

LABOUR NEWS

Most elementary and secondary teachers in Ontario, including many ESL teachers, are currently bargaining for new contracts. Some groups have already settled. The provincial government has threatened back-to-work legislation if a deal is not reached by the end of August.

The collective agreement between Ontario colleges and their teachers is also set to expire before September, again, potentially affecting many ESL teachers. OPSEU, the union representing the teachers, has requested that the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) schedule a strike vote for September 6.

DIGEST

Language Decline?

“As many have noted, every generation tends to believe that language is in decline. McWhorter, at least, is careful to point out that we know little about how ordinary people spoke in the pre-microphone past. Listening to a recording of, say, a New York cab driver in the 1940s, as McWhorter did in his research for the book, suggests that too much nostalgia for a supposedly more refined era would be a mistake. ‘Youse fellas,’ McWhorter quotes the cabbie as saying, ‘ya always got da same habit.’”

Charles Foran, *The Walrus*

<http://walrusmagazine.com/articles/2004.10-language-English-language-evolution/2/>

Huz Pronoun?

“Despite the growing popularity of ‘ze’ and ‘hir’ within the transgender community, gender-neutral pronouns have yet to find a place in the vernacular. But for (Bobby) Noble (a trans activist and professor of gender, sexuality, and women’s studies at York University), grammarians’ attempts to systemize the English language miss the point entirely. He encourages his students to identify with a pronoun of their choosing, and he invites them to switch pronouns whenever they see fit. ‘It’s not just about finding the right word,’ he says, ‘but about opening up the discussion on how we use language.’”

Simon Lewson, *The Walrus*

<http://walrusmagazine.com/articles/2011.09-frontier-spellbound/>

Hot Dog Diagrams

“Making a picture of the sentences we read and speak every day was a concept with no real history behind it: it was invented not by an ancient on the other side of the world but in Mr. (Stephen Watkins) Clark’s study, in his classrooms, on long meditative walks around the town of Homer.

And, radical or not, it apparently caught on at the academy. His fellow teachers urged him to take it public, and he wrote the book.

Mr. Clark's early diagrams were basically balloons, though they might be mistaken for a fleet of airships or a family of hot-dog rolls."

Kitty Burns Florey, *New York Times*

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/26/a-picture-of-language/>

In Correct Guidelines

"TYPOGRAPHY is not just about the creative distribution of dark bits on a page. Correct spacing is essential. Daniel Indyk produces in evidence guidelines for authors issued by the Australian Corrosion Association. 'All papers and presentations,' they specify, 'must be incomprehensible English, as would be expected at a technical conference.'"

Feedback, *New Scientist*

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21528762.600-feedback-just-wait-50-years-for-result.html>

L1 + L2 = L?

"Eins, Zwei, Drei, Vier,...'.

This is how I count.

And 'Zwanzig Prozent von Neunzehn-Dreiundsiebzig?' is how I think about tipping the bar tender.

It's mildly weird, because although I grew up bilingually and went to school in Germany, I have lived the larger portion of my adult life in the US.

For the past 7 years most of my conversations have been in English. I think in English. I dream in English. When I count or perform simple algebra, however, I invariably switch into German."

Daniel R. Hawes, *Psychology Today*

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/quilted-science/201208/what-language-do-you-use-multiplication>

SENDING THEM BACK TO THE WELL

Chirawibha Sivell, Welland Heritage Council

John Sivell, Brock University

Based on a Presentation at the TESL Ontario Conference: October, 2011

Slowing Down, Turning Fewer Pages, and Engaging Learners More Deeply

Experience suggests that there is a close correlation between three important variables: happy and successful learning by students, perceptive and beneficial instruction by teachers, and a modest pace of introducing new material that offers teachers and learners alike the satisfaction of working thoroughly and thoughtfully. Optimistic students and confident teachers! It doesn't get better than that. And the key to reaching this goal is to realize that a written or spoken text can be a deep and abundant well that provides ladle after ladle of refreshing water, again and again. Instead of rushing frantically from page to page, there are ways in which to guide learners towards reconsidering the same material from many usefully different perspectives. That's what we mean by *sending them back to the well*.

In a moment, we will outline a number of strong pedagogical justifications for this kind of moderate and methodical approach, but first let's reflect on a perhaps less idealistic but nevertheless vital background reality. Basically, the days of limitless photocopying are over. Heightened awareness of copyright requirements is leading programs to rely more than ever on either class sets or reproducibles as their core pedagogical resource, which—although obviously necessary—introduces a constraint that may have been rather less strict in the past. Undoubtedly, the best of such materials are excellently designed but, even so, class sets are expensive, so that we may not be able to afford as much depth and variety as we would like, and the range of available reproducibles is still relatively limited.

In these circumstances, instructors may well envisage broadening their horizons through copyright-compliant use of realia, which is certainly a worthwhile possibility. However, identifying appropriate realia and then building effective teacher-made activities around them can be time-consuming; thus, as an alternative to that option, or as a parallel track alongside it, there are compelling reasons to consider the potentially simpler approach of taking a fresh look at ways in which to get the most out of the published resources that are already accessible. Insightfully analyzed, a single page of written material, or a brief audio segment, can take on the qualities of a generous wellspring that richly rewards repeated visits. And the fortunate truth is that everyone benefits from slowing down the pace by

reconsidering the same material a few more times: students have a chance to feel that they are really mastering the language content, and teachers are re-invigorated by having time to design meticulous and systematic learning activities.

The Language Learning Experience that we should Promote

Theory is not everything, but it's really important when it can be applied in a practical way, and the relatively new theory of Connectionism is extremely practical. For a long time, theorists have been trying to discern the various mechanisms of the learning process. Everyone is generally familiar with *top down* and *bottom-up* models of language processing, and with the *interactive* model that was proposed as a potential way to combine both. Still, although commonsense experience makes those concepts seem appealing, exactly how do the top-down and bottom-up phases *interact*? Broadly speaking, it is plain that the development and application of background knowledge must be involved, but for many years the only available exemplification of background knowledge appeared to be Schema Theory. Unfortunately, careful studies revealed that Schema Theory was too clumsy and rigid to provide a really convincing explanation. Basically, researchers have concluded that traditional schema theory is “not... the best way to explain mental representations and their uses” because learning is a far more dynamic and nimble process (Grabe, 2009, pp. 76-80).

Connectionism apparently solves that problem. Validating a reality that most classroom teachers have always intuited, Connectionism highlights the way in which learners profit from literally “millions” of encounters with language items that permit them to build up a more and more subtle network of connections and patterns over their whole lifetime (Grabe, 2009, p. 64). As a model of memory, background knowledge and learning, Connectionism emphasizes the importance of repeated encounters with language features in context. Incorporating a surprisingly bottom-up dimension. Connectionism argues that language learning stems largely from “frequency of input, associative processing, and larger emerging patterns”, such that “[a]s exemplars repeat, the knowledge is registered in long-term networks of information” (p. 66).

Above all, this means that the top-down Goodman-style (1967) or Smith-style (1973) processing models, which many teachers still accept, have in fact long ago been “abandoned” by researchers (Grabe and Stoller, 2009, p. 442), who now view Schema Theory as little more than a vivid metaphor for what is no doubt a crucial factor in language learning—background knowledge—but not a working explanation of how that factor actually operates. Instead, Connectionism suggests that “networks of background knowledge” (Grabe, 2009, p. 78) stem from the way in which the pattern-seeking human mind responds to multiple opportunities to process language in diverse meaningful texts, so that the resulting mental structures take the form of active processes rather than fixed schemas. This shift in thinking has become central to understanding a range of language abilities, including reading (e.g.,

Plaut, 2005), vocabulary knowledge (e.g., Nation, 2001, especially his emphasis on the way in which “[k]nowledge of a range of associations for a word helps understand its full meaning and helps recall [it]... in appropriate contexts”, p. 104), and grammar (e.g., Ellis, 2002).

And this Connectionist perspective is consistent with the back-to-the-well recommendation that language teachers should highlight learning activities that allow students to repeatedly re-examine the same oral or written text from varied angles, so as to provide them with the interest and satisfaction of mulling over meaningful language features in numerous different ways. In fact, we may suddenly recognize that learners’ resistance to moving on from a text before having fully mastered it could be evidence of an extremely wise strategy: perhaps, our students are in fact demonstrating their determination to build up the deep-rooted networks of associations that many psychologists of language would also emphasize!

A Communicative View of Focusing on Language Forms as Part of the Teaching/Learning Process

As an old proverb says, *When your thirst is satisfied, you turn your back on the well*. In the context of language teaching, the implication is that we ought always to be on the lookout for ways to keep learners thirsty: that is, opportunities to guide them back to the well, to drink again and again. To quite an extent, this objective may entail alerting students to the possibility of uncovering the many associations, patterns and connections that underlie the individual word-forms and expressions in a given oral or written text; the more they look, the more they see, and the more they see, the more numerous are their occasions to learn. At least in part, this seems to occur because a remarkable transformation can take place. Intensive reading (or listening) passages are typically selected for their challenging new language features, which can be counted on to support “a lot of attention to the vocabulary, grammar and discourse” (Nation, 2001, p. 149), but when the same text is re-examined again and again, the most obvious obstacle to in-depth processing—initial unfamiliarity with vocabulary, grammar, or general content—becomes far less preoccupying. This means that, through numerous reconsiderations over time, a passage that began by requiring students to focus only on a few prominent new demands can gradually become so comprehensible as to facilitate fluent inferences in support of much subtler discernment; in effect, “repeated reading” (or listening) is one of the most direct ways in which to attain the crucial experience of multiple, increasingly informative encounters with the same language elements in order to promote deep learning (Grabe, 2009, p. 306).

And language-oriented activities of that nature are not at all out of step with the principles of communicative language teaching that effective instructors hold dear, even though such language study may sometimes receive less attention than it deserves. Actually, from its earliest formulation, communicative teaching has always included a place for language-focused practice. In this respect, it is informative to go back to Brumfit’s (1979) famous depiction of the complete cycle of communicative language teaching:

1. attempt to communicate
2. assess outcomes; determine any deficiencies, including problems with language forms
3. practise (even drill) formal elements on a perceived-need basis
4. re-attempt to communicate

Brumfit's message is clear: although attention to language should certainly not be the first step in the cycle—that is, we should begin with an authentic or realistic text that has a communicative purpose, not with the presentation of some decontextualized language structure—there is no escaping the reality that progressive mastery of many, many interconnected lexical, grammatical and discourse forms must underpin the development of communicative ability.

Categories of Activities to Promote Repeated Meaningful Encounters with Language Features

Of course, materials from class sets or reproducible packages always come with a certain number of more or less valuable activities, but they can readily and usefully be augmented. Such extensions are much easier to envisage when one realizes that, using the terminology of Harmer (2007), learning tasks fall generally into two categories:

- *Type-1 tasks*: listen or read for general understanding, with a focus on comprehension of the main ideas and chief supporting details
- *Type-2 tasks* (typically completed after Type-1): examine the text for more detailed information, with a focus on bias, tone, literary effects and so on, typically based on specific text features, such as syntax, word choice, and such

In most cases, published materials will provide ample tasks from the type-1 category, but many fewer reflecting type-2; so, teachers can expect that it will nearly always be profitable to scrutinize available materials for unexploited type-2 task opportunities. With rare exceptions, many will come to light and, through experience, spotting the gaps becomes easier and easier.

While specific type-2 task opportunities will naturally depend on the particular recorded or printed text being used, the key point is that most if not all exercise options relate to fundamental configurations of vocabulary, syntax or discourse that are very familiar to anyone with a good background in English language teaching (for example, TESL Ontario Accreditation). It is precisely the commonness and relative simplicity of such task foci that make these exercises useful: they underline the value of basic language patterns with which students are probably already somewhat familiar, but that are ripe for reinforcement in terms of fluency and flexibility. Therefore, even very easy-seeming tasks can contribute not only to learners' confidence but also to their increasingly effortless and subtle control of language features that recur again and again, which is a central implication of the

Connectionist model. And as noted at the outset, students themselves seem intuitively to recognize and pursue that pattern-building process, which matches the preferred learning style of many or most. Moreover, when this crucial principle is understood, teachers in turn are encouraged by the rewarding realization that their own linguistic knowledge—which they may almost have taken for granted, and might even be inclined to discount when deciding how to design supplementary materials—is actually a very powerful professional attribute. In other words, as with students, instructors will find that the suggested approach meshes well with their existing preferences and skill-set. Thus, it is possible to provide an effective overview of suggested exercise options under the simple headings of *vocabulary*, *syntax* or *discourse*, which may in fact serve more as an array of welcome reminders than as an introduction to anything entirely new.

Vocabulary Focus

As Nation (2001) has stressed so convincingly with respect to vocabulary—and this surely applies to features of syntax and discourse, too—“[L]earners need many different kinds of meetings with words in order to learn them fully” (p. 4). Beyond the core meaning of each new word, full understanding of vocabulary includes fluent and accurate recognition of secondary meanings, as well as awareness of word-form variations—for instance, changes due to different kinds of affixes, compounding, and so on—and also knowledge of words’ diverse grammatical associations, such as the way in which most but not all adjectives can be positioned both before nouns or after linking verbs, or the potential (or not) of certain nouns to function as the objects of specific verbs (e.g., *I ate an apple* but not *I ate a hammer*). Information of this nature responds to inquisitive students’ uneasy but very accurate perception of the numerous patterns of vocabulary meaning and usage radiating out from the simple-looking central denotation of words, which they are often aware of only partly understanding; learners value opportunities to verify what they do know, to solidify what they are still in the process of mastering, and to extend their grasp of new connections that may not yet have even come to their attention.

Possible examples of type-2 tasks in this group include:

- Devise simple word-collection tasks: several vocabulary activities can begin with collecting vocabulary items in a grammatical category. For example, list all adjectives, nouns or verbs from a section of text; then, analyze the resulting list. For instance, classify adjectives as having gradable or absolute meanings; determine if any classifications are ambiguous.
- Ask students to put all the adjectives, nouns, or verbs from a written or oral text into groups: positive, negative, and neutral meanings. Often, assignment of words to the neutral group can be debatable; encourage learners to share their opinions with their classmates.
- Focus on semantic patterning: For example, have pairs or groups search the text itself for lexical sets related to key words (for instance, a word like *health* may be part

of a lexical set including *flu*, *headache* and *aspirin*). Or create semantic maps with a word from the text as the centre, surrounded by additional words brainstormed by students through reference not only to the text but also to their personal word-stores.

- Work on recalling or looking up the opposites of adjectives, nouns, or verbs: do all the words have opposites? For nouns, introduce the idea of complementaries (e.g., *knife* and *fork*).
- Work on reviewing a written or oral text for localized examples of superordinates and hyponyms (e.g., *camping gear* could be a superordinate term in a text where hyponyms like *tent*, *sleeping bag* and *air mattress* occur nearby).
- Use dictation as a pedagogical tool rather than as a test: let students practise recognizing the sound of words and producing their written form accurately, by working with passages that are already quite familiar (or by providing prompts, such as backboard notes with the spelling of words that learners will find very difficult, because simply copying the exact lettering into a dictation text may be an early bridge towards later mastering the orthography independently).
- Design rational cloze exercises based on part or all of an actual text, or—for a greater challenge—on a summary of it. Purposefully leave gaps that not only focus repeatedly on recently taught vocabulary, but also will form a list of restored words that can then be further studied in one or more of the ways itemized above.
- Create opportunities to practise speaking by using vocabulary from the passage: For example, use *wh-* words and prepositions from the passage, to ask/answer questions about where things are, how to do things, and so on, referring for content either to the written or oral text itself, or to real life information.

Syntax Focus

Although the basic subject-verb-object (SVO) pattern may seem very obvious, inversions, complex word groups at the S, V or O level, and intervening prepositional or participial phrases containing unrelated nouns or verbs can readily obscure the actual SVO sequence. Furthermore, sentences with more than one clause will of course also have more than one SVO structure, so that distinguishing between SVO patterns in the main and subordinate clauses may be difficult, too. Students struggling to comprehend a demanding text benefit enormously from the ability to avoid panic by confidently homing in on securely identified SVO sequences as the solid ground on which they can stand while sorting out the rest. Even though accessing the full meaning of a text obviously requires more than sentence-level understanding, complicated sentence grammar is often a barrier to movement towards global comprehension; thus, stressing the primary SVO pattern that is always present in even the most daunting of texts is a way to encourage students to start with what they *do* know and *can* manage before tackling less familiar and more intimidating aspects of a passage.

Available type-2 task options related to syntax include:

- As above, numerous type-2 syntax tasks can often begin with a collection activity to

produce a list that may then be analyzed. For example, ask pairs or groups to list all the verbs and the corresponding subjects in a section of text; do any have no subject (e.g., as with many non-finite verbs)? Instruct students to identify the tense of finite verbs; if present tense, they can give the past form, or the reverse if past. Or alter a subject word in the list, along with the following pronouns, from singular to plural (or the reverse), and ask learners to change the verbs to suit. Or distinguish between active and passive verbs, and restructure sentences into the alternative form where possible.

- For syntax, such collection activities can also target structures instead of individual words. For instance, request students to find all the nouns that involve two or three words in a complex group, and identify the head nouns. Or identify *-ing* verbs that are or are not the second element in a verb + verbal structure, or verbs that are followed by an infinitive with or without *to*. Or pick out adjectives that appear before nouns or after *be* in a given text: Which of these can or cannot be used in both positions (for instance, *big* or *lovely* can, but not *asleep* or *glad*)? Or identify main vs subordinate clauses, and explain the relationships among them.
- Find all the pronouns and identify the words they refer to (including possessive pronouns), taking care to separate out the dummy subject *it*. Relate pronoun-antecedent connections to the idea of “chains” (see also the Discourse section below).
- Read aloud for pronunciation and sentence stress (which relies on grammar awareness): ask students to take turns and read only one clause (or two or three, etc.) at a time (which relies on perceiving grammatical structures).
- Practise speaking, listening, and rewording: for example, the teacher says a sentence from the text in the affirmative and students change it to the negative, and vice versa (or singular/plural, or present/past, etc.). Then, students take turns to say a sentence from the text and the class changes it according to the agreed pattern.
- Explore various types of sentence restoration task: begin with correction. Choose one paragraph at a time; retype it without punctuation and capital letters. Students write it back into the original form. Also, restore sentences from a list of jumbled words: first, work on actual sentences from the passage; then, sentences that restate or summarize the passage; then, ones that extend the passage.

Discourse Focus

Since either constructing or comprehending discourse can be viewed as the process of either selecting or recognizing purpose-specific lexical and syntactical items, the type-2 task suggestions in this third group will, to an extent, share features with those noted under *vocabulary* and *syntax*. Nevertheless, the other two varieties of type-2 task so obviously require students to manipulate individual language forms that instructors will nearly always need to explicitly remind them of the wider goal of creating or comprehending meaning, which of course is the key objective in every instance. By contrast, with discourse-oriented tasks the meaning connection is typically more direct. Still, it should not be inferred from that difference—or from the convenience-based ordering of vocabulary, syntax and discourse in this outline—that the three forms of type-2 task should be introduced

sequentially. Each particular task will have its own degree of difficulty, depending on the context-specific complexity of its content; thus, providing that the demands of individual tasks reflect students' proficiency level, teachers can and should present examples of all three kinds of type-2 task—focusing on vocabulary, syntax, or discourse—from the earliest possible stages of learning.

Among type-2 task options related to discourse are the following:

- Find lexical chains: Identify chains of synonyms, hyponyms, superordinates and/or antonyms that foster discourse coherence by recurring throughout a written or oral text with much the same real-world referent each time (and draw attention to the broad parallel with pronoun/antecedent chains, explored through syntax-related tasks, that create cohesion; e.g., *Ottawa à capital à city à citizen*).
- Engage students in working on various types of paragraph-writing tasks that foreground discourse structure. For example, work on jumbled sentences to restore a paragraph, or—after building up skill and confidence through much practice—jumble the sentences from two or even three paragraphs together, and challenge students restore each original paragraph separately.
- Re-apply experience of overall discourse structures and supporting discourse markers in a new composition. Write a parallel paragraph, or devise a parallel oral description or narrative, with discourse-level similarities to the original text but with different content: For example, after reading or listening to the depiction of an admirable figure from sport, science, or national history, students create their own written or oral presentation of a different figure of special interest to themselves.
- Match related sentences or larger sections from different parts of a written or oral text, in such a way as to highlight the workings of key discourse patterns like comparison and contrast, cause and effect, or general and particular.
- With written texts, examine how headings and paragraph divisions reflect the discourse structure; invite students to experiment with alternative headings and divisions.
- Building on students' experience with simple dictation, move on to dicto-gloss tasks, which much more strongly emphasize recognizing and recalling discourse moves: For example, allow learners to listen to a (usually familiar, but perhaps even totally new) text and make personal notes during each of two or three hearings, after which the goal is to produce a version that effectively captures the meaning, structure, and key details of the original, without being a verbatim repetition.
- Playfully provoke learners by presenting a series of oral (or written) statements that sometimes are—but sometimes are not—either true according to the original text, or at least consistent with it. Deviant sentences may be literally incorrect or just inferentially unlikely or unfounded. Students distinguish between acceptable or unacceptable sentences, providing corrections when necessary. Then, once the class gets the idea, individuals may be encouraged to propose their own sentences with either accurate or wrong/inconsistent information, and correct each other as appropriate.

Conclusion

It goes without saying that effectively functional knowledge of English requires far more than control of the language and discourse features presented above. Indeed, even within the three categories discussed, the items included are only a representative sample; moreover, of course, additional areas—such as subject-matter knowledge, cultural knowledge, and understanding of appropriateness—are equally essential but beyond the specific topic of this account. Thus, it might at first glance appear disproportionate to slow down in order to methodically visit and revisit such language features, in the way that our back-to-the-well theme recommends. However, ESL teachers who are native speakers of a language other than English, or who are English native speakers but have learned another language, will readily acknowledge from their own experience—and in keeping with the advice of Connectionism (and of our actual students, too, who likewise really want to slow down!)—that gradual, repeated, and thorough attention to issues of this kind must be respected as a key part of the overall language learning experience, whether enacted in class or assigned for homework.

Obviously, the most demanding part of the process relates to carefully reflecting on tasks that will usefully target language items of importance for one's students. So long as that key criterion remains in view, actually creating the tasks themselves can be quite simple, so that providing extremely rich volume and repetition should not be a problem. Nonetheless, a somewhat different challenge may still arise: adopting this approach will entail a notable change in the way in which teaching materials are used and in the pace of instruction. Thus, if we were to reduce our argument to a few central exhortations, they would be: *It's okay to slow down! It's okay to spend a fair bit of time on specific language items!* and *It's okay to view language learning as at least in part an incremental, bottom-up process!* Teachers can rest assured that trustworthy communicative language teaching principles do not exclude such decisions, and they will find that the response from students confirms the value of this enrichment of the learning experience. Especially in LINC classes—with adult learners undergoing many real-life pressures and distractions—it is crucial to maintain trust, attention and regular attendance. But when a LINC instructor like Chirawibha can maintain attendance levels of 80–85% month-in, month-out—despite the usual necessary absences for legal work, interviews, medical care, and so on (i.e. close to 100% on actually free days)—there is reason to believe that a slower, more methodical approach is highly motivating. Moreover, this impression is confirmed by student comments like, “When you understand about clauses, you can read and write without problems,” “I love all the activities we do to analyze a paragraph,” or “Because of all this work, I can understand everything well, and I don't feel afraid to express my feelings in English.”

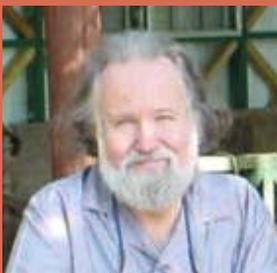
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Author Bios



Chirawibha Sivell is an ESL instructor with teaching and teacher-mentoring experience in Canada and abroad. She recently retired from the Welland Heritage Council.



John Sivell is a TESL educator at Brock University, with teaching and training experience in Canada and abroad.

ESSAY WRITING INSTRUCTIONAL LEXICON AND SEMANTIC CONFUSION

By Amir Azizmohammadi

“Introduction,” “body,” and “conclusion” are the most accessible words in the instructional lexicon for ESL writing teachers when they want to describe the structure of a typical five-paragraph persuasive or argumentative essay or its shorter variations for standardized tests such as TOEFL and IELTS. They are frequently employed to refer to the three tiers of the hamburger essay in textbooks, on classroom boards, and in YouTube tutorials. Not surprisingly, English learners also might give you the same words if asked what the main components of an essay are. Like ESL teachers, students usually use the same terms or their equivalents in their own languages to describe the skeleton of an essay.

However, I have learned from bitter experience that although ESL teachers and learners might use the same words to begin, develop, and end an essay, they usually refer to completely different concepts. As a result, I have disciplined myself to be extremely cautious when I address English learners and talk about the “introduction,” the “body,” and the “conclusion” of an essay. In fact I tell my students that in English essay writing the introduction is *not* actually an introduction, the conclusion is *not* a real conclusion, and the body of the essay is *not* what you have in mind at all. I beg them not to assume that we understand each other.

In order to avoid any misunderstanding caused by presuppositions, my students and I explore our understandings of the essay from scratch. Afterwards, we label different parts of the essay together to make certain that we mean the same. I strongly believe that redefining the essay writing jargon with the students is neither a luxury nor a fancy experiment; it is one of the most important steps in the lesson plan.

English teachers tend to lean on established instructional terminology. In writing in English as a second language, for instance, it would not be considered wise to coin new terms to replace “paragraph,” “thesis statement,” “topic sentence,” and “supporting details.” Besides being extremely convenient to use, the current terms are a part of a universal language used by almost all ESL teachers and textbooks, and learners. More importantly, students are likely to use the same words in their own languages. Using a word shared by the student’s first language, we can comfortably build upon the students’ prior knowledge.

Ironically, the very sense of convenience we feel, when using English writing terminology, can cause a lot of misunderstanding. Sometimes although the teacher and the student use the same words, they may not exactly mean the same thing.

Think of the very word “paragraph,” which is shared by most of Indo-European and Germanic languages and which is in my experience understood immediately by the students from the East too. The definition of “paragraph” as a body of written language woven together around one single idea is peculiar to Anglo-American culture. The Italians and the Spanish do not mind including more than one idea in their paragraphs. Neither do the Arabs, the Persians, and the Turks, who did not historically divide their writing into paragraphs. Paragraphing is in fact what they borrowed from the West through scientific paper writing because of the dominance of Western scientific institutions after the 18th century (Selin, 1997; Saheb Jami, 1998).

Similarly, in Far Eastern writing, for instance in the Japanese rhetorical strategy “return to baseline theme,” the main idea of an essay is not broken down to topic sentences that are distributed in paragraphs in a linear way. The thesis occasionally appears in the essay where it is surrounded by seemingly unrelated new ideas with the writer avoiding an explicit description of the relationship between these elements (Mulvey, 1992).

This marked difference between an English paragraph and a non-English paragraph has made me highly sceptical of my students’ head-nodding when I talk about the “paragraph,” and, in the same manner, when I discuss the introductory paragraph, the central paragraphs, and the concluding paragraph in an essay.

I am sceptical because I do not wish to complicate the process of teaching writing to students who already have strong views of writing even more with semantic confusion. Research shows that students carry preconceptions about the subjects they are learning (Donovan, Bransford, & Pellegrino, 1999). Moreover, students tend to hold on to their views even after being exposed to alternative explanations of the same phenomena or merely slightly modify them (Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, 1987). That is why I tend to clarify the fact that the English “introduction,” the “body,” and the “conclusion” may have very little in common with the non-English “introduction,” “body,” and “conclusion.”

In second language acquisition research, the examination of different rhetorical patterns in different cultures, which can seriously challenge the process of learning to write in new language, is referred to as “contrastive rhetoric” (Kaplan, 1966). According to contrastive rhetoricians the characteristics of the “paragraph” differ between two different rhetorical cultures. Since the 1960s, when discussions about contrastive rhetoric started, the conversation has taken different forms. Most researchers in this area, however, seem to agree that a conscious attempt to explain the differences between English rhetorical traditions and those of English learners is crucial (Connor, 2002).

When I teach the “introduction,” I emphasise over and over again that an introduction to an English essay is not an introduction to the main discussion. It is indeed the main

discussion itself. It is your main idea. It is a thesis (Fowler & Aaron, 1998, p. 58). My Italian students taught me that the “introduction” in a *tema* was a lengthy historical account of the topic in question. They also told me they thought narrowing down their ideas to one single thesis expressed clearly in the introduction was a rather uncomfortable practice for them.

My students from the Middle East did not mind quoting poetry in the introduction of their *maghaleh*. More importantly, they seriously avoided stating the thesis at the beginning of their essays. It might show somewhere towards the end or might not be mentioned at all and be left to the reader to find it between the lines. Likewise, in the Korean *supil* the writer is not obliged to address the main idea of the essay immediately at the beginning. The introduction also can be a complicated combination of abstract ideas tightly or not very tightly connected.

Some non-native speakers of English thus may not consider an English essay’s introduction a real introduction. Writers with non-Anglo-American rhetorical backgrounds might consider the English “introduction” an abrupt statement of the whole point of the essay unimaginatively stated right at the beginning of the conversation. For non-native writers and readers of English, English essays are headless, introductionless. I have learned from frequent failures that I am better off teaching my students not to write an “introduction” and start their English essays with what they want to say, their thesis.

The process of teaching the “body,” or how to “develop” the thesis is not less complicated either. As long as central paragraphs are concerned, the golden rule of English writing is “examples” (Bailey & Powell, 1988, p. 8). This rule did not come into existence by accident. English essay writing is the outcome of complicated historical, cultural, and economic developments over the past three centuries (Berlin, 1984) .

Roughly speaking, the certainty by which we dictate our ESL learners to support their topic sentences comes from the rivalry between English empiricism and French rationalism. The English empiricists, such as Francis Bacon and David Hume, solidified the position of inductive reasoning, or putting forth particular examples as proof, as the basis of human understanding (Russell, 1961). This gave the growth of empirical sciences a momentum which led to the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution also gave the English speaking world the economic and political supremacy which, among other developments, established English essay writing as the dominant form of writing in Anglo-Saxon culture.

Nonetheless, although English essay writing has had a profound impact on scientific writing all over the world, it has not necessarily changed other writing traditions in other cultures. If you ask your French students to develop a thesis in the body of their essays, they tend to use abstract deductive reasoning rather than exemplify the idea. Your Italian students are likely to use elaborate rhetorical devices as a means of persuasion. The Persians are more easily convinced when the thesis is revisited in poetry or metaphorical language than when they face examples or figures. Chinese development of the thesis at times takes the form of stating the thesis over and over again with a twist or from a different angle.

Thus, although both you and your students might use the word “body” to talk about developing a thesis, what you have in mind might be completely different to what comes to their mind. I suggest that in order to minimize misunderstanding, we should avoid using “body” or replace it with an expression that clarifies what the “body” in an English essay means. I believe “we start with an ‘introduction’ then we move on to the ‘body’” would create chronic misunderstanding. Instead, I usually say, “‘state your claim at the beginning’ and ‘give examples immediately after that’”

“Conclusion” is also as misleading. In English essay writing, when you conclude your piece, you do not reach a conclusion in a syllogistic manner. Your conclusion is practically a restatement of your claim rather than the outcome of an arrangement of premises (Fowler & Aaron, 1998, p. 58). The outcome is already stated at the very beginning. The “conclusion” in the English essay is in fact a repetition of the “introduction,” or rather the restated thesis or the central point of the essay

In a lot of non-English writing traditions, essays are open-ended. In some there is more than one conclusion. In a lot of them, however, if there is one conclusion, meaning “result” of the discussion, it is mentioned only and only at the end of the passage and never at the beginning. In some of these traditions, the element of suspense is valued highly. The writer must not give away the ultimate wisdom of the text and the reader should become hungry enough to devour it. In some other writing traditions, reading the passage is a journey that both the writer and the reader take together; accordingly, the reader patiently follows the arguments and eventually will gain the resultant knowledge.

Thus, the essay writing teacher’s “conclusion,” may not necessarily be the “conclusion” the language learner has in mind. And why risk if there is the slightest possibility of misunderstanding? Through a gradual metamorphosis of my instructional language over a decade of teaching essay writing to international students, I have replaced the “introduction,” the “body,” and the “conclusion” with “your single main idea clearly stated at the beginning,” “examples, statistics, expert opinions,” and “again your single main idea.” These are indeed familiar expressions for ESL teachers too, yet they usually come after as the second step. I suggest we should use them right from the beginning in order to avoid semantic confusion.

Measures of this kind will help students realize that the English essay is a rhetorical tradition with unique characteristics. It is important for English learners to understand this so that they consciously see the shift in rhetorical paradigms when they start English essay writing. Such an approach will also breed respect for students’ rhetorical literacy in their native languages. In other words, it will help the students regard the English essay as a new literacy that can interact with their own knowledge of written language in a positive way rather than a corrector of the literacy they must have dearly gained all through their life (Cummins, 2006).

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Author Bio



Amir Azizmohammadi is a Master of Teaching student at OISE/ University of Toronto. He is currently working on a research project focusing on academic writing in English as a second language in a Canadian context. As a practitioner, he has taught ESL and EFL to adult professionals in Canada and abroad for fifteen years. Before coming to Canada, he also taught English to secondary school students at the Italian School of Tehran, Iran for eight years.

PLAIN-LANGUAGE TOOLKIT TEACHES NEWCOMERS ABOUT HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

by Cindy Moser

When Mina was asked by her boss to carry heavy boxes up a ladder and put them on the highest shelf in the storage room, she felt uneasy. The boxes were heavy, the ladder looked shaky, and the top shelf was a long way up. It just didn't look safe.

Nonetheless, having finally found work in Toronto after arriving from India nine months earlier, she certainly wasn't going to say anything. What if her boss got mad? What if he even fired her? She might not even find the right words to express her concerns. No, she had better just do what she was told.

Mina didn't know she could refuse to do work that she thought might hurt her, or bring her concerns to a joint health and safety committee. She had no understanding of her rights under Ontario's health and safety laws.

Mina ended up falling off the ladder and injured her back so badly she needed surgery. But at least her boss helped her out, or so she thought.

Mina explains: "Right away my boss called me, to the hospital and said 'Well Mina, you know, you are short for three weeks because you had to go for your surgery, that is okay. I'll pay you for these three weeks but when you come back to work you have to pay me back this money. Again, I didn't know what she was talking about, and I said 'Sure, thank you so much!' For me it was like, okay, like this paycheque come, I pay the mortgage until I sell the house. I thought, oh my God, she's an **angel** to [do] this favour to me." (Kosny, A., et al., 2012, p. 281)

Research confirms newcomers' need for information

Mina is a pseudonym for a participant in a study conducted by the Institute for Work & Health (IWH), a not-for-profit research organization based in Toronto. Her words above are verbatim; however, her story leading up to them is based upon similar stories told to the researchers while studying immigrant workers' experiences with workplace health and safety. As a result of stories like Mina's, IWH researchers decided to develop a toolkit to help settlement agencies, teachers of English as a second language (ESL), workplaces and others teach newcomers to Ontario about their health, safety and workers' compensation rights and responsibilities.

Called *Prevention is the Best Medicine*, the 11-item toolkit contains everything needed to deliver instructional sessions on two separate, but related, topics within an Ontario context: occupational health and safety, and workers' compensation. Although designed to be delivered to recent immigrants who are preparing to enter or have recently entered the labour force, it is a potentially useful tool for a wide range of ESL students.

"*Prevention is the Best Medicine* fills an important void," says Agnieszka Kosny, the lead researcher of the team that developed the toolkit (Personal communication, November 2011). "Research indicates that Ontario's newcomers are more likely than Canadian-born workers to be employed in jobs with a higher risk of work injuries. Yet they receive little information in language-training classes or job-search workshops about their job health and safety rights and responsibilities, or what to do if they get hurt on the job."

The toolkit was piloted at Skills for Change, a settlement agency in Toronto, with the aim of integrating the modules into existing job-search programs. Focus groups were held in May 2011 with workshop leaders/facilitators and newcomers who had recently participated in the workshops. IWH researchers learned that the documents should be easier to read, that facilitators needed guidelines on how to deliver the sessions, and that a glossary of terms would be helpful. These suggestions, and others, were incorporated into the final toolkit.

"This is a great tool," says Roland Rhooms, director of Programs and Services at Skills for Change. "This is the beginning of information dissemination in this area, because the research tells us that there is a gap, that these newcomers are not getting this type of information in a timely fashion. So it's a benefit to the clients because they have something simple, easy to understand" (Centre for Health and Safety Innovation, 2012)

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The toolkit includes plain-language handouts in English for learners, sample lesson plans, slide show presentations and more. It is free for download from: www.iwh.on.ca/pbm. A full list of IWH research on newcomer health and safety is available at: www.iwh.on.ca/immigrant-workers-experiences.

Author Bio

Cindy Moser is the communications manager at the Institute for Work & Health. She can be reached at cmoser@iwh.on.ca

GOOD READS

by Pat Campbell

Take a moment to close your eyes and think about your last good read. What do you recall? The sensation of stepping out of your world into another? The feeling of being lost in time? Or do you recall the story itself? A gripping plot that held your attention? A certain character that you can't get out of your mind? An underlying theme that resonated with your life?

As fluent readers, we are always in search of a good read, that special book that transports you to another time and place as you identify with the characters and relate to their conflicts and emotions. As you turn the pages of a good read, you are drawn into another world that makes you laugh, reflect, and cry, allowing you to set aside your day-to-day concerns. After experiencing a good read, you probably share the book with your friends and family. I know I do.

When you live within the magic circle of literacy, books come your way. This week, I spent 12 hours in the air during a trip to Iqaluit. At the end of the flight, the passenger behind me said, "Does anybody want to read this book? I just finished it." Many adults, however, do not experience the pleasures of reading a good book because historically, authors and the book industry have written and published literature for a literate readership. If literature opens the door to other worlds, then adults with low-literacy skills cannot gain access to these worlds. In a real way, they are marginalized, excluded from the opportunities that reveal themselves to the literate readers in mainstream society. This marginalization supports the argument that individuals, as well as the public and private sectors, have a moral and ethical obligation to make good literature accessible to emergent readers.

The benefits of using literature to teach critical reading and communication skills are well documented by ESL educators and have been discussed in *Contact* a number of times (Maian, 2009; Meraj, 2011). The first step in getting adults hooked on reading is to provide compelling books written in accessible language. While librarians and educators express frustration over the shortage of literature for adults who are struggling readers, imagine the frustration for these adult readers. When they pick up a novel, the first question that crosses their mind is likely, "Will I be able to read this?" When fluent readers pick up a challenging piece of text, they access



internalized reading strategies to construct meaning.

The Series

Reading for pleasure is a privilege. Unfortunately, it is a privilege that is beyond the reach of many. Roots Press decided to publish a collection of easy-to-read Canadian novellas for adults to bridge this gap. The seed for the Good Reads project was planted in 2007. Brenda Livingston, a colleague from Toronto Public Library, already understood the difficulties of building collections of easy-to-read books for adults. We brainstormed and formulated a plan to publish Canadian novels written in accessible language, the first step being to bring together people with a similar vision. Grass Roots Press partnered with ABC Life Literacy and the Government of Canada's office of Literacy and Essential Skills.

Convincing best-selling Canadian authors to write novellas for struggling readers was the biggest challenge. We approached authors at book readings, appealed to authors' agents, and solicited the help of everybody we knew in the literary world to find authors. Another major challenge was working through legalities and contracts with agents. Even the authors who from the start felt compelled to write a novella still needed to seek permission from their publishing houses and agents. To date, we have experienced considerable success and have published books by Gail Anderson-Dargatz, Deborah Ellis, Marina Endicott, Joy Fielding, Robert Hough, Anthony Hyde, Francis Itani, Maureen Jennings, Rabindranath Maharaj, Louise Penny, and Gail Vaz-Oxlade. These authors have the ability to cross readership borders; they understand how to tell a story in accessible language. Forthcoming titles include novellas by Joseph Boyden, Tish Cohen, Trevor Cole, and Sandra Gulland.

The Good Reads novellas cover a range of genres, including romance, mystery, adventure, thriller, humour, realistic fiction and non-fiction. ESL students will appreciate *The Picture of Nobody* by Rabindranath Maharaj, who writes about the immigrant experience. Students who tune into the TV series called "Til Debt Do Us Part," will enjoy Gail Vaz-Oxlade's book on money management. Students can also listen to author interviews and readings by going to the Good Reads website at <http://abclifeliteracy.ca/goodreads/multimedia>

Writing and Editing

We asked each author to submit a ten- to twelve-thousand-word manuscript written in plain language. The authors were provided a set of writing guidelines that underscored the importance of monitoring sentence length, referential cohesion, and vocabulary. An extensive editing process ensured that unfamiliar cultural concepts and vocabulary were explained through context. Authentic language was given precedence over controlled vocabulary. Rather than grading the books by the number of headwords, we applied formulas such as Fry and Flesch-Kincaid, which look at the length and complexity of sentences and words. The books vary in terms of readability, with the easiest book being at

a Grade 2 level and most difficult book being at a Grade 6 level. In terms of CLB levels, the books range from Level 4 to CLB Level 9.

Because the notion of writing in plain language was a new concept for the majority of the authors, we added to the substantive and copy editing a layer of plain language editing. The chart below provides examples of the types of changes that occurred during plain language editing.

Before Plain Language Editing	After Plain Language Editing	Rationale for Change
You can take trains from here to San Francisco, San Diego, San Antonio, Chicago, New Orleans.	You can take trains from here to cities across the U.S.	The city names are difficult to read because you can't use context cues to predict the words.
Thomson was the father of the Group of Seven.	Probably the most famous Canadian painters are the Group of Seven. In the years after the First World War, they hiked and paddled their canoes through northern Ontario, drawing and painting.	Readers might not have the background knowledge to understand the cultural reference to the Group of Seven.
There was a rustle and ripple through the crowd in the pews.	There was a rustle and ripple through the crowd sitting in the long pews.	the word "sitting," provides a context clue for the word pews
gale	wind	Use a word that is more familiar.

We ensured the authors used short sentences, familiar vocabulary, context, and words that were easy to decode.

Guides for Teachers

Educators, like public and private sectors, also have an obligation to make good literature accessible to emergent readers. They can fulfill this obligation by setting aside time for students to engage in leisure reading. However, because educators are usually stretched for time and mandated to teach to a competency-based curriculum that often overlooks reading for pleasure, skill-and-drill instruction tends to take precedence over leisure reading, even though educators realize the benefits of reading for pleasure. To help alleviate the pressures of time constraints, Grass Roots Press has developed comprehensive readers' guides for the Good Reads series, which can be downloaded from our website.

These 14-page guides provide pre-, during and post-reading activities and strategies.

The sample below, which is taken from the reading guide for *The Stalker* by Gail Anderson-Dargatz, engages the student in the process of making inferences.

Reading Guide

Good Reads
The Stalker Reading Guide
3

WORKING WITH THE BOOK

Characters

Tell students that readers can learn about the characters in a novel in three ways—from (1) what the writer tells us, (2) what the characters say, do, and think, and (3) what others think and say about the characters.

As students read, have them note a few examples from each chapter, where applicable, of how the writer develops the following characters: Gerald, Samantha, Dave, and Jason. Encourage students to make inferences about the characters, where possible. Then put the students in small groups and have them share their examples.

How do we make inferences?

Active readers use their experience and knowledge to make educated guesses about characters and their motivations. Readers who make inferences use clues in the text together with their own experiences to help them figure out the author's meaning.

The Good Reads project is helping to ensure that all adults, regardless of their literacy skills, have an opportunity to access literature by well-known Canadian authors. Perhaps adults who have found reading challenging can now say to their friends, “You know, I didn’t get to sleep till 1:00 a.m. last night. I was reading this book called *New Year’s Eve* by Marina Endicott and just couldn’t put it down.”

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Author Bio

Pat Campbell began her teaching career as a CUSO volunteer in a secondary school in Nigeria. Pat has worked within the field of adult literacy since 1985 as a practitioner, researcher, and publisher. She is the author and editor of several books and assessment tools including the Canadian Adult Reading Assessment (CARA), The Diagnostic Assessment for Beginning Readers (DALA), Teaching Reading to Adults: A Balanced Approach, Measures of Success: Assessment and Accountability in Adult Basic Education, and Participatory Practices in Adult Education. Pat has been the President of Grass Roots Press since 1998. Pat is also an adjunct professor at the University of Alberta.

COMPASSION FATIGUE

By Stephanie Hooker

The Cost of Caring: How to Recognize the Signs of Compassion Fatigue

A woman sits in front of me, her chair pushed back at an awkward distance. She stretches her arms out in front and presents red welts on her arm. “Look at these marks,” she insists. The skin looks tender and sore.

“How do you think I got these marks?” she asks.

Silence fills the quiet, small space, the proverbial elephant in the room. I stare at the multiple stripes, as our appointment veers decidedly off-topic. After all, she came in to discuss TOEFL preparation classes.

“Let me tell you,” she volunteers. “I have never cooked in my life - *never*. The first time I cooked anything – Canada. I don’t even know to boil water.” She laughs. I am relieved. I had imagined far worse.

“I am trying,” she adds, “but it’s hard.”

We both know she is talking about something bigger than boiling water. She leaves that day with a page of referrals for TOEFL preparation classes and I can’t stop thinking about her.

More and more, teachers support language learners beyond teaching. We navigate highly sensitive water in language classes daily.

While it may not be written in our job description, as dedicated professionals we connect with students on many levels. We want to help even when it’s not expected of us. So, we push ourselves to become more knowledgeable in areas outside of teaching - depression, culture shock, loss of income and identity, domestic abuse, frustration and anxiety. We meet students who have lived through war, domestic violence and other traumatic events. They talk about it during communicative exercises. They use new vocabulary to describe their personal experiences. They write about it too. And sometimes, what they share triggers us in unexpected ways.

We may begin to feel some of what our students describe. Then we take it home with us. We might begin to pull back from social interactions with our family. Or maybe we get

insomnia, or notice we are quick to react to things that wouldn't normally bother us. We sound more cynical than usual and seem unable to show the same compassion we once shared with our classes.

Without even realizing it we might be suffering from Compassion Fatigue (CF).

Compassion Fatigue (CF) - an occupational hazard

The term has been around since 1992 when it first appeared in a nursing magazine but is now commonly connected to Figley and is associated with the “cost of caring” (Figley, 1995). At the risk of oversimplifying this evolving concept, your ability to care about your students may trigger you in different ways—you may find yourself suffering from symptoms associated with your students’ experiences, or set off in other ways by their experiences. For example, if war is one of your triggers, when a student talks or writes about war, this might prompt you to experience vicarious trauma, you might begin to feel depressed or withdrawn. If you have been raised to be extremely independent, your experience of CF may be agitated by your student’s sense of dependence. This might lead you to display cynicism and negativity about your student and lead you to be less compassionate.

Recognizing exactly how CF affects you can be tough. It manifests itself in different people in different ways and pops up in varying measures. Often symptoms are similar to other conditions such as depression or burnout; they may strike on multiple levels: personal, professional and organizational. On a personal level, you may notice excessive blaming, bottled up emotions, isolation, poor self-care and an overall negative attitude that could include apathy, sadness and being critical. At a professional and organizational level, you might notice increased absenteeism, lack of effective teamwork, negativity toward management and increased cynicism and pessimism in the potential for change.

Alexandra Fortier knows first-hand about CF. She did her BA in sexology with a specialty in children who suffered from sexual abuse and then her MA in social science. She has a history of working in clinics with violent sexual abusers and Child’s Aid. As part of her training, she had to view and study explicit videos to assist police. “I began to have vivid flashbacks that were not mine and experienced vicarious trauma. I started to feel depressed and tired; it definitely impacted my personal relationships too.” Compounding the problem,

One way to test your level of satisfaction and fatigue is by taking the Professional Quality of Life Scale (PROqol) (http://www.proqol.org/uploads/ProQOL_5_English_Self-Score_3-2012.pdf). This scale measures your compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue in the last 30 days and will help you understand both positive and negative aspects of being in a “helper” profession.

The ProQOL is now available in 17 languages including English. The languages include Chinese, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Portuguese (Brazilian), Norwegian, Russian, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish.

she says no one talked about what was happening. “I recognized the vicarious trauma and then I came across information about CF. I thought, Oh, this is what is happening to me.” (Personal communication, March and July, 2012)

“After that experience, I knew I wanted to learn more about CF to help other people.”

That’s when she became an associate at Compassion Fatigue Solutions. Based in Kingston Ontario, but with associates across Ontario, Compassion Fatigue Solutions provides skill-based workshops, consulting services and training materials focusing on CF, self-care and workplace wellness (n.d.).

“CF is definitely an occupational hazard for TESL teachers” Fortier says. In fact, it is likely that at one point in your teaching career, you will develop some level of CF. Language teachers need to be aware of what it is, how to identify it and how to manage it so we can continue to give, while maintaining our own sense of well being.

One of the key factors in distinguishing CF from burnout is paying attention to what follows you home. “In burnout,” explains Fortier, “you can change the environment and you modify the experience; you no longer feel burned out. When you are suffering with CF, even when you change the environment, you still feel the symptoms.” In other words, in burnout, if you take a short break or get some rest, you will start to feel better. If you are suffering with CF, it will not let up.

Know Your Triggers

Once you recognize CF, it will likely help to know your warning signs and triggers, which will be different for different people. Fortier uses traffic lights to describe hers, which usually surface at home first. “In the green zone, I’m a yes mom – this is your happy, perfect persona – yes to the pool, yes to the park. In the yellow zone, I have more difficulty saying yes to requests but it’s manageable. When I’m in the red zone, I’m making up rules to organize the fridge.” She laughs a little as she describes her attention to the fridge. Admittedly, it is insignificant, and seemingly benign compared to her day job where she works in clinics with violent sex offenders, but Fortier knows this is the first warning bell for her—this is the time to catch it. Her family recognizes her signs too. And this

We all know what we should do to maintain our health and sense of wellbeing. Eat well. Exercise. Take time out. Get off the grid. But it’s harder than you think. Karen Hill, director of Compassion Fatigue Toronto, a company that runs CF workshops, recently delivered a workshop on CF at the Toronto TESL Conference (2012) and provided some good ideas to teachers.

Hill recommends “do nothing for 2 minutes,” a website that asks nothing from you, literally.

Go to the link <http://www.donothingfor2minutes.com/>, listen to the waves and do nothing for exactly two minutes. If you touch your keyboard, you see a FAIL and the clock resets for another two minutes. If you can’t take two minutes to do nothing, that says a lot.

recognition can lead to greater support on the home front, which is critical.

At work, Fortier says she and her peers have developed excellent skills in being able to recognize each other's signs. For example, when she closes her office door, which is almost always open, everyone knows she is in the red zone. But since CF is discussed openly in her office, colleagues rally around each other. That support can go a long way in counteracting the negativity and cynicism that can seep in during those moments.

Manage it

Self-care strategies are very important in treating CF although they are not always easy to implement. You know how it goes: easier said than done. But if you are suffering with lower levels of CF, it can be handled effectively by more focused self-care. In general, the better we take care of our general mental and physical health, the more resistant and resilient we are to many challenges, including CF. More serious incidents of CF which lead to an increasing sense of hopelessness, vulnerability and a general sense of being overwhelmed may require more appropriate treatment such as medical attention.

At an organizational level, it is important to talk about CF and support each other. If you suspect you might be experiencing CF, you *probably* are and some of your colleagues might be too. It is important to create an open and safe environment to discuss your feelings and normalize the issue. Start with a small support group of willing colleagues. As Fortier says, "Sometimes just stating, hey, this has been affecting me lately, how do you think we can address it – that helps." Together, you can develop more creative ideas.

CF typically has a very negative affect on morale and the overall mood of your place of work. So, it is highly advisable to get support on the organizational level to implement policies.

How to Keep on Giving

Teaching is a helping profession and that is not going to change any time soon. In the same way a construction worker needs a hard hat, teachers need to protect themselves against symptoms that impact their life and work. By acknowledging, recognizing and managing CF, you can keep doing what you do, but more importantly, you can keep *loving* what you do.

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Author Bio

Stephanie Hooker first fell in love with teaching English as a Second language in South Korea. Since that experience, she has taught LINC, ELT and helped develop an employment co-op program. Currently, she is a case manager of Internationally Educated Professionals entering regulated professions in Ontario. In addition to teaching and coaching, she always devotes time to her writing, which has been published in *Today's Parent*, the *Manitoban* and *Our Pink Thoughts*, a national outreach initiative that celebrates, inspires and mentors Canadian girls and women.

SIT, STAND, STRESS

By: Anthony Zanzonico

There has always been a need to incorporate pronunciation exercises into everyday lessons. Often, one may find that there just isn't enough time to fit it in, or the students just don't respond. The following exercise is one that I have used in the classroom. Over the last year it has undergone a few changes, and it will probably continue to do so in the future.

The activity is called "Sit, stand, stress", and it can be played with two or more teams. The purpose of the game is to properly understand word stress in words with different amounts of syllables. There is an element of total physical response, as students are expected to use movement to successfully complete the game.

To begin with, the teacher will place two sets of chairs at the front of the class. He/she may place sets of two, three or four chairs in rows as shown:



image: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chair.png>

The number of chairs will correspond to the number of syllables in the words that will be worked with. For example, if the teacher chooses to use three syllable words, three chairs are needed.

The teacher will then split up the class into separate teams. Each team will choose representatives to sit in their specific set of chairs. Those representatives will each signify a syllable.

The teacher will then allow one practice round for the students, writing a word on the board (the number of syllables should correspond to the number of chairs that each team uses), and the students will determine which syllable has the major stress in the word by

communicating with their representatives who are on the chairs. For example, if the word is *computer*, the students will stand and sit like so:

Com PU ter

The teacher will then count down (“are you ready? 3! 2! 1!”), and at “1”, each team will present their “stressed syllable.” The student who corresponds to the syllable would quickly stand up. If students successfully choose the correct syllable as the stressed one, they are awarded a point. The teacher then has the opportunity to say the word, having the students repeat it.

A “practice round” is definitely a good idea for the group as it gives them an opportunity to see what is happening. The game itself is very visual and the best way to teach students the rules is to show them.

This activity should be used with students who are having trouble with word stress, especially when it impedes meaning. Many students put an emphasis on grammar and writing, but don’t put a sufficient amount of awareness into word stress. This activity puts word stress at the forefront and helps the student to become aware of how important it is.

A great idea is to incorporate some recently studied vocabulary into the game so that students are aware of some of the words and where they come from. This does make the game easier, but it also helps the students to remember what they have learned.

The rationale behind making the students sit and stand is that it gives the learners a chance to “feel” the language. By having the students see the ups and downs of spoken English, they can see pronunciation and word stress in more than just one mode of thinking.

The game does require an ability to manage the class. Students may sometimes be sidetracked, and might revert to their L1 when discussing with other students from their own country. It is important that the teacher keeps the class on task. Also, when playing a game like this, not every student is active in the process. One way to minimize this would be to form more teams so that more people are using the chairs, and they are in a more closely-knit working unit.

When I first started using this technique, I didn’t count down from three at the end of each round. I had a bell, which would be rung by the first team that completed the task. I found that students focussed strategically on getting points by copying a strong team rather than on getting the right answer. A student then suggested that each team wait until a



image: Anthony Zanzonico

countdown before they present their answer. This proved to be much better because teams stopped copying each other's responses.

All in all, students enjoyed the activity because it provided a much needed boost to the energy level of the class (especially on longer days). Although the game itself is open to changes (I urge you to put your own personal spin on it), it's a great way to get students to think of pronunciation in a different way.

Author Bio



Anthony Zanzonico is an ESL teacher based in the Greater Toronto Area. He is currently working with Centennial College as a Communications Instructor for International Students with the School of Advancement. At the moment, he is working on completing his Masters of Education in Postsecondary Studies at the Memorial University of Newfoundland. His overseas experience includes teaching in both Shanghai, China and Vicenza, Italy. He completed his TESL Certification at George Brown College in 2011 and was the recipient of the Dean's Medal. Prior to that, he did a teacher training course in Florence, Italy. Anthony has interests in curriculum design and has had experience in creating course outlines with George Brown College's Continuing Education department.

LOOK WHO'S NON-STOP TALKING!

By Chris Madden

This is a series of speaking activities that I use to get my university students talking non-stop, and I am sure it would work well with all learners above CLB 4. Feel free to use the suggested questions, and/or create your own. This game format serves very well as an icebreaking activity and so I suggest rather simple questions for the first round, designed to facilitate the lowering of affective filters. I also recommend using a “Snakes & Ladders” game board to further lure them into a playful mood before setting up the parameters. In groups of three or four (but no larger), with question cards like the ones below supplied, they take turns rolling the dice, moving their markers, and answering questions. The first time we play I tell them this is a speaking game and that they should give 30-second answers (adjust for your students’ levels). Here are some of the questions/statements that I use for the first time we play the game:

If you could be any animal, what would you be and why?	Talk about your family members (names, ages, etc.)	Describe your best friend from your childhood.	What is your favorite sport to play and/or watch?
Who is your favorite English singer or band?	What food do you love, and what food do you hate?	What will you do tonight?	Who was your favorite teacher in High School and why?
Who is your favorite English actor and your favorite movie?	What countries have you been to, and where do you want to go?	Talk about your hometown (food, festivals, weather, etc.)	What is your hobby?
What is one skill or activity that you want to improve?	If you won a million dollars what would you do?	What is the nicest present you ever received?	What is your favorite way to relax?

The second time we play, and each successive time, there’s an important difference: after each player answers the question on their card, the other members must ask that player a follow-up question, which is then answered (hence maximum group size of three or four). This demands constant engagement from all members, builds communicative competence, as well as increases group interactivity and motivation. Accordingly, the questions are

more complex and open-ended, and I don't request 30-second answers. Despite the removal of this time limit, I am often pleasantly surprised to hear my students talking at length during a response. Before the game starts I tell them that this has now become a conversation game, and remind them that follow-up questions are very important for a good conversation. I then give an example by pulling a card from the new pile, reading it out loud, and answering it briefly. Then I choose people to elicit other questions from until we have covered most of the possibilities, and finally I write 'who, what, where, when, why, how, how much, how many,' on the board, and let them begin. The following is a list of some question suggestions for the second and other rounds:

What will you be doing 10 years from now?	Describe a movie that made you cry.	Describe a challenge you overcame.	When did you first come to Canada?
What housework is appropriate for children?	Describe your husband's or wife's personality.	How old were you when you got married?	Describe the first job you ever had.
Talk about someone you respect.	What gives you the most pride or satisfaction?	Is it better to raise children in the city or country?	What should you wear to a job interview?
Describe the perfect job you want to have.	Describe your favorite place.	What are the qualities of a great teacher?	What are the qualities of a great boss?

Questions can be also designed to elicit interesting multicultural exchanges, for example; "Choose a saying in your language, translate it into English and explain why you like it" and "What is a custom from your culture that you think needs to change, and why?" It is also quite likely that most of your students have felt the effects of, or are currently feeling culture shock to some degree, so questions relating to this topic are sure to stimulate an enriching exchange, as well. For example; "What was the first difference in culture you noticed between your country and Canada?" and "What do you do to keep your native culture?"

Of course, questions can be designed for any EAP field, faculty, business or professional theme, or any other subject matter that you want your students to be discussing, but one of the more fulfilling experiences for my students was when I asked them to write their own questions. The following are some examples:

If you were born again would you want to be the opposite sex? Why?	If you were God, what would you create or change and why?	If you will die tomorrow, what would you do today?	Tell a joke in English.
If you could go back in time, when would you go back to? Why?	If you could change another person, who would you, and how?	What is your dream or goal?	What three things would you bring to a deserted island? Why?
What is the most important personality quality? Why?	Describe the happiest moment in your life.	How does global warming affect you?	How can we stop climate change?
What is your most charming point?	How many children do you want and why?	How are you feeling right now?	Do you want to be famous? Why?

Whether used as an icebreaker, a communication skill builder, for specific lexical practice or merely to increase output, this seemingly simple game format will encourage excellent conversational opportunities while simultaneously building group cohesion.

Author Bio



After nine years of teaching in Japan, Chris Madden moved back to Toronto and joined the TESL Toronto executive board, presented at their Spring Conference, and over the summer taught at the International English Programs for youth at the University of Toronto, New College. He is now teaching various programs for International Language Schools of Canada at their downtown campus, and will be presenting at both TESL Canada in October and TESL Ontario in November.

WORKING ON SPOKEN ENGLISH

By Derrick Lee

What is the most difficult skill for English-language students? The ability to read a driver's manual, watch the Star Wars trilogy without any subtitles, or write an essay with few enough grammar mistakes that the tutor is not driven to put it into a shredder? Actually, as far as I—a Chinese international student—know, at least for the majority of Chinese international students and a giant number of other Asian students, spoken English is the difficulty most unlikely to be overcome. It is very common that a student who has studied through EAP or ESL finds that she or he still lacks the ability to talk fluently. The reason for this shortfall could be integrated: confidence, opportunity, and practice. And for language teachers, they probably can do something specific to make a difference.

A reasonable accent would be a good start. I know that English is not always a first language for all language teachers. However, what I am talking about is not a “perfect accent” that makes it unclear if you are a first or second generation speaker, but an accent that leads to less frustrating misunderstanding, especially when a student is at a beginning level of English learning. Why is accent so important? The answer is that accent is related to confidence. I am not surprised to see some of my friends using body language or just a few of words when they are checking out, or asking directions. A friend who has been living in Toronto for 5 years told me that he only speaks English when he has no other options because he thinks his accent is “horrible”. This situation is not because students like my friend cannot compose a whole sentence; it is that their accents that make them ashamed after being faced with a bunch of “pardon”. So every language teacher who wants their students to feel confident enough to talk should try to start with pronunciation.

Now let us talk about opportunity. I used to have an internship in an elementary school, although I have never become a real teacher in my life. Nevertheless, I found that it was really difficult for me to give equal opportunity to all of my students to speak in a short class. Some of them did have the will to talk, while some of them were too shy to participate in class discussions. After a 13-hour flight, now I am a student sitting in a North American class. I found the situation here is quite similar. Some of my classmates who have already lived here for a couple of years have become good at spoken English, and they therefore want to answer questions, to give their opinions, although sometimes they may speak “a little” long.

If I were a language teacher, I would probably not stop them, because encouraging students to talk is kind of a part of my job. And if those students stop talking, who would answer my questions? I do not want my class to be as silent as a graveyard. Yet the problem is: for those never-stop-talking students, their spoken English is not in urgent need of improvement, and other students will never get a chance as those students are spending their limited class time on talking. It is not fair for those poor students who lack ability in spoken English. They need time to build sentences, to control their tones to avoid speaking like an alien, while already their classmates have spoken what they want to say. So as a teacher, maybe you could say “no” to those students whose spoken English you think is good enough, and give more time to others, although sometimes the Antarctic ice will have melted before those “others” are prepared.

Moreover, as far as I know, Asian students are quite different from Canadian students in that often you cannot expect them to say what is on their mind. They are used to being called on to answer. So if you are teaching, let us say, 20 Asian students in your class, it is totally ok to call upon some student to answer questions. We are not distracted in class; we are just waiting for you.

But we do not want to wait to become fluent. It is hard to remember that learning English is not like becoming a Spiderman—you got bitten today and turn into a superhero tomorrow. It is more like Chinese Kung Fu, which requires years and years practice, and maybe chronic suffering. Neither Rome nor English spoken fluency is built in a day, so I would like to recommend what my language teacher recommended to me: students need to take things slowly, set a goal, and achieve it step by step. Maybe teachers can tell their students to start with answering questions twice per class. After students feel comfortable doing that, they could try more.

The second thing inspired by my teacher is that working only in class is not enough at all. It may take an average 20-year old about three ongoing years of practice to make spoken English fluent. So the idea that “I have been working very hard in class; I don’t need to do more at home” is totally wrong. A very efficient way to get the goals earlier is to speak English to classmates, friends, and families; even though they may think you are odd.

In my experience as a learner in English classes, these ideas generally work for students who have the initiative to develop their speaking skills. For those students whose desire to improve spoken English is a little lower, I have found two other methods effective: presentation and debate. They may take ages, but it is totally worth it. Imagine you are standing in front of people, surrounded by eyes that are brown, blue, and other colors, being a joke, or worse, an “international joke” (considered the language class is sort of internationally mixed), is definitely the last thing you want to do. I found that some of my classmates who may not submit their homework on time, or skip class frequently, are usually well prepared to participate in presentations or debates. Why not? It is show time! However, one point is essential: do not let students bring transcripts. Otherwise, presentation becomes intonation, and debate becomes a reading contest. Without

transcripts, students have to memorize their text. In other words, they have to keep words, phrases, pronunciation and sentences in mind. Furthermore, they have to speak them out, which is a double exercise. Basically, every element in English studying can be found in learning presentation/debate, whose core is learning the way people speak. So spend more time on presentation and debate, which is an attractive and useful way of practicing English.

Spoken English is a huge barrier for all levels English learners. Since the Canadian government seems to be trying to attract international students, their numbers have been rising sharply. Hence the problem of spoken English has risen. Nevertheless, it is not insurmountable, only if teachers can do the right job. For teachers, I think the job is to inspire students to be interested in English, to give them enough opportunity to practice English, and to help them keep in a right and effective way. By accomplishing all above, plus lots of the students' own efforts (actually, what students do is more important than what teachers do), every student can be successful in not only spoken English but in all English skills.

Author Bio



Derrick Lee is an international student from China, entering the electromechanical engineering program at Humber College in the fall. Apart from engineering, he is interested in different cultures, economics, and psychology.

INTERROGATING PRIVILEGE: REFLECTIONS OF A SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATOR

Stephanie Vandrick (2009)

University of Michigan Press

Reviewed by Alida Salinas, York University

In *Interrogating Privilege: Reflections of a Second Language Educator*, Vandrick explores the concept of privilege in second language education, particularly in university level ESOL teaching. Vandrick examines how teacher and student identities—such as culture, gender, social class, sexual orientation, and religion—establish different kinds of privilege (or lack thereof) in second language education. Vandrick shows how these privileged—or unprivileged, and often marginalized—identities interact with one another in different and unexpected ways, as they are unwittingly negotiated in the ESL classroom. Vandrick sets out to chronicle the experiences of teachers and students based on her many years of thinking, teaching, and writing about education, in hopes of fostering meaningful dialogue about the role of privilege in lives of teachers and students within the field of TESOL.

The book is a refreshing combination of personal essays and academic research, seamlessly blending scholarly writing and narrative. The book is composed of ten chapters, each structured as a personal essay, and featuring relevant discussion questions at the end of the book. In one of the most striking aspects of the book, Vandrick begins each chapter with a short note; a richly detailed, and often intimate, account based on Vandrick's own personal experiences. The book begins with a clear introductory chapter that explains the goals of the book—primarily, the concept of privilege, a topic which, as Vandrick notes, is seldom discussed in the field of TESOL.

In Chapter 2, “ESL and the Colonial Legacy,” Vandrick recounts her childhood as a missionary kid in India, and connects her experiences there with her choice of becoming an English teacher, highlighting how personal background influences teaching practice. In Chapter 3, aptly named “Tea and TESOL”, Vandrick discusses her enduring fascination with tea culture, a symbol of colonial privilege. Vandrick's complex relationship with tea exemplifies how even the most innocuous elements in our everyday lives inadvertently display privilege, underscoring the need for TESOL educators to be mindful of the legacy of colonialism in their practice.

In Chapter 4, “Shifting Sites and Shifting Identities”, Vandrick discusses her three decades of teaching experience, candidly presenting both positive and negative aspects of life as a teacher in her institution, the University of San Francisco (USF). Chapter 5, “Fathers and Mentors”, discusses the foundation of privilege provided by Vandrick's parents, and

supported by three academic mentors who not only helped her throughout her academic career, but also shaped her views on equity and justice.

In Chapter 6, “Gender, Class and the Balanced Life”, Vandrick explores the intersection of gender and privilege in TESOL. Vandrick argues that there is still a deep divide between the privileges of men and women, and calls for more formal discussion of these issues in the academic world, particularly the field of TESOL. (p. 94) In Chapter 7, “Sexual Identity and Education”, Vandrick advocates for the rights of the LGBT community in second language education, and calls upon TESOL educators to consider their own roles in addressing sexual identity issues and in supporting LGBT students and colleagues.

In following two chapters, “On Beginning to Write at 40” and “The Power of Writing Groups”, Vandrick focuses on the topic of scholarly writing, and explores the issues surrounding research and writing that privilege people in academia. In the final chapter, Vandrick concludes with a reflection on her life as an aging educator, and expresses excitement for the joys and challenges in this new stage of her life.

Vandrick’s *Interrogating Privilege: Reflections of a Second Language Educator* is a clearly written and highly engaging look at the educational process from the perspective of teachers, students, and their multiple identities. Vandrick eloquently addresses frequently avoided, yet significant issues of power in the classroom, and initiates a stimulating discussion of the complexities of privilege in the field of TESOL. For future educators, Vandrick’s reflections illustrate the importance of individual identities, whether privileged and unprivileged, which each teacher and student brings to the classroom.

MY CANADA SNAPSHOT AND REVIEW

By Shweta Gupta

My Canada is an educational program aimed at meeting the language needs of the ESL and literacy students. The program is developed with a practical and holistic approach to language learning while integrating the knowledge of the Canada's geography, history, government, culture, and more. It also prepares new immigrants for the Canadian citizenship test. (See figure 1)

Formatting

The program is organized according to the topics above and their corresponding subtopics (see below for details). When learners click on the topic of their choice, they have the option of doing exercises within Beginner, Intermediate or Advanced levels. The program is formatted in a very similar way for all three levels, with increasing text length and proficiencies. Each level has an introductory text, followed by 4 comprehension exercises. The follow up exercises for Beginners include multiple-choice questions, fill-in-the-blanks and true-or-false questions. In addition to these, at the advanced and intermediate levels, an exercise involves correcting the spellings within a given text. The introductory text can be read silently, narrated, or printed.

The media controller function located at the top of the screen allows the students to play, pause, stop, forward or rewind the narrated text to their liking and needs.

Instant feedback and in some cases descriptive feedback is offered by the program as the students work through each answer of the exercises, or at the end of the exercises. By clicking on the radio button, students have the control over the timing of the feedback.

An online dictionary pops up in a separate window if the students hold down the control key and click on an unknown word in the introductory text. By clicking on the speaker next to the

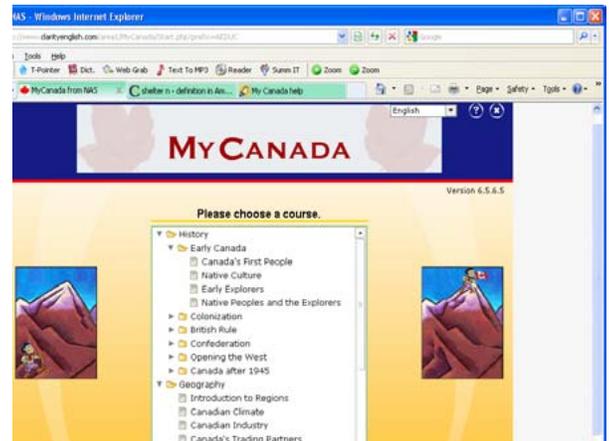


Figure 1. Topics screen shot from My Canada.

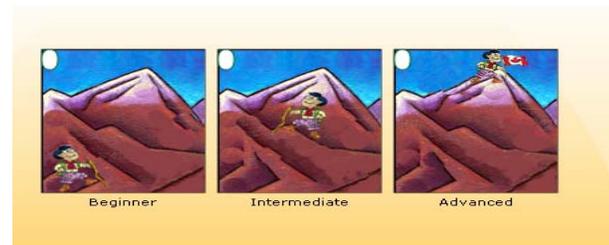


Figure 2. Level markers.



Figure 3. Media controller.

word embedded in the online dictionary, students can hear the pronunciation of the unfamiliar word repeatedly. The students can continue to read the text in another window, while they have the dictionary open or close the dictionary window.

The Recorder function located with the introductory text allows students to record the text in their own voice online through the “clarity recorder”. Students listen back to their recording. This feature is a great way for students to practise speaking and enhance their pronunciation skills. Needless to say it will build their confidence in speaking English out loud. The labs would just need to be equipped with the microphones, which can be purchased at a minimal cost from any dollar store.

The Progress feature allows students and teachers to record their ongoing progress within each session or in subsequent sessions provided the same login is used. The progress meter shows a student’s progress between levels. It shows the score earned in a frame of time on a particular date. Furthermore, the progress feature allows the students to compare their results in a graphical format with other students who have attempted the same exercises.

The following are the Canadian topics covered in *My Canada* multimedia software:

History	Geography	Government	Culture
Early Canada	Regions	Federal Government	Food
Colonization	Climate	How government is formed	Healthcare
British Rule	Industries	Passing a Law	Money
Confederation	Trading	Governor General	Sports
Opening the West	Environmental Issues		
Canada after 1945			

Points to Consider

- The multimedia software is easy to navigate from one module to the next, as well as within each module.
- It provides students with the opportunities to work independently and gain confidence.



Figure 4. Feedback options.



Figure 5. The dictionary.

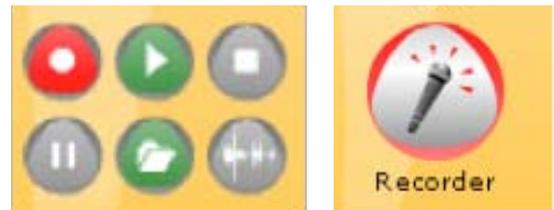


Figure 6. The recorder function.

- Instant and descriptive feedback motivates students and allows teachers to monitor and evaluate.
- The content of the texts is reflective of the Canadian school curriculum.
- Comprehensive follow-up exercises test and review new concepts and vocabulary.
- The media controller allows students to develop listening and speaking proficiencies.

Getting the Software

My Canada is available through NAS Software Inc. in a CD format for network installation or through subscription for online use. Additional information on My Canada software and its publisher, NAS Software Inc. is available at <http://www.nas.ca/mycanada/>. NAS Software Inc. also have to their credit: *Tense Buster*, *Pronunciation Power*, and *Live Action English*. Our school also has licenses for these programs, and we find that they are quite frequently used during the language lab hours.

Feedback and Assessment from Teachers and Students

The conversations with other teachers and students have led to positive reviews of the software. The overall assessment of the *My Canada* program is that it is interesting, engaging and useful. A level-6 student commented, “It is logical and easy to follow.” Another student from benchmark 3 stated, “I like to follow the audio script.” A highly experienced teacher noted, “The program lends itself well to the lessons in LINC Curriculum Activities.” I have supplemented my in-class lessons such as “making of maple syrup” quite successfully with the “Culture” of *My Canada*. At times, the program can be slow to launch either because of the poor internet connectivity or browser cache.

The software has been installed since September 2011 school year. Teachers and students use My Canada consistently to supplement in-class language learning experiences.

Progress for you (in Canada's First People).

Your scores Compare Analysis

Your records in detail.

Unit	Exercise	Score	Date	Time (mins)
Beginner	Canada's First Peoples - Introduction	---	18 Jan 2012	1
Beginner	Canada's First Peoples - Exercise 1	13%	18 Jan 2012	1
Beginner	Canada's First Peoples - Exercise 2	33%	18 Jan 2012	<1
Beginner	Canada's First Peoples - Exercise 3	0%	18 Jan 2012	<1
Beginner	Canada's First Peoples - Exercise 4	0%	18 Jan 2012	<1
Intermediate	Canada's First Peoples - Exercise 2	40%	18 Jan 2012	<1
Advanced	Canada's First Peoples - Exercise 3	8%	18 Jan 2012	1

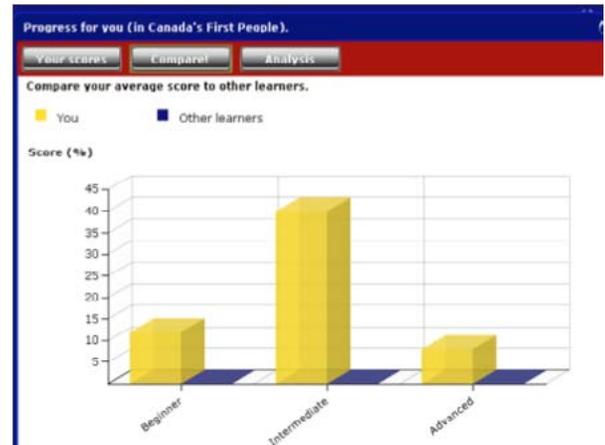
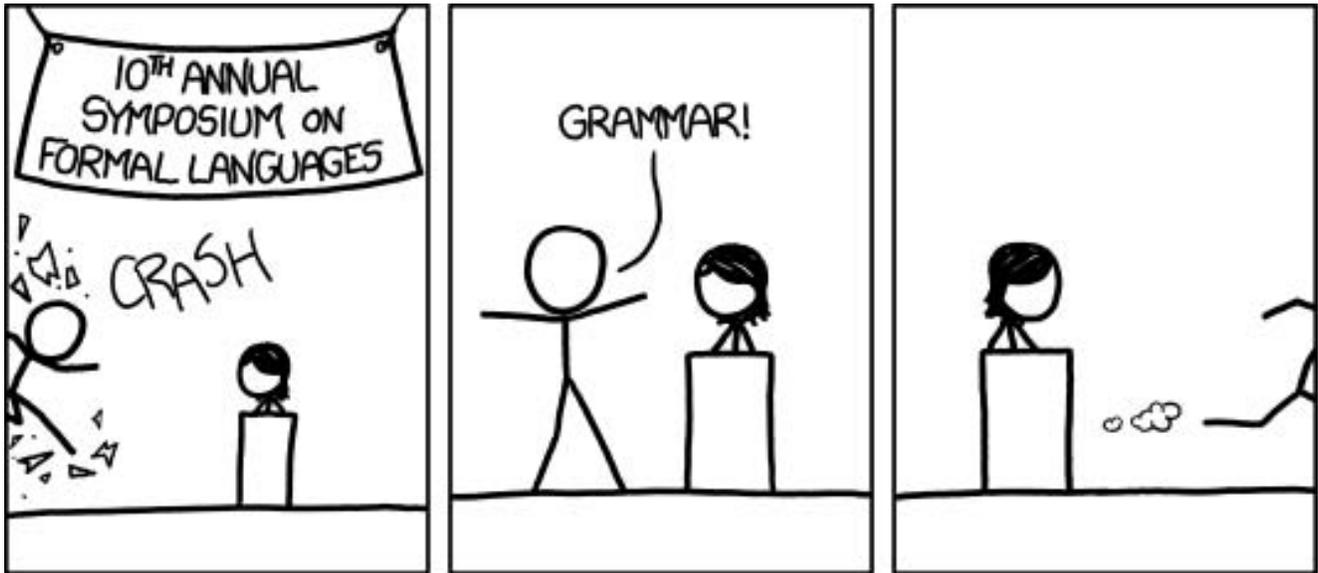


Figure 7. Feedback and progress reporting.

Author Bio

Shweta Gupta is a Classroom Teacher and Adult ESL Instructor with the Peel District School Board. She holds OCT qualifications at primary, junior, intermediate and senior divisions. She has extensively worked with students who struggle with literacy. Her research interests focus on collaborative inquiry and descriptive feedback. Other than her love for teaching, she enjoys white water rafting, biking, and swimming. She has no connection with NAS.

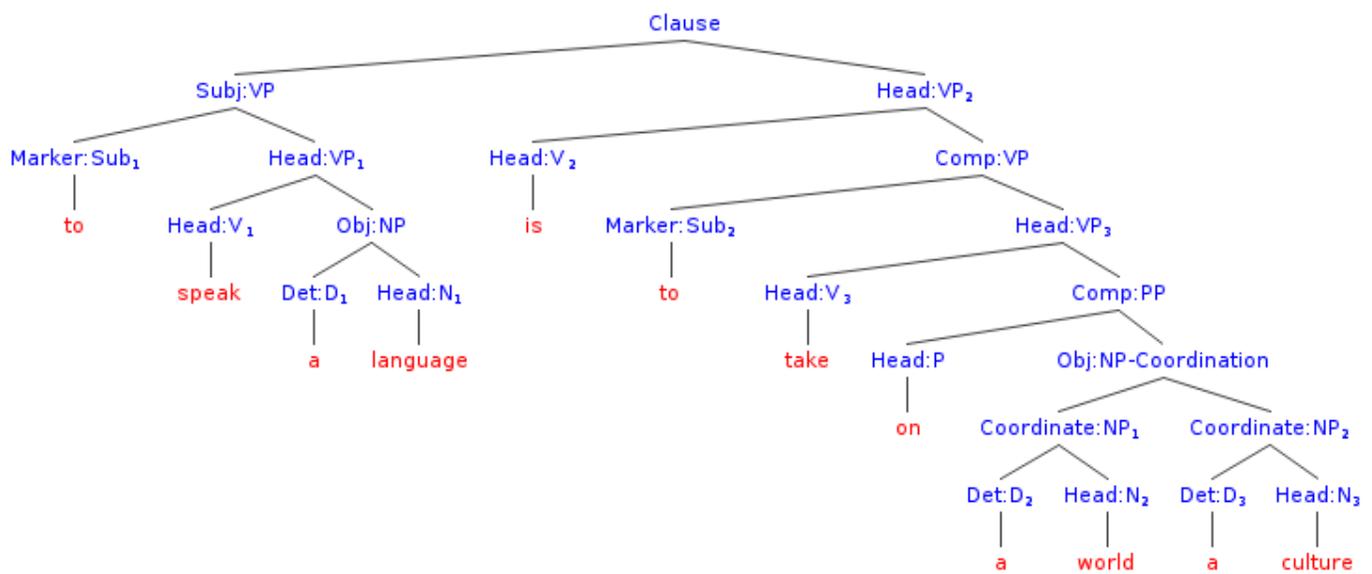
XKCD, by Randall Munroe



**[audience looks around] ‘What just happened?’
‘There must be some context we’re missing.’**

source: <http://xkcd.com/1090/>

Syntax Tree



- Frantz Fanon

Puzzle

Cat and Mouse Story

“Okay, so my cat pombled gwee the trowby, and she pombled gwee the foba. She pombled ippip the foba and pombled gorch the foba, and eventually she pombled ippip the trowby.”

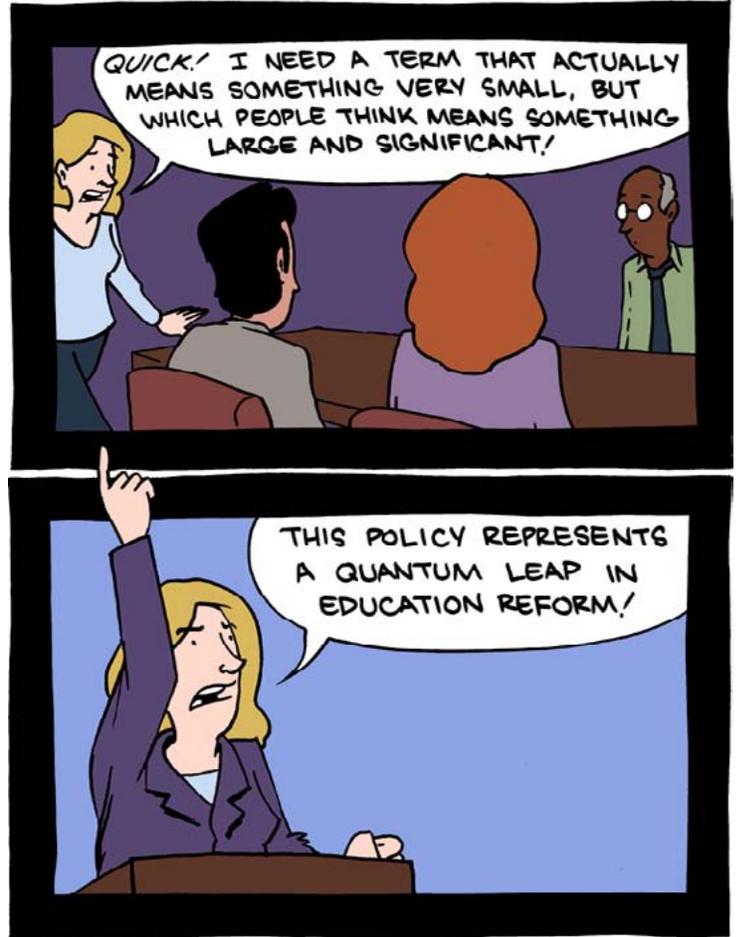
Your friend has apparently joined some strange new subculture and is trying out the slang. Either that or he hit his head. Whatever the cause, it looks like your friend has replaced the words down, into, up, run, mouse, and street with the words gwee, ippip, trowby, foba, poble, and gorch. You can't yet tell which is which, so you have this conversation:

You: So, it started off with the cat pombing the trowby gwee.
 Him: That's nonsense; that's not even a good sentence.
 You: Could I say “The cat pombled the foba gwee?”
 Him: That's just as bad.
 You: It was gwee the foba that the cat pombled, right?
 Him: Correct.
 You: Then the cat pombled gorch the foba and ippip the foba.
 Him: Yes.
 You: And the cat pombled gorch the foba and ippip the trowby?
 Him: You're talking nonsense again.
 You: But it was ippip the trowby that the cat pombled?
 Him: You don't know how to use words, do you?
 You: The cat pombled the trowby ippip.
 Him: That sounds a lot better.

What do the new words mean? Context clues are useful to give you hints, but to prove which words mean which, you should also use your friend's judgments about your attempted sentences.

Source: <http://www.naclo.cs.cmu.edu/problems2012/NACLO2012ROUND1.pdf>

Saturday Morning Breakfast Cereal, by Zach Weiner



Source: <http://www.smbc-comics.com/index.php?db=comics&id=2628>

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Submit a response to the Call for Submissions online at <http://www.teslontario.net/conference/presenters>.

- Registration brochure posted online Sept. 10
- Registration open October 9-30

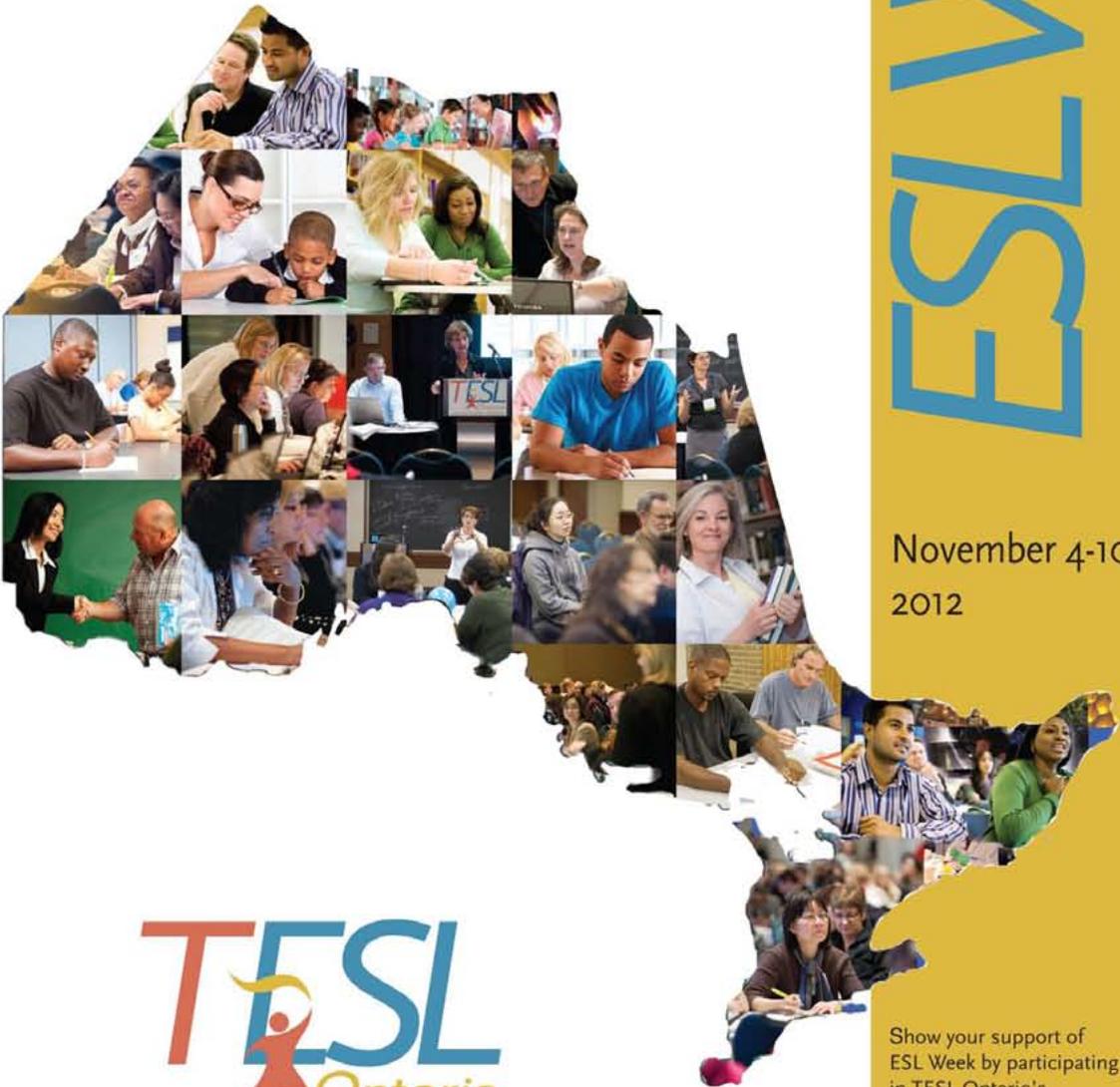
www.teslontario.org/conference

Photo: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:122_-_Toronto_-_Septembre_2009.jpg

TESL Ontario 2012 Program Flow

	Thursday, November 8	Friday, November 9	Saturday, November 10
7:00			
20	REGISTRATION OPEN		
40	EXHIBITS OPEN		
8:00	POSTERS OPEN		
20		REGISTRATION OPEN	
40		EXHIBITS OPEN	
9:00		POSTERS OPEN	
20		REGISTRATION OPEN	
40		EXHIBITS OPEN	
10:00		POSTERS OPEN	
20		REGISTRATION OPEN	
40		EXHIBITS OPEN	
11:00		POSTERS OPEN	
20		REGISTRATION OPEN	
40		EXHIBITS OPEN	
12:00		POSTERS OPEN	
20		REGISTRATION OPEN	
40		EXHIBITS OPEN	
1:00		POSTERS OPEN	
20		REGISTRATION OPEN	
40		EXHIBITS OPEN	
2:00		POSTERS OPEN	
20		REGISTRATION OPEN	
40		EXHIBITS OPEN	
3:00		POSTERS OPEN	
20		REGISTRATION OPEN	
40		EXHIBITS OPEN	
4:00		POSTERS OPEN	
20		REGISTRATION OPEN	
40		EXHIBITS OPEN	
5:00		POSTERS OPEN	
20		REGISTRATION OPEN	
40		EXHIBITS OPEN	
6:00		POSTERS OPEN	
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9:00		POSTERS OPEN	
20		REGISTRATION OPEN	
40		EXHIBITS OPEN	
10:00		POSTERS OPEN	

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