English Language Learning Magazine

CONTACT

August 2014

The Birth and Death of Ideas

- New ideas in teaching English
- What ideas are ready for retirement?

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TESL Ontario
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Calendar

September TBA	TESL North York's Fall after-school AGM and plenary
September TBA	TESL Peel-Halton-Etobicoke's Fall PD
October 3	TESL Windsor's Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA)
October 3–4	Minds Transfigured: Stratford Festival Annual Teachers' Conference
October 4	BC TEAL Interior Regional Conference "Interior Designs: Building Teaching and Learning Communities"
October 5	International World Teachers' Day
October 12–18	ESL Week
October 16–18	**TESL Ontario's 42nd Annual Conference:** *"Integrating Language and Transcending Boundaries"*
October 17–18	Ontario Modern Language Teachers Association Fall Conference
November 5–7	Educational Computing Organization of Ontario & the Ontario Association of School Business Officials Conference
November 8	People for Education Annual Conference
November 19–21	York Region District School Board Conference
November 20–23	NCTE Annual Convention
November 21–23	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages; ACTFL Annual Convention and World Language Expo

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

EDITOR’S NOTE

In the philosophy of science, there’s much discussion about the birth and death of theories. In the marketplace of ideas, some have overwhelming currency, and others are seen as worthless. New ideas are being born all the time, while, by middle age, many simply fade into the background without being widely accepted or clearly disproved. Very few suffer the fiery death of phlogiston theory or the strong form of behaviourism, much as they might deserve to.

In this issue we present a number of ideas in various stages of life. Pavel Trofimovich, Kim McDonough, and Sara Kennedy explain the concept of interactive alignment, something few teachers will have heard of. Natalia Henderson considers the value of religious texts and ideas as a basis for classroom readings and discussions, an approach that used to be mainstream but has largely died out. We’ve also got a group of four essays discussing ideas that the authors feel have outlived their useful life and should be retired. And there is, of course, our usual banquet of practical, theoretical, and interesting food for thought.

Magazines and their sections have life cycles too. When I took over as editor in 2011, I thought TESL Ontario should be sharing general news relevant to our membership, so I endeavored to do so within *Contact*. At the same time, our TESL Ontario News Briefs website was just getting off the ground. Currently, though, I think News Briefs does a far better job of presenting relevant news than *Contact* does, so I’ve decided to discontinue our news feature. With 16 articles in this issue, I hope you will not feel a gap, but if you do, please, let us know. As always, we welcome and, indeed, depend on your contributions.

Brett Reynolds
editor@teslontario.org

CONTACT

Contact is published four times a year (Feb, June, August, and November) by TESL Ontario. February is our conference issue and May is our research issue. It is published for the members of TESL Ontario and is available free online to anyone.

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

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Contact TESL Ontario

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

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TESL ONTARIO 42ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Integrating Language and Transcending Boundaries

October 16–18, 2014

Metro Toronto Convention Centre – South Building

MESSAGE FROM THE CONFERENCE CHAIR:

The TESL Ontario conference team is eagerly anticipating the 42nd annual conference for ESL professionals. The theme, "Integrating Language and Transcending Boundaries", aptly describes the current thinking in the world of ESL. If the goal of our programs is to help immigrants settle into their communities then we must accept that language is but one step along the pathway. In striving to meet their goals they will most likely need to transcend multiple boundaries along their path.

The conference pathway, while linear for many years will be changing once again. While we will continue to be hosted at Sheraton Centre Toronto for accommodations and the Friday evening dinner, the conference will be located at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre (MTCC) in the South Building. MTCC is a short walk under or above ground from the Sheraton and will provide large breakout rooms in a bright spacious environment. With food services easily accessible, lunches will not be included, but you will be able to enjoy complimentary coffee breaks each morning and afternoon. In order for you to create your own agenda, there will not be a scheduled lunch break; you will be able to choose when or if you want a break or if you want to maximize your education time.

We know you will be pleased with the wide variety of workshops, presentations, papers and posters available to you. Details regarding the Research Symposium and Plenary speakers are being finalized.

The Friday night dinner and entertainment has always been a popular feature. We have invited 'Mike the DJ' for a return engagement. He was an audience favourite last year and we know he won't disappoint. While many people enjoyed the Friday dinner, we consistently experienced a number of no-shows – people who indicated they would attend, but didn't. Despite allowing for the no show factor, we were paying for meals that were not required. To compensate for this and be socially responsible with regard to waste we are introducing a $20 fee for dinner and entertainment. The $20 will offset the $85 cost of the meal, but will also serve to indicate a commitment and hopefully eliminate excess costs and waste. The intent is not to discourage attendance, and we feel it's excellent value – likely less than you would pay if you were going elsewhere for supper. You can indicate the dinner option when you register and the $20 will be added to your registration fee. Your conference badge will show that you've paid for your dinner and will be required for entry to the dinner. We are confident that you will appreciate our effort to be socially responsible.

As more details become finalized we will be sure to update you. In the meantime, be sure to mark your calendars for October 16, 17 and 18 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

Mark your calendars and stay tuned for ongoing updates.

Barb Krukowski
Conference Chair

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KEYNOTES:

How Important Is 'Spoken Grammar'?

Michael McCarthy, University of Nottingham, UK

In 1985, my colleague Ronald Carter and I published two papers on spoken grammar and its role in English language teaching. We based our evidence on data from native-speaker corpora. The papers engendered a debate from which we (and, we hope, our challengers) gained a great deal. In this talk, I review that debate and our findings, and progress made in the understanding of spoken grammar in the last 20 years. I present examples of the core features of spoken grammar and show how these underpin successful interaction. Being able to use spoken grammar features appropriately and successfully enables learners and incoming non-native users to break down significant barriers to integration and the creation and maintenance of good relations. I consider how best to approach the teaching of spoken grammar and how we can overcome some of the reluctance and even, in some cases, prejudices that discourage material writers, curriculum designers and teachers from incorporating spoken grammar into their teaching programs.

Supporting Students' Self-Determined Motivation to Learn Languages

Kimberly A. Noels, University of Alberta

There are many reasons for why students take language courses, and some of these are better than others for sustaining motivation over the long run. In this talk, I consider how an orientation to learn a language because it is personally relevant and/or because it is felt to be inherently interesting and engaging (that is, for self-determined reasons) supports engagement in the learning process, and thereby a variety of positive learning outcomes. I also show evidence that feelings of pressure, whether from others or self-imposed, can undermine motivation, and I suggest strategies by which teachers can effectively support students' self-determined motivation by supporting their sense of autonomy, competence and connectedness with other people. Drawing from recent conceptualizations of language learning motivation as a complex, dynamic system, I point out how reasons, engagement, and feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness reciprocally influence each other over time. Likewise, I discuss how students' motivational orientation and engagement and teachers' motivational orientation and engagement mutually interact in a transactional relationship.

EXHIBITORS/SPONSORS:

TESL Ontario's Annual Conference is widely anticipated as the place to learn about the latest research in the field, attend informative workshops and of course, network. Your product or service will be centre stage - with an audience of over 1500 ESL professionals from across Canada, all of whom are interested in discovering and purchasing new materials to increase their effectiveness.

WHY PARTICIPATE?

- Personal interaction with direct influencers, key decision makers, potential buyers and end-users from the English language teaching field
- Showcase your products or services to the right audience; gather information for product/service development
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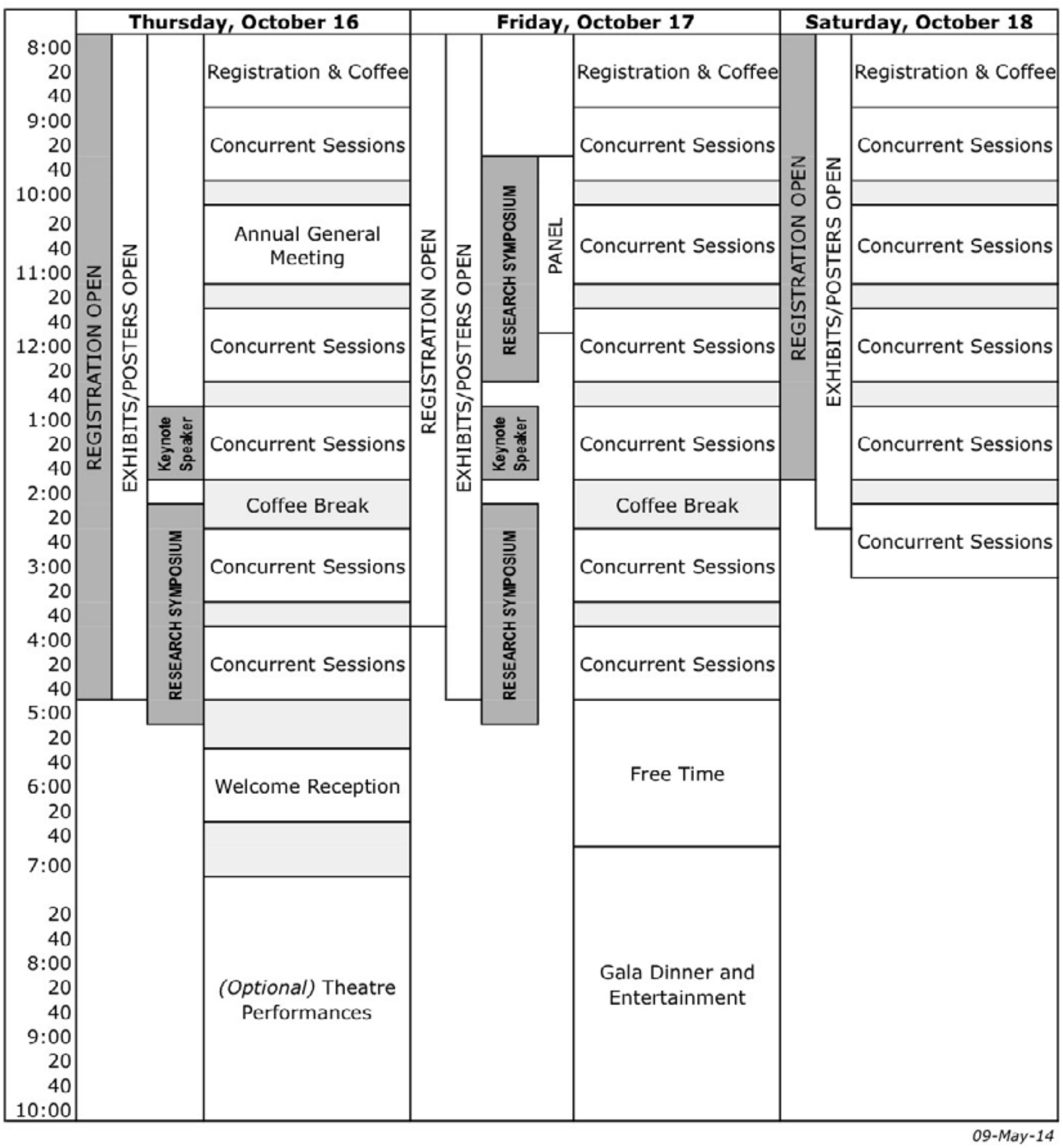
TESL Ontario's advertising, sponsorship, and exhibiting opportunities reach leaders and educators in the profession. You are invited to be part of the most highly regarded and attended conference for ESL professionals in Canada.

Registration brochure posted online: September 15
Online Registration open September 24 to October 7
http://www.teslontario.org/conference

TESL Ontario 2014 Program Flow



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHERS (CASLT)

Excellence in teaching languages

By Guy Leclair, Executive Director of CASLT

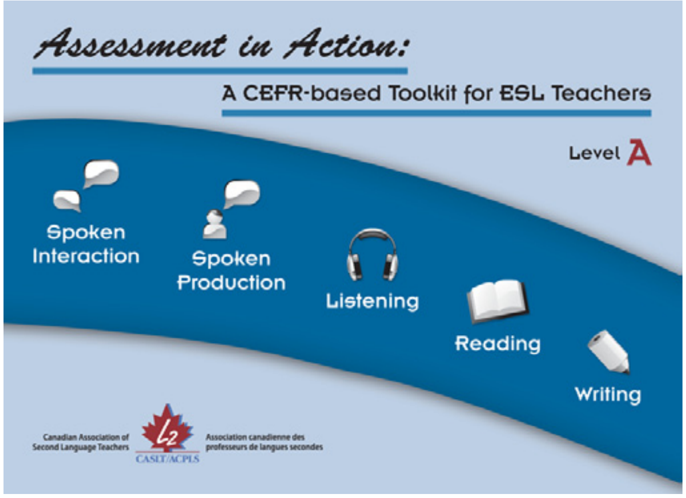
CASLT aims to advance professional excellence in the teaching of second languages in Canada. It supports the teaching of English and French as the official second languages within Canadian curricula. CASLT members are mainly elementary and secondary teachers in the public school system, the majority being French as a Second Language teachers. Yet our mission, vision and fundamental values reflect the multilingual nature of the Canadian society. CASLT supports teachers who work in a variety of urban and rural settings with students learning other languages than those spoken at home or used in their communities. These students can include multilingual learners taking French or English classes, Aboriginal language learners, or allophone students learning Basic French.

Our objectives are to promote language learning, develop research-based educational resources, refer teachers to quality educational resources, provide professional development opportunities, encourage research, facilitate the exchange of information and ideas, build partnerships, support a professional community, and assist our members through the provision of programs, products, and services.

In the area of professional development, CASLT organizes and holds workshops, conferences (Languages Without Borders), and meetings (Networking Day, Stakeholders' Meeting, round tables, panels, presentations, etc.). CASLT's biennial Languages without Borders (LWB) conferences are held across Canada.

In March 2015, CASLT's LWB teams up with the Ontario Modern Languages Teachers Association (OMLTA) and the Fédération internationale des professeurs de langues vivantes (FIPLV), to hold a World Congress of Modern Languages to be held in Niagara Falls, March 26–28, 2015. CASLT invites all TESL Ontario members to attend, as this will be a unique opportunity for professional development, with speakers and presenters from across Canada and around the world. Visit our website for more information.

CASLT develops and produces educational resources, including the *Assessment in Action* toolkit (for both FSL and ESL teachers), the *Language Teacher Calendar*, the *Semaine de la langue française*, the "*Portfolio des langues pour les* élèves *du primaire*", the *Speakarama* board game, the LangCanada educational resource database (for both FSL and ESL teachers) and various online resources available on our website. We also produce publications (*The Canadian Language Portfolio for Teachers* and *Leadership for Successful FSL Programs*) and resources (L2 Teacher Learning Opportunities Inventory) as well as podcasts and videos (over 100 AV resources).



CASLT believes that the exchange of information and ideas among second language teachers is an essential service. We publish an electronic newsletter each week and the professional magazine *Réflexions* three times a year. We also share news, information, announcements, and other information on our website, Twitter, and Facebook. We invite TESL Ontario members to submit articles, share information, and join us on Twitter and Facebook to touch base with other language educators across the country.

Research support is another pillar of the activities and services that we provide to our members and the educational community of Canada. We offer research and special initiative grants to teachers, conduct research projects, and publish research findings. Recent research reports include *FSL and ESL Teachers' Perspectives of Their Professions: A Comparative Overview of Two National Survey Projects* (2013); *Canadian Empirical Research on the CEFR: Laying the ground for future research* (2012); *Perceptions from ESL Teachers Across Canada: A National Survey of the English Second Language (ESL) Teaching Profession* (2011); *Stakeholders' Meeting on the Implementation of CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) in Canada: Facilitator's Report* (2010).

In additional to serving and working with its members, CASLT has also collaborates with a large community of L2 partners and stakeholders. CASLT has built a vast and complex network of provincial, national and international partners; we inform and educate the public, the media, and stakeholders in education and the different levels of government about second language teaching and learning issues, in order to promote and defend the interests of second language teachers.

AN INTERVIEW WITH INCOMING TESOL INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT ANDY CURTIS

By Jeff Brown, Humber College

1. Coming into your new role as President of TESOL International Association, what is your vision for the organization?

In 1999, during his time as President of the TESOL International Association (TIA), David Nunan made the observation that: "You don't get to choose the issues. The issues choose you". Although it didn't make complete sense to me at the time, I now understand that David was advising against going into this role with a long list of all the things you would like to achieve. For one thing, you're only President for one year, and even with three years in TESOL's presidential line, (as President-Elect, Sitting President and Past President) time limits what can be achieved. Also, you inherit all that went before you, including the many issues and initiatives that were already in motion when you arrived, many of which are multi-year projects.

That said, there are a number of things that I would like to achieve during these three years, and one of my long-term goals was to help bring the annual TESOL Convention back to Canada. My role in that was when I served on the TESOL Task Force on Convention Long Range Planning (from 2005 to 2006) the job of which was to look at the feasibility of having the annual convention outside the US. Ten years later, we've finally made it onto 'foreign soil'! TESOL's current President, Yilin Sun, will be President during TESOL 2015 in Toronto, but on the last day of that convention, I will be installed as the next President. So, I'm thrilled that that's taking place in TO, as I now live in Kingston, and as I've been an active member of TESL Ontario for some time, attending my first TESL Ontario convention in 2001, and publishing my first article in *Contact* in 2003.

It is perhaps a cliché, but I do hope to bring a fresh pair of eyes to the TIA, as I am a 'first president' in a number of ways. The first TIA President of Indian origin, the first of South American origin, and the first of Caribbean origin. That 'three-for-the-price-of-one' is because my parents and grandparents were born and raised in Guyana, which is geographically part of South America, and officially part of the Caribbean, and before then, we came from East India. And as I was born and grew up in England, but now live and work in Canada, as a 'new immigrant', with dual nationality, it's also the first time in decades – and one of the very few times in the TIA's 50-year history – that the President has been Canadian, and British-born.

2. We both began our professional lives in fields outside of TESL: you began in Medicine and I started out in Philosophy. What insights and perspectives do you think such non-traditional backgrounds bring to language teaching and research in applied linguistics?

At the end of last year (November, 2013) TESOL Press, the publishing arm of the TESOL International Association (TIA), announced the publication of book called *Language Teaching Insights from Other Fields: Sports, Arts, Design, and More* edited by Christopher Stillwell. Having moved to ELT from a non-traditional and unexpected background later in life, I was happy to see that new collection, as it's something I've often thought and talked about, as well as researched, written and presented on.

My professional 'leap of faith' was moving from clinical medicine to ELT, which was described as 'career suicide' by some colleagues at the time, and which came about around 25 years ago, after I had been working in hospitals in England for some years by that time. As a result of that background, long before organic metaphors in language education became popular, I was thinking of language as a living, breathing entity, with all of the qualities and characteristics that make a living thing 'living', such as birth, death and reproduction, being entirely applicable to language. And coming at it from that perspective, language classrooms have always seemed to me to be extremely dynamic environments, in the sense of changing chaotically but systematically from one moment to the next.

These kinds of professional 'leaps-of-faith' are more common today than they were then. As a result, these days it's not unusual for someone to come up to me after one of my talks, in which I've mentioned my medical background, and say something along the lines of: "I too came to ELT from a very different background. Like you, my family and friends strongly advised against it, but it's been the best move I ever made. Thanks for talking so positively about the benefits of doing that, and about what we can bring to ELT from those different fields of knowledge – seemingly unconnected, but not really".

During all my years as a student, all the way from elementary school to eventually completing my doctoral studies at the University of York, it constantly struck me as strange that knowledge had to be divided up in ways that seemed to me to be arbitrary; at best artificial, and at worst contrived. However, in between those two times at the start and the end of my formal education, when I worked as a secondary school teacher in a very poor area in the Northeast of England, I realized that such divisions of knowledge were necessary for the purposes of things like scheduling and timetabling. But I've maintained my belief that 'All Knowledge is Connected' (as are all people).

3. You recently wrote an article focussing on the ethical dilemmas facing IEP administrators and on your own experiences as an IEP administrator. Given

the state of the ELT profession, do you see any prospects for amelioration of these types of dilemmas?

When I was the Executive Director of the School of English at Queen's University, from 2002 to 2006, I was faced with all kinds of ethical dilemmas, largely as a result of the fact that the School was 'zero-base-funded' by the University, which meant that we did not receive any funding directly. So, we had to generate a seven-figure sum to run the School and pay the salaries of all the teaching and administrative staff, and in addition to that, generate income for Queen's. You can imagine how such funding models can lead to ethical dilemmas.

In the article that I wrote for the TESOL IEP Interest Section Newsletter last fall, I referred to a short piece in the *TESOL Journal* from the Spring of 1993, 'Ethics and Intensive English Programs', by Steve Stoynoff, who drew on the early work of Elinor Lenz (1982). She identified four main challenges confronting administrators of self-financed programs: "(a) maintaining sufficient enrollments, (b) avoiding hidden agendas, (c) presenting accurate publicity, and (d) avoiding conflicts of interest" (Stoynoff, 1993, p.4).

I believe that those pressures on IEP administrators, and other additional pressures these days, are greater now than they were in the 1980s and 1990s, as university funding continues to be cut, putting university IEPs under more pressure than before to cover costs and generate income. This is just one of many reasons that I'm no longer an IEP administrator.

As for any prospects for amelioration of these types of dilemmas, I believe that, if universities could stop seeing their IEPs as 'cash cows', and go beyond paying lip service to notions of 'internationalization', then IEP students, teachers and program administrators could all be given more respect. That, in turn, could help address – or even pre-empt – some of the ethical dilemmas, as the discussion would move beyond dollars-and-cents, to the real value of such programs.

4. Do you see teachers as involved with these same ethical issues? If so, do you have any thoughts on the options open to concerned and ethically-concerned language teachers?

Yes and No. I think that teachers are faced with ethical issues and challenges, but not the same ones as program administrators. In fact, that difference can be one of the places that communication between teachers and administrators can break down; because of facing different ethical dilemmas. For the program managers, those challenges may relate more to enrolment, tuition fees and covering costs or generating income, whereas for the teachers, the issues may relate more to what is happening in the classroom.

One of the commonest dilemmas that teachers from many countries have shared with me is their concern regarding some of the global issues of English language teaching, especially in a post-colonial, multilingual, multicultural world, in which ELT is now a 'global commodity'.

In my experience, one way of addressing such concerns is through the special interest sections and groups of professional associations like TESOL and IATEFL. For example, TESOL's Social Responsibility Interest Section (SRIS): "supports members who are actively engaged in integrating language teaching with social responsibility, world citizenship, and an awareness of global issues such as peace, human rights, and the environment". The SRIS aims to: "promote social responsibility within the TESOL profession and to advance social equity, respect for differences, and multicultural understanding through education".

Likewise, IATEFL has a Global Issues Special Interest Group (GI SIG). On their website they refer to: "Challenges, trends, changes, pressing concerns facing humanity. Some of us are privileged enough to live in places where we don't experience their immediate adverse effect. The default mode of our day-to-day existence pushes them to the periphery of our consciousness. We're too busy to notice, don't have time to think … and change."

Membership of such groups does not automatically resolve the ethical concerns of English language teachers, but being active, contributing members of those kinds of groups has helped address some of those ethical concerns.

5. Prima facie, TESOL International and TESL Ontario have quite disparate concerns. For example, TESOL is involved with elementary school ESL, while TESL Ontario isn't at all. Many readers of *Contact* work in LINC, whereas many TESOL members might not even recognize that acronym. Given this apparent divide, how much overlap do you see in the concerns of the two organizations? How do you see TESOL International and TESL Ontario working together?

That's a good question, which relates to your first one, about my vision for the TIA. One of the recurring questions I'm asked by audience members is about the differences between language teachers and students in other countries, compared with language teachers and students in their country. My answer is that I see far more similarities than differences, though we have created a world in which it is in the vested interests of the media and politicians to focus as much attention as possible on the differences. For example, the qualities and characteristics that make a 'good' language teacher or a learner 'good' are much the same wherever I go, including things like deep and lasting motivation, commitment to the process, willingness to work long and hard, openness to differences, and tolerance for ambiguity.

So, while I agree that, on the face of it, the TIA and TESL Ontario may not have much in common, I believe there are more similarities than there might appear to be. Let's look at the statement on TESL Ontario website: "TESL Ontario, established in 1972, is a non-profit organization serving the needs of teachers of English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development. In its commitment to professional development and advocacy, TESL Ontario addresses the range of competencies, experiences, and issues which influence the success of immigrants, refugees, visa students, and others who are learning English."

Author Bio

Jeff Brown holds an MA and a PhD in Philosophy, a post-graduate certificate in TESL, and is currently pursuing an MA in Applied Linguistics. Over the past 15 years, he has taught at a number of colleges and private schools in the Toronto area. Presently, he teaches EAP at Humber College.

Now, let's look at the TIA's current three-year Strategic Plan, for 2011 to 2014. One of the three main Goals is to help TIA members "build expertise" and be "recognized for their involvement and professionalism", and one of the 12 main Objectives is to: "Advocate for English language learners, professionals, and the profession". To me, that sounds a lot like a "commitment to professional development and advocacy". And in relation to "the success of immigrants, refugees, visa students, and others who are learning English", the TIA has large and active Interest Sections focused on 'Refugee Concerns', 'International Teaching Assistants', 'Non-Native English Speakers in TESOL' and a more than a dozen other ISs committed to helping "immigrants, refugees, visa students, and others who are learning English." So, I rest my case for 'far more similarities than differences' between the TIA and TESL Ontario.

6. Why should TESL Ontario members be members of TESOL International?

The 'Membership Benefits' page on the TIA website lists some of the answers to that question, including membership of up to 21 TESOL Interest Sections (some of which were mentioned above) access to virtual seminars, symposiums and conferences, online courses, the TESOL Resource Center, TESOL Academies, scholarships, awards and grants, as well as a range of TIA publications, and leadership and volunteer opportunities.

I can admit to an obvious bias here, as one of the goals of any president of any association like the TIA is to grow the membership, in terms of recruitment and retention. But I also confess that, when I read the membership statistics, it pains me to see that, according to the latest figures on the TIA website, from April 2014, there are only 350 members of the TIA in the whole of Canada, which is less than 3% of the total of more than 13,000 members in 170 countries. That means that there are more members of the TIA in Japan and in China than in Canada, which seems odd and unfortunate to me. Perhaps a reflection of the tensions between Canada and America? I don't know, but whatever the reasons, to wrap-up this first part of the interview by going back to your first question, one of my goals during these three years is to significantly increase the number of Canadian members of the TIA, especially with next year's convention coming to TO, and being hosted by TESL Ontario.

Bio

Dr. Andy Curtis received his M.A. in Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching and his Ph.D. in International Education from the University of York in England. He is a Professor in the online School of Graduate Education at Anaheim University, California, but he is based in Kingston, Ontario, from where he works as an independent consultant for language teaching organizations worldwide. Next year, he will be the President of the TESOL International Association.

INTERACTIVE ALIGNMENT:

What's in it for language teachers?

By Pavel Trofimovich, Kim McDonough, and Sara Kennedy

Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

It should come as no surprise to anyone that people repeat themselves. We repeat words and even entire phrases for emphasis. And we repeat our own words and grammatical structures without realizing that we're doing it. When we talk to other people, we often repeat their utterances, such as when we don't understand them or when we want to agree with them. This tendency for people to repeat each other's language has implications for how second language learners interact with each other and what they can learn from those interactions. In this paper, we explore whether second language speakers repeat each other's speech while interacting, and if teachers can take advantage of this repetition for teaching.

Perhaps the most surprising fact about linguistic repetition is its frequency. Besides repeating each other's words and phrases, which we often become aware of as conversations continue, we also repeat aspects of speech that are less noticeable, such as grammatical structures, intonation, and specific details of individual sounds. The excerpt in Box 1 illustrates repetition in an authentic conversation between two bank robbers (Schenkein, 1980).

Box 1. An example of repetition in language.

A: Cor, the noise downstairs, you've got to hear it and witness it to realize how bad it is.

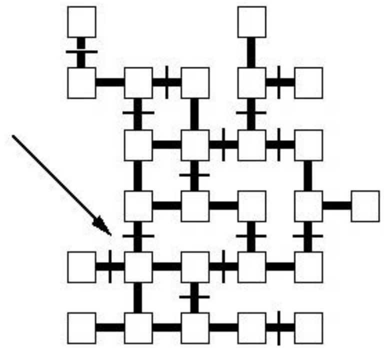
B: You have got to experience exactly the same position as me, mate, to understand how I feel.

This excerpt, drawn from a longer interchange recorded by a ham radio operator, features Speaker A, who was located underground as he and his accomplices were tunnelling through a basement to reach safety deposit boxes inside a bank vault, and Speaker B, who was a lookout placed on the roof of a building overlooking the bank. As the robbers compared their grievances, they re-used each other's language, including common words, phrases, as well as similar grammatical and rhythmic structures. This type of repetition is not just a feature of conversations occurring under dramatic circumstances. Common, daily interactions are filled with similar repetition at the level of words, phrases, grammar, and pronunciation.

If repetition is so pervasive in everyday interaction, then what functions might it serve? One possibility suggested by social psychologists is that speakers use repetition to show their (often subconscious) desire to integrate with interlocutors. Repeating one another's language makes people appear more similar, which helps promote mutual solidarity and understanding. Social psychologists have identified a number of speech characteristics that speakers seem to use (implicitly or overtly) to promote social integration. For example, we tend to produce language with similar utterance lengths, speech rate, volume, and pausing frequencies. In addition to repeating language, we also repeat each other's gestures. We tend to like interlocutors more if they mirror our body postures and gestures, such as leaning to one side, touching the face, or moving a foot. It's been suggested that imitating an interlocutor's behaviour helps social bonding.

Researchers in the field of cognitive psychology, however, have proposed that the function of repetition is to help people achieve common understanding. According to this view, we establish "common ground" with our interlocutors by matching their language at the level of words, grammar, and pronunciation. By aligning our language use with our interlocutors, we can understand each other more quickly and easily. We align ourselves at different levels of language, such as word choice, pronunciation, and grammar, with alignment at one level facilitating alignment at another level. Box 2 illustrates this idea of using interactive alignment to achieve common understanding in a cooperative maze game, where speakers were asked, without seeing each other's materials, to figure out where they are located in the maze (Garrod & Anderson, 1987). This example shows the interlocutors' speech on the left and the approximate position being described marked by an arrow on the right. Speakers A and B re-use each other's words and phrases and follow the same rhythmic patterns, such as *along from the bottom* or *in the second box*, to quickly zero in on each other's location. It is this repetition of language that, according to researchers, helps interlocutors establish common understanding quickly and efficiently.

Box 2. Alignment between native speakers.



B: Tell me where you are?

A: Ehm. Oh God *laughs*.

B: *Laughs*.

A: Right, two along from the bottom one up.

B: Two along from the bottom, which side?

A: The left, going from left to right in the second box.

B: You're in the second box.

A: One up. I take it we've got identical mazes?

B: Yeah well, right, starting from the left, you're one along.

A: Uh-huh.

Interactive Alignment Between Second Language Learners

If interactive alignment is a basic characteristic of human interaction, then it should occur during conversations between learners. However, most of the interactive alignment research has focused on conversations between native speakers in tightly-controlled experimental conditions. As a result, researchers have questioned whether alignment occurs during conversations in a second language.

To answer this question, we audio- and video-recorded 34 intermediate and advanced second language speakers of English from many different language backgrounds, while they carried out information-gap tasks in pairs (Trofimovich & Kennedy, 2014). For the task shown in Figure 1, the learners had to compile a complete map by sharing their information. Whereas one learner had a map containing landmarks, the other had a map with the route. For the task shown in Figure 2, each learner received three pictures and they had to work together to narrate a story.

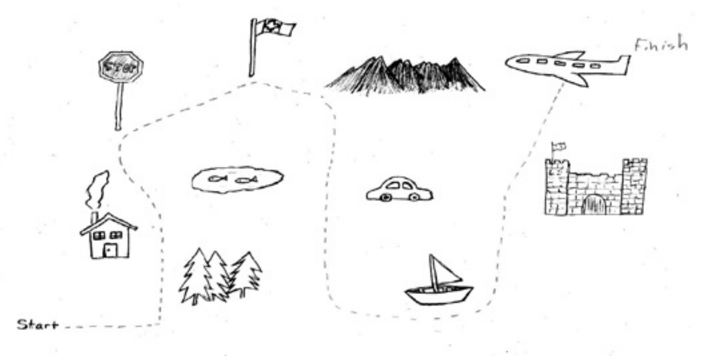


Figure 1. Completed map task prompt.

We took 50-second excerpts from the first minute and the last minute of each conversation, which were approximately six minutes in length. We asked 10 English speakers to listen to the excerpts and judge how similar the learners sounded using a rating scale. We found that the English speakers rated the learners as sounding more similar at the end of the conversations than at the beginning of the conversations for both tasks. Put simply, after talking to each other for only six minutes, the learners had already begun to sound more similar.

When we looked at their conversations more closely, we noticed that they repeated language in ways very similar to native speakers, as shown in the excerpt in Box 3. These learners are exchanging information about one of the pictures in the story task. They re-used common words such as *gentleman* and *assume*, and also repeated common structures, including relative clauses (*the guy <u>who lost</u>*...) and prepositional phrases (*the gentleman/policeman <u>with</u>*...). When we asked the raters to describe what aspects of speech made the learners sound similar, they mentioned linguistic features such as fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. They also pointed to nonverbal behaviors such as smiling, hand gestures, nodding, eye contact, posture, voice volume, eye gaze, and features of interactive style including interruptions, backchannels, and comprehension checks. In sum, our study found that second language learners engage in interactive alignment of verbal and non-verbal behaviours, just as native speakers do.

Figure 2. Picture narration task prompt.

Box 3. Alignment between second language learners.

A: So, one is policeman, one is thief, and another guy is a the guy who lost his wallet.

B: The third one the third one is a... I don't know maybe he's the guy who lost... Maybe maybe...

A: Yeah, yeah. Just, just assume this...

B: He's a gentleman, he has a...

A: Yeah okay. We can assume he's the guy who lost his wallet. The third one...

B: Yeah, yeah, that's right. The third one. Yeah. This guy the gentleman...

A: The gentleman is it same gentleman with the...

B: Yeah, the same gentleman, yeah. The same gentleman. And the same gentleman with the he ring the bell...

A: The gentlemen glasses

B: Yeah with glasses, right.

A: With the green t-shirt...

B: Yes. good. And he...

A: And the policeman with the police... suit, right?

B: Yeah.

Interactive alignment as a teaching tool?

Having shown that alignment occurs during conversations between second language learners, we then asked whether it might be a useful teaching tool in language classrooms. Many classrooms are socially, educationally, and linguistically diverse, and learners often possess different linguistic knowledge, progress through learning at different rates, and understand language in different ways. These differences might prevent learners from "aligning" with their interlocutors, in which case alignment could not be used as a teaching tool.

To explore the pedagogical applications of alignment, we created theme-based information-exchange activities for university students enrolled in an English for academic purposes class (McDonough, Neumann, & Trofimovich, in press; Trofimovich, McDonough, & Foote, 2014; Trofimovich, McDonough, & Neumann, 2013). In these activities, we included multiple instances of three grammatical forms, which were passives, relative clauses, adverbial clauses, and two pronunciation patterns, which were three- and four-syllable English academic words with the stress on the second syllable (e.g., *conSIder*, *inTElligent*). We wanted to know if the students were sensitive to their interlocutor's use of these forms. Put simply, if the students were aligning, they would produce more target forms after their interlocutor used one than they did when their interlocutor did not use them. And this is precisely what we observed. Across several tasks administered throughout a 13-week course, the students used a target form most often when they had just heard their interlocutor produce that same form.

Box 4 illustrates alignment in stress patterns between two students who were discussing misconceptions about children's health. Student B produced an accurate stress pattern in the word *asSUMption* immediately after he heard Student A produce the same stress pattern in the word *deTECted*. What's noteworthy here is that alignment occurred at the level of an underlying stress pattern, that is, a three-syllable word with a major stress on the second syllable. In fact, this kind of alignment—as opposed to, for example, a simple repetition of the same word or the same relative clause—was most frequent in our data.

Box 4. Alignment during second language classroom activities.

A: Depression is often deTECted among teens with stable families, many friends, and appreciate ("appropriate") social behaviours. These teenagers hold their depression until sym… symptoms became extremely sever ("severe").

B: B: Many people have the asSUMption that extra weight caused by stripping… err… skipping breakfast.

A: A: True?

B: B: Yes, true.

One pedagogical implication is that collaborative tasks seeded with targeted grammar or pronunciation patterns can provide students with production practice opportunities. With respect to stress patterns in academic words, each student produced about 11 to 15 words per task, and heard his or her partner say an equivalent number of words. This amounts to sizeable exposure to the target stress pattern during a 10–15 minute activity where learners were not intentionally focusing on word stress at all, and were simultaneously receiving practice opportunities for other English skills, such as fluency development, vocabulary, and question formation. This means that even if alignment does not occur, students may still receive ample opportunities to practice target language forms in a communicative setting.

Pedagogical implications and conclusion

If linguistic repetition is indeed a basic feature of human communication, then what can interactive alignment offer to second language teaching? The answer to this question requires a more precise understanding of what underlies alignment. More research needs to be carried out to identify exactly how alignment happens, but one finding is clear: alignment is both a social and a cognitive phenomenon at the heart of human interaction. It may be premature to suggest definitive applications to teaching, but several possibilities come to mind. First, learners might benefit from awareness-raising activities that will sensitize them to the fact that successful interaction often involves a lot of repetition. Learners might find it useful to be exposed to activities featuring authentic spoken interaction, for instance, through watching excerpts from popular television shows, in order to become aware of repetition at the level of words, grammar, and pronunciation. This may help them become more sensitive to how they can use repetition to construct successful interactions.

Second, if we adopt the alignment view, then communicative activities specifically targeting linguistic forms hold some promise for teaching. This includes collaborative classroom-based activities designed to elicit alignment towards target grammar and pronunciation patterns (as opposed to convergence on common errors), as well as tasks built around high-frequency, functional language patterns. This also includes activities featuring corrective feedback and especially recasts (defined as teachers' reformulations of learner errors). Recasts function as repeated models to which learners could align if they are given the chance to respond to the recasts.

Third, one assumption is that alignment is greatest when it occurs at several levels of language simultaneously, such as when a repeated pronunciation feature co-occurs with a repeated grammatical form. We can also hypothesize that when language patterns are experienced concurrently across several modalities (speech and text) and sensory channels (eyes and ears), alignment should be enhanced. For example, the effects of alignment in teaching/learning activities might be increased by presenting information both orally and visually, or by using facial expressions and gestures to accompany language.

Finally, alignment implies that different kinds of imitation activities—such as silent mouthing, mirroring, echoing, shadowing, as well as dramatic imitation techniques that involve imitating gestures, facial expressions, and affect—may be particularly useful in helping learners align to target models. Such imitation activities need not involve meaningless, drill-like repetition. Instead, interactive alignment suggests that meaningful contextualized repetition-based collaborative activities can be a useful addition to the tasks learners and teachers already use in their classrooms.

So what's in interactive alignment for teachers, after all? While a lot more needs to be learned, one conclusion is obvious: interactive alignment is a useful framework to explain some of the complexities of second language development. It can be used by teachers to develop or refine communicative activities in order to take full advantage of the linguistic repetition that is all around us.

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WHAT TESL IDEA IS READY FOR RETIREMENT?

The Grand River just north of Paris, Ontario.
By JustSomePics (Own work) [CC-BY-SA-3.0], via Wikimedia Commons.

Back at the beginning of the year, *Edge* published 175 essays in response to the question, "what scientific idea is ready for retirement?" This prompted me to wonder what TESL idea is ready for retirement. So I contacted a number of esteemed folks in our field and asked them to write a short essay on the topic along the lines of the essays in *Edge*. Below are the responses we received.

–Editor

COMMUNICATION IS A WORN-OUT WORD

By Vivian Cook, Newcastle University

About 1970 language teachers apparently woke up to the fact that language was about communication. So syllabuses were designed around the communicative functions that students needed to acquire and the ideas that they wanted to express, leading in due course to the Common European Framework (2001); teaching was about encouraging students to communicate in the classroom; classroom tasks were seen as a vehicle for communicating information, resulting eventually in task-based learning (TBL) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Most language teaching still has communication as a key notion.

But what does communication actually mean? Presumably it involves someone giving information to someone else. A typical exercise in a coursebook might be 'Work in groups. Find out who has the biggest family' followed later by 'Conversation Practice A. Have conversations about your family.' (*Outcomes*, 2010). Yes, information is changing hands; but why? What motivation do students have for communicating with other students about their families? What analogue does this information exchange have to conversation in the world outside the classroom? Why should students want to talk about size of family, something that not only has different cultural values but also may be felt to be a gross intrusion into their privacy?

Rather than communication, this exercise is language for language's sake, carried out to practice the useful vocabulary (relatives) and structures (questions) it contains, essentially with the same purpose as the dialogues of the audiolingual method. It is communication devised and dictated by the teacher, without context, motivation or rationale – other than teaching; if you want to talk to other people about your family, why would you do it in a second language? It typifies what one philosopher of language Peter Carruthers (2002) calls 'the (purely) communicative conception of language, according to which language is but an input-output system for central cognition', no different from downloading and uploading data on a computer. In other words communication in the classroom of this kind has little to do with what we mean by communication in other contexts; it is simply language practice by another name.

And communication is only one of the many functions of language. Much of our thinking, remembering and planning takes place through language. Part of our sense of who we are and how we belong to our society comes from language. Language is embedded in our religious worship, our scientific theories and our legal systems. Our relationships start, are maintained and finish through language, nowadays in part through Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp. Relying on information transfer as the essence of language cuts out the many other ways in which human life is carried out through language.

A long time I gave a talk about language teaching at a conference in which I said that there should be a moratorium on the term “communication” as it no longer conveyed anything very useful. The next speaker John Trim, the chief architect of the CEFR (2001), declared the moratorium was already over; indeed the CEFR is probably the best embodiment of communication in teaching. Indeed it would now be very hard to find any teacher that doesn’t claim to be communicative. However if the term “communication” is so wide that there is effectively no non-communicative language teaching, there is little point in using it.

When we learn a second language, we are transformed in many ways. Our thinking changes and becomes more flexible. Our creative language abilities improve in our first language. We even stave off Alzheimer’s Disease for a few years. The value of language teaching far exceeds the ability to “communicate” in another language. The continuing use of the effectively meaningless terms “communication” and ‘communicative’ stifles language teaching and diminishes the many benefits that second language learning brings to the individual and the community. Treating language as nothing but information exchange cuts out from the classroom most of what makes second language learning relevant and meaningful.

Author Bio

Vivian Cook taught EFL, first and second language acquisition, and language teaching methodology in various institutions before becoming Professor of Applied Linguistics at Newcastle in 2004. He is chiefly known through books on second language learning, Chomsky, and spelling. Current interests include the English writing system and the multi-competence view of L2 acquisition, in particular bilingual cognition. He is Founder and first President of the European Second Language Association.

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HEY HEY, HO HO: TRIADIC DIALOGUE HAS GOT TO GO

By John Barnett, Western University

On the top of my list of educational practices that need to be abandoned sits triadic dialogue. Often mistaken for, and misconceived as, Socratic dialogue, the practice causes teachers to teach lessons badly and students to learn content poorly. Triadic—or three part—dialogue differs from Socratic—or two part—dialogue mainly in the unproblematic evaluation of answers given by students to teachers' questions. It is my claim that this seemingly unproblematic evaluative component, is the problem.

Employing the triadic method to teach new content, the teacher asks a question with an embedded hint and calls on an individual student to answer, openly evaluates that answer and, only if negative, asks a revised question; one that contains a further hint as to the answer the teacher expects. Should that question still not elicit a good enough guess, the teacher hints more and more broadly in succeeding questions until only the truly inattentive or recalcitrant student fails to answer correctly.

The Socratic method, in contrast, is intended to elicit understanding through the asking and answering of questions. It has only two components, the asking of the question and the answering of that question. The intent is to illuminate the differences amongst ideas, perceptions, and conclusions amongst the participants and to engage the students in critical thinking about their own and others' assertions. In the Socratic method the teacher, carrying a greater depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject area and, having more developed ways of thinking, is expected to ask probing questions that draw from the students their original ideas, exposing the flaws, eliminating their unwarranted assertions, and hence opening a Vygotskian-like zone of proximal development in which the students gain greater understanding.

As a teacher in my former career, I thought that using the triadic method was superior to lecturing to my students. It looked more like "real" teaching than straight lecturing. I thought I was using the Socratic method but I was wrong.

My mindset was altered when I took a masters-level curriculum course in which the professor was highly skilled in asking probing Socratic questions: those that made students carefully re-think unexamined assumptions, retract unwarranted assertions, and see the dawning light of new and deeper understanding. I cannot recall a single instance in which he outwardly evaluated an answer. But when he asked that second question, the class paid attention because it inevitably highlighted incorrect or imperfect thinking. He would ask follow up questions such as: What evidence can you produce that your assertions would be of use in other classrooms? To what extent can you generalize from so few instances? What clues told you what your students were thinking? I started to examine every answer myself, trying to see the assumptions in my reasoning if I agreed with the student who was answering or the flaws in their reasoning if I disagreed. It was nerve wracking to be asked. It was uncomfortable to have to think carefully but quickly through an answer that I would give. I think I learned more in that course than any other. I came to appreciate my own metacognitive thinking processes. I developed confidence that, after the course, I could better warrant my views than I could have before I took it. I developed a deeper, richer, and more coherent view of my own practice.

So when I say we should not use triadic dialogue, I am not saying we should abandon the Socratic method. In fact, I think that teachers need to learn the very subtle and highly demanding skills of the Socratic teacher. But that is not what is happening in many teacher education programmes nor is it being used well by many teachers. In some ways, it almost seems to be a lost art.

It is my contention that the third component of triadic dialogue—the unproblematic evaluation—takes away from the teacher the necessity of creating and asking a new question that goes to the heart of the flaw in the original response. In triadic dialogue the obviousness of the question's answer is taken for granted: the teacher ***knows*** the correct answer. The teacher does not have to analyze the underpinning assumptions of the student's answer or choose an appropriate, yet different, follow up question to ask. The teacher evaluates the answer to her or his question on the basis of the teacher's own, often unexamined, assumptions. Since the simplistic answers are unveiled in the process, students learn to guess the answer the teacher wants, rather than examining their own thinking before answering. The guessing process takes student focus away from the subject matter. It supports the memorization of the teacher's views. Thus, the triadic method trivializes learning.

The one thing going for triadic dialogue is ease of use. It is perhaps as easy to use as the lecture method. Unlike Socratic dialogue, the triadic interaction when used as a teaching method for new material is, in fact, lecturing in a contrived, roundabout, and disguised way. Lecturing is often perceived as poor pedagogy for good reason. Lecturing can discourage student thinking in that a well crafted lecture, carefully written over time, can make its conclusions appear much more robust when compared to students' own real time thinking about the subject matter. However, compared to triadic dialogue, lecturing about new material is more effective because it wastes less time to teach facts and principles provided that it is short, interesting, appropriate to age and subject, and accompanied by other activities that engage students.

I am not arguing that we should eliminate questioning for evaluative purposes but rather that new teachers need to learn the skills of Socratic dialogue and decide to avoid triadic dialogue in teaching content. The Socratic method takes a great deal of practice, perhaps a good grounding in philosophy, well developed thinking ability, astute "reflection-in-action", and a deep understanding of the content being discussed to transform that deep analysis into a new and appropriate question.

To teach these skills, teacher education programmes should include a greater role for philosophy in their programmes and provide a multitude of opportunities for teacher candidates to practice Socratic dialogue with each other. Teacher educators should use the Socratic method more often in their own classes, exposing students to the thrill of metacognition, deep analysis and confrontation of their own thinking. In practice, teacher candidates should be warned against evaluating students' answers to their questions when teaching new content. They should deal with the discomfort they feel when a student answers a question incorrectly by learning how to probe that which underlies the incorrect answer rather than telling the student that her or his answer is wrong.

In my view, every child comes into the classroom able to think at some level and in some way. It is the teacher's job to help that student to engage her or his own assumptions, views, and beliefs as a means to grow, not just guess what the teacher wants.

And that is why triadic dialogue has to go.

Author Bio

John Barnett was a high school biology, science and computer science teacher for twenty years before taking his PhD and teaching at the University of New Brunswick, York University, and The University of Auckland before moving to Western University where he has worked since 2001.

RETIRING "LINGUISTICS APPLIED" IN LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

By Brian Morgan, Glendon College/York University

Following the organizing theme for these contributions to *Contact*, I would like to see the disciplinary knowledge of linguistics reduced—rather than retired—in the preparation of adult ESL instructors in Ontario, if not all English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals in Canada and abroad. I come to this recommendation following about eight years of prior experience as a coordinator of a university TESOL Certificate Program officially recognized by TESL Ontario, and more currently, as an instructor in a certificate program in the Discipline of Teaching English as an International Language (D-TEIL) at Glendon College in Toronto. Maybe this is a problem specific to universities, but in the programs with which I am most familiar, courses such as Introduction to Linguistics and the Structure of English are often compulsory for pre-service ELT, with the assumption that the conceptual foundations of syntax, phonology, and morphology, necessary for further linguistic study, are of equal relevance for the those working with immigrants or refugees and the real world issues that they encounter. Moreover, these courses are usually taught by linguistics professors and graduate students, most of whom come to the field deeply immersed in Chomskyan Universal Grammar and its preoccupations with mentalist notions of language competence. More important, few if any of these instructors have any experience in teaching second/additional languages or in relating linguistic description to pedagogy.

Certainly, there are financial factors involved: establishing specialized courses, say in pedagogical grammar or in theory and practice in L2 pronunciation, would require additional funding at a time in which universities and colleges are coping with deep budget cuts that increasingly undermine the academic integrity of many programs. Yet, it is not just a case of funding in isolation but also of theories and ideologies of language that make some funding decisions seem more "responsible" when tough budgetary decisions are required. To explain this proposed correlation with theory, I'd like to revisit a key article written by Henry Widdowson (1980) many years ago and aptly titled *Models and Fictions*.

In this article, Widdowson (1980) contrasts the more familiar model of applied linguistics with linguistics *applied*, warning us of the dangers that the latter model can pose for the ELT profession. Applied linguistics begins with real world settings, values, and language practices, and then selecting language theories that best illuminate these conditions and address the needs and interests of language users. Linguistics applied works in reverse, projecting its scientifically derived theories onto worldly contexts in an a priori manner. Where the notion of ideology comes into play is in the "truth-bearing" status and privilege our contemporary society assigns to this *cultural* (i.e. Western-European) way of knowing. Linguistics applied, thus, is a belief or assumption that the most valid forms of knowledge about language are those that claim the mantle of science and whose purported objectivity, universality, and impartiality precede and necessarily inform all other forms of language work. In this model, classroom teachers are generally viewed as technicians, faithful implementers of the expertise of others (see e.g. Kumaravadivelu, 2003, Ch. 2). Linguistics applied not only diminishes the status of teachers' own research and theorizing, but it also places an ideological straightjacket on curricula and pedagogy, treating language as an end in itself—measured by code proficiencies and grammatical accuracy—rather than as a *social* practice deeply implicated in the life chances of students and their communities.

I was recently thinking about these issues while participating in a practicum at the E. A. Varona Higher Pedagogical University in Havana, Cuba this past spring. The practicum is a required component of Glendon College's D-TEIL program (e.g. Martin & Morgan, forthcoming; Morgan & Martin, 2014). The program, designed by my colleague Ian Martin, is conceptualized as part of an enhanced liberal arts undergraduate education in keeping with the college's bilingual mission and specializations in public and international affairs. It is not a narrowly focused, pre-service teacher-training program, which might seem, at first glance, to be a disadvantage in comparison to others. Yet, what I have come to appreciate and increasingly encourage is this liberal arts dimension in D-TEIL. For example, students in my English as a World Language (LING 4695.5) course come from a variety of academic backgrounds, not only linguistics, but also English literature, international studies, or sociology. Their conversations and questions when doing group projects bring a rich interdisciplinary understanding to the course readings and problems—a diversity that can be lost in over-specialized, lingua-centric programs. And as we often witnessed in the Varona practicum, such students seem particularly alert to noticing social and cultural factors that can make a particular language lesson—even when grammar or pronunciation are focal points—more relevant or motivating for the students involved.

To reiterate, it is not my suggestion here that we retire the field of linguistics in pre-service programming. Re-visiting Widdowson's concerns (i.e. linguistics applied), I would rather see us engage with broader language options: for one, a socially engaged linguistics in which the limitations of objectivity, universality and impartiality are recognized and addressed, when needed, in the form of a critical language awareness that is locally oriented and sensitive to language and power, as well as the transformative potential of teachers (e.g. Clarke & Morgan, 2011; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Reagan, 2004). Towards this goal, we should help our students become "aware of the existence of a range of 'theories of truth'; the dominant theories have not always been to our [i.e. language teachers'] advantage and the mere understanding that there can be more than one such theory is itself emancipating" (Crookes, 2009, p. 123). Drawing on the D-TEIL experience, we might also consider promoting more of a liberal arts and social sciences orientation in pre-service LTE/TESOL programs.

It's significant that TESL Ontario once had a political action committee directly engaged in advocacy on behalf of its members and the profession that went about its work at a time in which membership in the organization was voluntary and in which the highly formalized and specified modules of knowledge required for TESOL certification programming were not yet in place. The current TESL Program Accreditation Application includes only 15 hours as the minimum for Sociological and Socio-political Issues in comparison to 25 hours minimum for Foundations (i.e. SLA, learning strategies and styles, etc.) and 25 minimum hours for Linguistics Systems. If we look closer at the subcategories within the relatively condensed theoretical area for Sociological and Socio-political Issues (e.g. Cultural pluralism in Canadian society; 2. Institutional and individual barriers to participation in Canadian society; 3. Culturally-determined life styles and learning styles and their effect on second language learning; 4. Acculturation), the notion or relevance of political action and advocacy are no longer explicitly named though they once warranted an official committee and were prominent concerns in the TESL community (see Elson, 1997). Indeed, perusing the accreditation document, an argument could be made that the advocacy dimension of socio-politics has been safely domesticated within the four categories offered.

Most *Contact* readers would view the demise of TESL Ontario's political action committee and the emergence of its highly formalized knowledge base for LTE as unrelated in any causally direct way, but I would invite readers to consider less visible or immediate correlations; that is, over time and through sustained professional exposure to particular theories and curricula, we have come to accept many of the beliefs that are central to the *linguistics applied* model described above: that it is our job to "just teach language" and "not get involved". In my opinion, both the attitude and its supporting model would be good choices for retirement.

Author Bio

Brian Morgan is an associate professor in the Department of English at Glendon College/York University, where he teaches courses in English for Academic Purposes and Language Teacher Education. His work has been focused on the implementation of critical theories in a broad range of English Language Teaching contexts. A primary interest of Brian's critical work has been research and pedagogy on language and identity. Another major research interest involves critical multiliteracies and their local and international applications.

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CAPTIONED VIDEO: HOW MUCH LISTENING IS REALLY GOING ON?

By Larry Vandergrift, University of Ottawa, and Jeremy Cross, Nagoya University

Increased availability of television programming and DVD video provides multifarious opportunities for written support for second/foreign (L2) language learning, including captioned video (i.e., L2 subtitles in an L2 video). While captioned video may have intuitive appeal for the development of listening comprehension, its value appears to be overstated. In recent publications, for example, Montero Perez, Van Den Noortgate, and Desmet (2013) and Vanderplank (2014) claim the benefits of captioned video for listening comprehension, primarily in terms of word recognition. In contrast, we contend that reading and not listening essentially takes place when L2 listeners are presented with captioned video, and that the use of captioned video in listening lessons does little to promote learning how to listen in "real-life" to L2 videos or in other "real-life" contexts outside the classroom. As a result, we currently hold the view that the value of captioned video for developing listening comprehension skills is limited.

Reading comprehension or listening comprehension?

When L2 listeners are presented with a captioned video, they face the challenge of processing the acoustic signal and representative text, as well as imagery which corresponds to the audio to varying degrees. Given the limited capacity of working memory and the complexity of the input, the default mechanism for (beginner to advanced) L2 listeners to maximise their comprehension is very likely to selectively focus their attention on reading the captions. In doing so, the processing of imagery and audio, the two components actually equated with listening, seem to be consciously avoided. Any imagery cannot be processed when the eyes are focused on reading full or partial L2 captions at the bottom of the screen. While "hearing" may take place, this is not the same thing as the audio being actively processed for comprehension of meaning.

We maintain that it is reading comprehension in captioned video which leads to associated language gains, with reading having a small, indirect effect on listening ability in terms of aural recognition of a few vocabulary items when they reoccur subsequently in testing in which the same text without captions is used (e.g., Markham, Peter & McCarthy, 2001). Regardless, there presently appears to be little research examining the processing of captioned video that illustrates the extent of learners' listening or reading for

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comprehension, or whether they purposefully switch to reading only when listening breaks down. Only in a recent study by Winke, Gass, and Sydorenko (2010) interview comments revealed that listeners who saw the videos initially with L2 captions admitted that captions may function as a "crutch", allowing them to focus on the form and linking that form to meaning (i.e., read) rather than extracting meaning from the sounds they heard (i.e., listen). In other words, for comprehension of the given videos, they admitted resorting to reading the captions rather than listening to the text.

More research is certainly warranted to tease out what is actually happening when comprehending captioned video. Furthermore, we need longitudinal research comparing the performance of an experimental group using captioned video with a control group, along with a measure that assesses listening comprehension without captions.

Learning to listen?

Listening teachers are right to be cautious regarding the value of captions in mediating the development of listening comprehension skills because captions offer little as a route to helping students learn how to listen in the L2. Vanderplank (2014) champions the merits of captions in training in listening skills and aural word recognition, citing a number of studies. However, those studies merely exposed learners to captioned videos and then tested their comprehension or word recognition, which achieves little in terms of teaching listeners to address the complexities of listening to L2 videos. In any case, we believe it is pointless to spend time teaching strategies for exploiting captions as recommended by Danan (2004) in terms of developing listening ability, and more useful listening strategies can be taught.

Classroom time would be better spent from the start on enhancing, for example, learners' metacognition of L2 listening through metacognitive instruction (see Vandergrift & Goh, 2012) and strategy instruction (see Graham & Macaro, 2008), instead of facilitating comprehension through reading which mitigates against the activation of "real-life" listening processes. In addition, rather than advocating the "staged video approach" proposed by Danan (1992) for developing listening ability, which involves steadily decreasing the amount of text in a captioned video, we advocate that the point at which to employ captions (full or partial) is at the end of a video listening lesson (not the beginning). Captions may be useful only after learners have attempted to understand the text as a whole, using prediction, inferencing, and monitoring strategies (among others) that can help to compensate for gaps in understanding (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Furthermore, listeners need to encounter and store multiple traces of a word/phrase in different listening contexts and with different speakers before word recognition efficiency improves (Field, 2008).

So how much listening is actually going on when students listen to captioned video? The evidence is very slim, and we assert that comprehension of captioned video is achieved through reading. While captioned video may serve a useful purpose in helping learners notice differences between what they hear and the written form of the message and

Author Bio

Larry Vandergrift is Professor Emeritus at the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute at the University of Ottawa. He has published widely on the theory and pedagogy of L2 listening comprehension and continues to be actively engaged in research and professional writing. He has also been a co-editor of the Canadian Modern Language Review. Email: vdgrift@uottawa.ca

facilitate word recognition for vocabulary reoccurring in a prior context, the value of captions for teaching L2 listening skills and for further L2 listening development still needs to be demonstrated.

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Author Bio

Jeremy Cross primarily researches different approaches to teaching L2 listening, and he has had his work published in a range of recognized journals. He also has extensive experience as an L2 teacher. Email: cross@lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp

CONFIDENCE IS ESSENTIAL FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS

By Pete Swanson, Georgia State University

When asked why they chose teaching as a profession, many of the teacher candidates in our language teacher preparation program remarked that they want to have an impact on their students' lives. However, before they have the opportunity to influence positively the next generation, many leave the profession. In Canada approximately 30% of the teachers leave the profession, which is less than other developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom where teacher attrition rates skyrocket to almost 50% (Dolton & van der Klaauw, 1995; Fédération Canadienne des Enseignantes et des Enseignants, 2004; Stoel & Thant, 2000).

Results of a Canada-wide survey suggest that the shortage of French teachers can be explained by four main factors: task-related, individual, social, and socio-economic (Karsenti, Collin, Villeneuve, Dumouchel, & Roy, 2008). Task-related factors (e.g., classroom management issues and working conditions) are the most commonly cited reasons among teachers. Individual factors, which entail teachers' emotional and psychological states play a role, while social factors (e.g., teachers' lack of collaboration, poor relations with administrators) were commonly mentioned too. Last, but hardly least, socio-economic factors—of particular interest in today's global economy—were reported to affect a teacher's choice to remain in or to leave the profession all together.

Regardless of language taught (e.g., English, Chinese) or type of program (e.g., immersion, foreign language, second language), as language teachers, we share common goals and endure similar challenges. Thus, I have grouped them collectively in my research when studying language teachers in both Canada and the US. Over the course of several studies focusing on language teacher attrition, and having worked as a Spanish teacher in public schools, I've found that the shortage of language teachers can be explained in terms of natural attrition (i.e., retirement), increased student enrollments, legislative issues, and perceptual issues surrounding teaching as a profession (e.g., teaching is a dead-end job, low status). Regardless of how the factors are categorized, as a language teacher-educator, I have learned that such factors can be discouraging to in-service teachers who may be considering leaving the classroom as well as those considering becoming a language teacher. In fact, the highest rate of attrition is among novice language teachers: those in their first five years on the job (Swanson, 2010, 2012, 2014). These individuals tend to have few successes and this sense of failure fuels attrition. Thus, developing and nurturing a strong sense of efficacy is vital for teacher retention and overall teacher performance.

What Constitutes Teachers' Sense of Efficacy?

Bandura (2006) suggests that of the four sources of self-efficacy mastery experiences are the most powerful in increasing self-efficacy. Such experiences help us build a strong belief of their abilities whereas failures tend to undermine and to weaken our confidence. The perception that a teacher is mastering a task has been found to be much more influential in constructing a greater sense of efficacy than the other three sources of efficacy, which are vicarious experiences (i.e., observing another teacher's class), social persuasion, and physiological responses.

According to Bandura, we are self-organizing, self-regulating, self-reflecting, and proactive. We set goals, predict likely outcomes, regulate and monitor our actions, and then reflect on our personal efficacy. Self-efficacy affects our goals and behaviors, and it is impacted by environmental factors found in schools. Further, efficacy beliefs determine how we perceive obstacles and opportunities and affect choice of activities, how much effort we exert, and how long we will persist when confronted with obstacles. As language teachers, each proficient teaching performance helps to create new mastery experiences for us, which then serve as new information that forms our future efficacy beliefs. A stronger sense of teacher efficacy leads to increased effort and persistence, which leads to better performances later, which, in turn, leads to even stronger efficacy beliefs. On the contrary, a weaker sense of efficacy leads us to expend less effort and to give up more easily, which leads to poor teaching outcomes and, ultimately, can lead to quitting the profession.

What Research Can Tell Us about Our Sense of Efficacy

From a personal perspective, when I was teaching high school Spanish in Wyoming, my first couple of years were challenging to say the least. My sense of efficacy, my belief in my ability to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, in my abilities to teach grammar was strong, but I felt less confident in several areas like teaching about culture. Luckily, the German teacher in the next classroom quickly befriended me and offered assistance. After telling Kevin how I felt about my abilities, he invited me to sit in his classes during my prep hour and observe his class. In addition to periodically joining one of his classes, he suggested that I study abroad and begin my master's degree. So I did. After returning that first summer from Spain, I began taking classes. It was at that moment I could see a change in my practice and my attitude. My cultural instruction was stronger and I focused on Spanish culture that first year. The next year I studied in Costa Rica and continued to take classes. Again, I returned to work rejuvenated a much better instructor. During this time, Kevin got me involved in our state foreign language association. I learned even more about teaching and the networking with other language teachers quickly taught me that there were others struggling with different aspects of language teaching.

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However, from a more scholarly perspective, recent research on language teachers suggests that teachers' sense of efficacy is positively related to a variety of outcomes such as working harder and persisting longer, even when students pose a challenge to teach, because teachers hold strong, positive beliefs about themselves and their students (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Additionally, they

- demonstrate greater enthusiasm for teaching
- demonstrate greater commitment
- employ more effective problem-solving strategies
- are more willing to implement innovations
- have improved classroom management strategies
- are less critical of students when they err
- are more likely to stay in teaching

Where language teachers are concerned, having a stronger sense of efficacy leads to improved teachers' coping strategies, classroom management abilities, embracing communicative language teaching, the teaching of intercultural competence, and longevity in the profession (Swanson, 2012, 2014). Overall, teachers who believe that they can affect student learning also persist longer and better when confronted with challenges. It's true in my case and many other people with whom I've worked would agree.

Interestingly, in addition to having benefits for teachers, a teacher's strong sense of efficacy has benefits for our students too. I found in a study of Spanish teachers that students of those teachers with a strong sense of efficacy in teaching Spanish outperform their counterparts on the National Spanish Exams. Using the Second/Foreign Language Teacher Efficacy Scale (Swanson, 2014), I surveyed Spanish teachers who administered the National Spanish Exams to their students and compared the students' scores on the exams for teachers who reported a high and a low sense of efficacy. Among the results, I reported that students of Spanish teachers with a strong sense of efficacy outscored their counterparts whose teachers reported a weaker sense of efficacy in the three areas measured by the scale: content knowledge, facilitation of instruction, and cultural instruction.

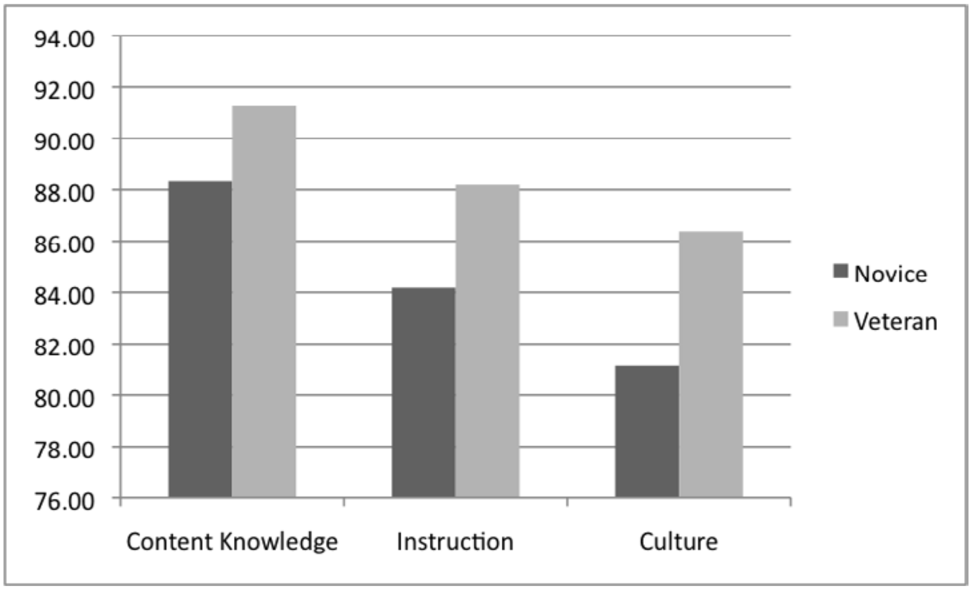

Figure 1. Differences in efficacy between novice and veteran language teachers.

Novice language teachers, who tend to have fewer positive experiences in the classroom, are more likely than their veteran counterparts to quit teaching. In a large-scale study of second/foreign language teachers in Canada and the US, novice language teachers reported a lower sense of efficacy on every statement of the previously mentioned efficacy scale (see Figure 1).

Typically, language teachers tend to rate their confidence in the target language content area the highest of the three areas. Then, they feel moderately confident in their ability to deliver instruction (e.g., pedagogy, engaging students to learn). Finally, language teachers tend to perceive the least amount of efficacy in teaching about the target language culture. As Figure 1 shows, there are clear discrepancies between veteran and novice instructors.

How to Improve Our Sense of Efficacy in Teaching Languages

While all language teachers are susceptible to attrition, novices are particularly vulnerable as mentioned earlier. They tend to overestimate their abilities and competencies during teacher training programs and then experience a professional jolt when they realize that their earlier beliefs about their skills are not congruent with their current abilities. Of particular interest, it is at this time that they are optimistic about the level of impact they will have with our students. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007) caution that such a realization may lead novices to recalibrate their idea of quality instruction and then lower their standards for learning as a mechanism of self-preservation in order to avoid a stressful self-assessment of failure. However, such setbacks may motivate novices to increase their knowledge about teaching and learning if the teacher can maintain a sufficient level of belief in the possibility of future successes.

Thus, there is much that can be done to build and sustain our confidence. Research suggests that efficacy is most malleable early in learning and that mastery experiences are the most powerful of the four sources fueling one's belief system. Teacher education course work and observation of master teachers are vital to constructing the foundation of a strong sense of efficacy. Instructors need to be in the classroom early in their coursework in order to begin building mastery experiences and learn from veterans modeling best practices. Simply getting a job with provisional certification and jumping into the classroom unprepared is not wise. Working side by side with a veteran mentor teacher improves our sense of efficacy. By watching a more proficient teacher, novice teachers can develop new ideas and add them to their educational toolbox. Additionally, collaboration is another avenue to pursue because by pooling pedagogical resources and knowledge, instructors can share the workload, develop materials together, and not feel so isolated, which is a common reason among those who have chosen to quit the profession.

I strongly recommend that instructors enroll in and complete graduate degree programs because they have been shown to be an important component when building and maintaining a strong sense of efficacy. My studies have confirmed such a belief and other researchers have found that teachers with advanced degrees specific to the subject area in which they teach are associated with higher student achievement. Many times during graduate programs, summer study abroad programs are available and it is highly advised that language teachers study in the target-language culture in order to improve their talents linguistically and well as culturally.

Additionally, joining professional organizations has been shown to improve our confidence in teaching languages. Attending conferences such as the annual meeting of the TESL Ontario and/or the TESL Canada meeting every 18 months can provide all language teachers new ideas and opportunities for professional development that may not be available from local school districts struggling with budget cuts. Spending a few days immersed with other language teachers learning about new strategies, theories, and ideas promotes professional growth and well-being. Even as a veteran teacher-educator I feel completely rejuvenated upon returning from a professional conference and can't wait to go again the next year.

Acting in a proactive manner is critical because efficacy beliefs have serious implications for all teachers. If a teacher's perception about his or her performance is low, that individual is more likely to perceive potential problems as much bigger than they actually may be and develop negative attitudes that may lead to their leaving the field. Finally, I recommend that language teachers self-administer the Second/Foreign Language Teacher Efficacy Scale so they can critically determine areas of perceived strengths and areas for improvement in terms of self-efficacy (available from http://pbswanson.edublogs.org/efficacy-scale/). Then, these individuals can begin focusing on professional development in areas that they feel need improvement.

Career Satisfaction

In summary, having a strong sense of efficacy enhances our accomplishments and personal well-being. Highly confident language teachers view difficult tasks as challenges to be overcome rather than as threats. Additionally, they set goals and attain them so that they can have the impact they dreamed of when they first set out to teach a language. Quitting the profession when confronted with difficulties is not the answer. We can have the impact we want to have. Language teaching is an awesome profession and the time is here to rise above circumstances and be proactive so that we can enjoy working with our next generation, a group that will impact our lives sooner than we may care to think.

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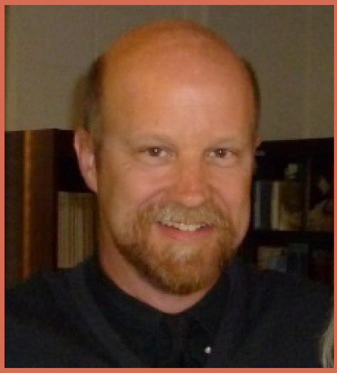
Author Bio



Dr. Pete Swanson is the Director of the Foreign Language Teacher Educator program at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia. He teaches classes in methods, technology integration, and foundations of second language learning. His research focuses on the characteristics of effective language teachers and integrating technology into instruction.

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DECODING JOB FAIR ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Classroom Activities and Critical Reflection

By Joan Bartel

"I will be absent tomorrow. I'm going to go to a job fair." If you are teaching any kind of daytime ESL for immigrants who are mostly seeking jobs, you have probably heard this hopeful statement more than once. It is usually followed two days later by a discouraged learner's pronouncement that the fair was a disappointment. (In this article the term *learner* is used to mean learners/students/participants in any ESL setting, especially employment-oriented groups.) As an instructor of occupation-specific language training (OSLT), I decided I should look into job fairs more closely, in order to help my learners decide whether attending would be a good use of their time. I quickly found that there are some decoding skills that, when applied to the wording of an announcement, are a useful exercise for my class. Below are five reading and job search tasks that I now regularly cover whenever a job fair announcement first appears during our nine-week course.

1. When is a Job Fair not a Job Fair? Decode the title.

Five of the largest job fairs most commonly advertized in the Toronto area, and where they take place, can be found at:

- www.thenationaljobfair.com/n/en/home/ (downtown Toronto)
- www.canadajobexpo.com/ (North York)
- www.nappcanada.com/ (multiple sites in the Greater Toronto Area)
- www.hirecanada.ca/ (Mississauga/Brampton)

WBG Canada fairs www.canadajobfair.net (and www.bilingualjobfairscanada.com) (multiple sites around Ontario)

All except one contain *job* or *hire* as key words in the website name. But it is important to ask learners to take a closer look at the name of the event itself on the home page of a website. Scanning the very top lines (often the top left corner) for words in title format (i.e., each word capitalized), they should seek the complete event name and find the following, respectively:

- The National Job Fair & Training Expo Toronto
- Canada Job, Career, Training and Education Expo
- Job Fair and Training Fair
- Job Fair & Training Expo
- Canada Job Fair Network (and on an inside page: The Multi-Sector Recruitment

Event in Employment, Career Advancement, Immigration and Continuing Education in Canada)

It becomes clear that, besides jobs, education/training opportunities are featured at these fairs. Those are two very different areas of interest. Rather than hiring staff, many exhibitors will be looking to enrol attendees in a training or educational program. (Our learners, though, are already taking part in a program which we assume they want to finish.) Conclusion: "Job Fair" is a code word for a much larger event; not all exhibitors are seeking employees.

2. Not all job fairs are created equal. Scan for logos of professional associations or government.

Newcomers often think "the government" organizes such events. In some rare cases, that may be true, for example, a municipal job fair. Professional organizations (such as the Professional Engineers of Ontario), colleges and universities, and some immigrant agencies also run events with hiring managers in relevant fields. These quality opportunities are almost always exclusively for their own members or graduates and thus not open to the public. If your learners are confused about this, ask them to scan for any government or professional association logo on the home page of the job fair announcement. If there is none, then there is no participation by these bodies.

Most job fairs are organized by private, for-profit companies. Since these events are based on profit, the potential visitor should be interested in how they make money. The answer is: through exhibitor fees of between five hundred and one thousand dollars per booth per day (NAAP Canada, 2012; TorontoJobs.ca, 2014), which may be influenced according to the number of visitors and registrants. Be aware that, in some cases, the registrants' application data might also be a commodity; find out what happens to personal data that is collected at Registration and where the privacy policy is explained. This economic reality brings us back to the question of why these events have such a long, comprehensive title: they are trying to attract as many visitors and exhibitors as possible.

3. Find the list of exhibitors. Analyze the ratio of employers to others.

As a reading exercise, ask learners to scan and skim the website's home page to find a list of organizations and companies that will attend the event. (NAPP and Canada Job Fair Network put this information on another page, making it difficult for novices to discover.) Caveat: The list is often not available until a week or so before the event. Given the key words *exhibitor* and *list* or *listing*, learners should be able to find, for the five websites respectively:

- List of Exhibitors
- Partial List of Participating Organizations confirmed so far
- EMPLOYER LISTING – within the page "For Jobseekers"

- Exhibitor List
- List of Exhibitors

As a more extensive, job-search related activity, guide learners in discovering (or tell them) which listed names are actually companies or recruiters and which are other exhibitors, such as immigrant and job-finding agencies, schools and training centres, career information dispensers, and professional organizations. In the past year, the ratios have not been very exciting for our job-seeking learners, since only about thirty to fifty per cent of exhibitors have been employers or recruiters.

4. Research the exhibiting companies.

Basic job search skills can be practised as learners research one or more organizations or companies on the exhibitor list. What do they do? Do they offer jobs, commission-based selling, or franchises? Where are they located? (Some employers travel far to engage with new talent because of the access to a much greater pool of candidates than in their own areas; for example, northern mining companies, the City of London (Ontario), and even other provinces have had representation at fairs in Toronto.)

After eliminating any companies that are of no interest, research the rest more carefully. If an exhibiting company looks promising, go to their career page. Skim for relevant information, such as: Is there any evidence of open positions at this time? If so, what kinds of positions? Is the work there appropriate for your learners? or for a particular learner? If a company really interests someone, they might decide to follow up by going to the job fair with résumé in hand. In my case, I have occasionally had learners who found a bona-fide employer in their field. One young man from one of my classes actually got hired into an entry-level position soon after his visit, but not by the company which he originally targeted! He is the only person I have known in my six years of employment-oriented ESL teaching to have received interview and job offers in his field (IT) stemming directly from a broad-based job fair.

5. Search for other reasons to attend besides the hope of landing an interview.

If, after doing activities 1–4, learners decide that the fair is unlikely to land them a job, ask them if they can think of any other reasons for attending. Again, skimming the content of the home and/or "Contents & Attractions" pages can lead to results. Additional events can be:

- The National Job Fair: "Public presentations, entrepreneur seminars," ten-minute résumé assessment, and "Communication skills consulting" with Toastmasters
- Canada Job Expo: several 45-minute "Seminars/Workshops to help you in your job search" throughout the day
- Hire Canada: "free Resume Critiquing"
- Canada Job Fair Network: "The Newcomer Employment Consulting Zone provide

> [sic] free individual (one-on-one/group) consulting with incredible employment consultants," including résumé critiquing

Note that some organizers mention that it is necessary to pre-register or "get in line" for those extras. In fact, I have observed line-ups of scores of hopefuls at résumé critiquing booths.

Another reason to attend is to practise self-introductions and networking. However, this is often easier said than done, as booth staff, in the midst of hundreds or thousands of visitors, have little time for individual conversations. Option: practise conversation and interruption strategies with the class beforehand.

A third reason to go to a so-called job fair is to learn about further education and training opportunities to engage in (after the learner's current course). In fact, it is at such fairs that some of our learners found out about our own courses.

Who attends these fairs? A crucial fact about visitors and critical reflections on exhibitors

Thousands of job-seekers attend job fairs every year in the GTA. My reading revealed some critical facts describing them, including the following:

> 96% of the visitors do not call employers directly for a job. Attending job fairs is their top job-search activity, followed by searching online on jobsites and sending resumé [sic] to employers by email. (The National Job Fair & Training Expo Toronto, n.d.)

This fact should raise a red flag to instructors of employment-related ESL classes, who know that the latter three job-search activities are the least effective methods of looking for work. First and foremost in gaining employment is networking, either in person with business colleagues, friends, or relatives in a position to make a referral and give a reference, or at targeted events like professional association meetings, and online, for example, through LinkedIn. The interaction with booth staff, who are in the process of collecting hundreds of job-seekers' résumés, can hardly be described as true networking. However, exhibitors of training programs are on fertile ground, since virtually all attendees have not been successful so far with their ineffective strategies and so may be amenable to exploring a new way to make progress.

It is likely that the employers and recruiters at their booths are also aware of the above fact. My assumption is that it is a major reason for employers not to be seeking many managers or other highly-qualified employees at these fairs. Such job-seekers should be able to comprehend and carry out more effective job search strategies and should not need to visit broad-based events. It is therefore not surprising that most of the employee positions that I have seen advertized at booths are entry-level. On the positive side, if newcomers are trying to get a foot in the door, this might be a good place to look, practising self-introductions along the way.

With experience, you will notice that some company names appear repeatedly, for example, Primerica and Investors Group, or in the spring and summer, Canadian Property Stars. It is fair to wonder why they might find these fairs profitable enough to return to time and again, in light of the fact that those who come through the doors, even if they have work experience, may not know much about effective job search strategies (and might be desperate for an income). Are these companies successful and booming, continuously seeking more staff to deal with new clients and undertakings? Some of the constant exhibitors are seasonal, while others represent commission-only enterprises, in which it is an advantage for managers to have as many subordinates out in the field as possible. Or, on the other hand, are these companies unattractive places to work, with high turn-over rates? Many of my learners reject commission-only work, for example, as being exploitative; others have seen it as a flexible arrangement. Consider referring the class to websites that rate employers, like www.indeed.com or www.ratemyemployer.ca (the latter only if you are willing for your learners to be confronted with swear words). Without criticizing learners' own decisions and experiences, instructors should be ready to discuss how important it is to fully understand any offer, so that job-seekers' limited Canadian business knowledge and language skills are not taken advantage of.

Conclusion

Securing a job is the ultimate goal of most of our unemployed ESL learners. Early in the course, if my learners think they want to go to a "job fair," I go through the details of the event announcement (i.e. do a job fair literacy lesson). Usually, by the time we finish making notes on all the other booths that will be there besides employers and recruiters and then research the list of companies—most of which might offer entry-level or commission-only jobs—the learners feel that landing an intriguing interview through a job fair is about as likely as winning the lottery. It, therefore, did not surprise me to read that "84% of the attendees are first-time visitor [sic]" (**The National Job Fair & Training Expo** Toronto, n.d.). It seems that, even if they are not employed later, most job-seeking visitors do not care to attend a second fair.

If my learners find a quality job fair with good employers in the exhibitor list and perhaps an interesting presentation, and they intend to miss class because of it, I ask them which company they are targeting (i.e. where they want to introduce themselves in hopes of a future interview). I also ask them to summarize their experience for the class the next day so that it becomes a learning experience for all.

We ESL instructors cannot conjure up jobs for our learners, but we can help them decode announcements and read sources intelligently in order to search for work effectively. If they go to a job fair with a realistic attitude, target a company booth, or plan to take in a special presentation, attendees can end up with a positive experience.

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Author Bio

Joan Bartel, M.A., has teaching experience in Toronto and abroad. She currently teaches Occupation-specific Language Training (OSLT) and is an occasional instructor in the TESL Programs at Humber College. She is a frequent presenter on soft skills at TESL Conferences. To better respond to the needs of her students for tips on Canadian business culture, she studied Career and Work Counselling and then wrote Office Soft Skills, a self-study and/or classroom textbook for immigrants, which is available at www.EnglishCentral.net.

MENTORING EFL LEARNERS LIVING IN THEIR HOME COUNTRIES, USING A CANADIAN MOOC AND A SOCIAL MEDIA PHONE APP

By Francine Beattie

I decline invitations to participate in social networking, primarily to monitor and control the amount of time I spend using computer technology. I am well aware of the issue of obsessive reliance on devices for many in today's society, and I strive to maintain a healthy life balance. For this reason, I am the first to be surprised that I have become a person who daily—and dare I admit, sometimes hourly—looks forward to receiving texts on my cell phone using Whatsapp, a social networking app. What started as a desire to volunteer and give back within the teaching profession morphed into an activity that both daily rewards me on a personal level and also has expanded my repertoire of teaching tools.

Content Volunteering

In the spring of 2013, I responded to a *Tutela* posting calling for teaching materials or proofreading assistance for a new summer course being run by English Online. The program was geared to new immigrants to Manitoba, including those who had been approved but had not yet arrived in Canada. I offered my services for proofreading, given that I professionally proofread for masters students at a Canadian university. My interaction with the lead of learner services at English Online was nothing short of an amazing experience. Within a short time I went beyond the proofreading role to collaborating on the design and content of this nine-week course, which was in a wiki-based environment. Although I gave many volunteer hours, it was rewarding as I learned so much about online teaching and distance learning. I'm also proud to say that the course has been nominated for the prestigious British Council 2014 ELTon award for learning innovation.

Facilitator Volunteering

Prior to the start of the course, I was made aware of two pre-departure immigrants who had initially registered but no longer qualified due to changes in funding criteria. Given that the course materials would be open, but with only registrants having access to facilitators, I suggested that I would volunteer to mentor these two learners as they worked through the course. Deciding to stay with a similar platform, I created a separate wiki to submit their assignments for discussion, evaluation, and feedback. We progressed through the course, staying in contact with the learners using the wiki, emails, and both Skype text and Skype live conversations, individually and as a group.

The two learners, although having had similar backgrounds in their English learning experiences, had different personal backgrounds. Amanda, married with a young child, was from Spain but at the time of the course was living in Poland for three months while her husband pursued his studies. Amanda has since returned to Spain with her family. She has a bachelor's degree in civil engineering, but Spain's economic climate makes it difficult for her to find employment. Le An, single and living at home with her family in Vietnam's capital city, has a bachelor's degree in computer technology and works in business administration. Both are eager pro-active learners, motivated to improve their English. Amanda is at an intermediate level, and Le An is high-intermediate. Amanda initially appeared intimidated by Le An's skills, but with encouragement realized that we all bring different skills and abilities to the forum. In our Skype conversations it became apparent that they were also communicating on Facebook, which sometimes created a gap as I am not on Facebook. Le An, who has the computer background, suggested that we switch to WhatsApp to keep in touch, and explained the process and advantages. So, near the end of the summer course, Le An created our Whatsapp group.

WhatsApp is a messaging platform where your mobile phone number is your account. It allows you to share text messages, photos, videos, and voice recordings wherever you have Internet access, with no associated charges. Groups can be established where you can share and stay in touch. Once downloaded, the app creates a favourites section from your contacts who already use WhatsApp as well as making it easy for you to invite others who do not.

As we moved away from the summer course, our interaction turned to our day-to-day lives. Similar to the summer course, I suggested that communication was the primary goal, so that I'dcontinue to do minimal correction unless comprehension was lost, or if a word or phrase was used that they were likely to use frequently and weren't using it correctly. As with most texting settings, complete sentence structure wasn't expected, although I did try to stay more grammatically correct as I realize there is likely an expectation that I'll lead by example for grammatically correct content. Although I'm the native English speaker and would by default be in a mentoring position, other than when they directed a specific question to me, I rarely addressed any theory. As before, if they wanted me to critique any written work, they knew to email it to me and I'd give thorough feedback.

Content Of Texts And How It Evolved

We used text, photos, and videos, with no expectations of when or how often we would participate in the ongoing discussions. Our friendship evolved quickly, as we shared our culture, including the various festivities and family events, both good and bad, that came along. We often provided photos of ourselves or of those we were with, places we had visited, or ethnic food we had eaten. For some reason, there were lots of photos of food! If we travelled, we shared those photos. As Amanda explored Poland, she shared her experiences (including photos of food!) and her comparison of life in Poland to life in Spain. We shared our hopes, our dreams, or successes and our failures. We encouraged each other. Throughout, we talked about what had brought us together—their common goal of immigrating to Winnipeg, Canada—and discussed their progress, especially the timeframe that sometimes made them feel like they were not progressing, and one would help the other understand the process. There were questions about the English language-testing criteria, which sometimes meant I would need to consult with others for clarification. Generally, we offered encouragement to each other and talked about when we'd hopefully someday meet in Canada. I'd also bring in content to give them examples of life in Canada, including this winter's harsh weather, which was such a contrast to their home countries. I saw myself evolve from that person who scorned those who were always texting, to someone who eagerly checked her phone each morning to see if there were any new texts. I had become that person who I had previously frowned upon.

While the summer course was in session, a single female from Mexico, who was looking for help with her English, contacted me. To further her career, she had applied for a job where English was a requirement and she felt she needed more practice. She was at an intermediate level. After our initial contact and sharing of information, I thought she might fit into our Whatsapp group, in that the two others could encourage her and coach her, having had recent experience with interviews, and in particular with interviews in their non-native language. I first approached those in the group for their input, and they were enthusiastic. I then put the idea to Klerya, who was hesitant in that our relationship within the group was already well-established, but she was grateful for the offer of help. The group was welcoming and encouraging. Klerya had to catch up with introductions, and sometimes we had to backtrack to explain an ongoing conversation, but overall she blended in well. She later admitted that it was overwhelming at first and that she took time at home with her translator and scripted her responses, which initially were less frequent than everyone else. She is now up to speed and "chats" along like the rest of us.

All three of us gave input to Klerya as she progressed through the interview process. I first challenged the two others to research the company where she was applying and prepare hints for her study approach, and questions for a mock interview. Meanwhile, we still continued with social chats, and weren't just focused on the interview. The two came back with excellent, challenging questions, ones I would not have thought of as I've never studied a language to the level they're at and haven't had the experience of being interviewed in other than my native language. We progressed through rounds of interviews with her over a period of a month or two, continuing with encouragement and suggestions. It came down to the final two candidates, and the final interview included an English test. She did get the job, and she was thrilled, and we were thrilled for her. She said she was confident that the support she received from our group, including the daily exposure to texting in English, gave her the confidence she needed. We were all so proud of her. Our group continues to be active.

Based on the success of this group, I established another match for two learners having similar backgrounds. Both are Mexican females in their twenties who are involved in the hospitality industry. Jessica is studying in Canada for event management, and Klerya (from the initial group) was working in Mexico in event management. Jessica was excited to be able to have the resource of someone working in the industry in her home country, and Klerya felt that this would expose her to new techniques and approaches that were being taught at college. They have little time to dedicate to texting, but nevertheless they encourage each other and share their work experiences. There's less personal exchange within this group, with more of a focus on the business connection. I am not convinced that this matching will survive, but it's opened up another way for them to connect using English. I'll be interested to see whether it will develop more slowly, or perhaps fizzle out. Klerya's career move to a job that's no longer related to event management may have a negative impact on their relationship.

When I took my teacher's training eight years ago, I did not envision using my teaching skills in this way, but nevertheless it's a very good fit for me. It's less structured than traditional classes, which means I can travel and yet still be available; all I need is my mobile phone and an Internet connection. We can always supplement this with emails and Skype when it's more appropriate. I've learned so much from the learners, culturally and technically, and for me it's very rewarding on a personal basis. I'd like to continue to volunteer where I can have this flexibility of assignments, but sometimes it's difficult to find the learners who need help. If you're aware of someone who could use my help, I can be reached via Skype at "esl_teachers".

Author Bio

Francine Beattie holds a post-graduate TESL Certificate from Brock University, St. Catharines. She has taught ESL to classes of adults in Canada and Mexico. She is also an approved proofreader for the MA Applied Linguistics program at Brock University. Her heart lies in volunteering, and she applies her skills to a wide range of volunteer work. Her current ESL focus is on mentoring learners in ways outside of the physical classroom environment. For the second summer, she is working with English Online Inc. on curriculum development and design for its summer MOOC. She is also a volunteer with TESL Niagara.

SHOULD WE TALK ABOUT GOD?

Reflection on whether and how we can integrate holy texts in a language classroom

By Natalia Henderson, Troy University

Born and educated in the Soviet Union, I have been teaching English as a foreign or second language for almost 40 years in several different countries in the world, and many of these years I have spent in teacher-training programs in Europe, Africa, and the United States. I have worked both with American and International students trying to familiarize them with the best teaching practices that TESL teachers have developed over the years. I have used practical textbooks and professional websites as well as periodicals, all replete with the examples of activities in which English language learners (ELL) are asked to talk about their respective countries, ethnic food, holidays, and customs. However, I have never come across a suggestion that ELLs may be involved in the classroom activities based on their respective religions.

Religion in school has become a controversial and even a taboo subject. I often notice in my classrooms that when my student teachers discuss cultural background, they never refer to religion. When asked to design a lesson plan addressing the issue of culture, they always avoid including religion among possible choices for student reports, discussions, essays, or talk shows. From pedagogical literature, we know that hot button topics always generate a great deal of student attention and classroom interaction and therefore are always recommended as useful. Religion is a hot button topic, so why is it avoided?

The American Academy of Religion issued *Guidelines for Teaching About Religion in K-12 Public Schools in the United States* (2010). This document emphasizes that there exists a widespread illiteracy about religion in the United States and that religious traditions are often represented inaccurately by those outside of and within the communities. People often think that religions are uniform and static rather than diverse and evolving. This misunderstanding leads to prejudice and antagonism at various levels. Just watch some television channels or listen to the radio. The same document informs educators that it is possible to diminish religious illiteracy by teaching about religion from a non-devotional perspective and promoting respect for diversity and peaceful coexistence in local, national, and global arenas.

We all know the influence of the Bible on Western culture. Such sacred texts as the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament have been revered by billions of people all over the world and have inspired thousands of writers, poets, musicians, politicians and ordinary people. When teachers use literature in ESL classes, they have to explain to the students references to the Bible. Passages from *The Old Man and the Sea* by Hemingway, *Where Are You Going Where Have You Been?* by Joyce Carol Oates, and Martin Luther King's speeches all contain references to Christian teachings. Without an understanding of the Bible references the meaning of many literary sources will be lost or misinterpreted.

If we know how important Christianity and its teachings are for the Western world, why would we forget about other religious teachings and philosophies? Many of the ESL students come from a world where other religions and sacred texts are revered, such as the Qur'an for Muslims, the Sruti for the Hindu populations, the Analects for those who believe in Confucianism, the Tripitaka for Buddhists, and many others. These documents are as important for some ELLs as the Bible for westerners. Once we know that there are other holy texts, we can use them as valuable and exciting tools in teaching English and at the same time promote multiculturalism and mutual respect among students and among students and teachers.

How can we do it? When I worked as an English teacher in what would be high school in French-speaking Burkina Faso, a developing country in West Africa, in the 70s, there were very few English textbooks that we could use or, frankly, afford. There were Christians, Muslims, and those who followed primal-indigenous or African traditional beliefs in my school. In order to diversify teaching materials, I started using passages from the Qur'an and the Bible in English and in French. To my great surprise, my students loved these activities. There was much more involvement in the classroom discussion than when we used a typical textbook literary piece. If, for example, I used a passage from the Bible describing how life and the first people were created, my students often volunteered to bring a relevant or corresponding passage from the Qur'an, which were subsequently translated into English by the students and discussed in class. Others would remember the stories told by the village elders around the fire in the evening. These activities were meaningful to my students, maybe, because they chose to work with them. In most cases, the conclusion at the end of the discussions was that there was very little difference between the sources and religions, and if there was a difference, it almost inevitably sparked much conversation. And is that not what we, language teachers, want from our students? I personally learned a great deal about Islam and African traditional beliefs from these activities, and so did my students. I continued using these activities long after I left Africa and started teaching EFL writing and reading, and later TESOL student teachers in other countries and in the USA. The following are some of the activities that are not only very popular with the students but also very useful in promoting interaction and other language skills in the target language.

A teacher may find passages from two or more sacred texts about the creation of the world, man and woman, plants, animals, moral obligations towards the sick and the poor, daily prayers, war, peace or whatever is of importance to the students. It would be better if the passages reflect students' religious beliefs. A teacher can use these texts for teaching or revising practically any language item or developing any language skill at the intermediate or advanced level. From my experience, it is always better to find the topic that students can relate to, compare, or discuss, for example, the passages from the Qur'an and the Bible about marriage. Consider the following verse from the Bible:

> In the same way, wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Even those who refuse to accept the Good News. Your godly lives will speak better than any words. They will be won over by watching your pure, godly behavior.
>
> *Don't be concerned about the outward beauty…You should be known for the beauty that comes within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and a quiet spirit, which is so precious for God…In the same way, your husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat her with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. If you don't treat her as you should, your prayers will not be heard.* (1 Peter 3:1-6, 7 New Living Translation)

These verses can be used to revise such grammar items as the imperative form, modal verbs, simple present, vocabulary, and most importantly serve as a basis for conversation and improving speaking abilities of our students as well as developing their higher order thinking skills. The following questions may be asked:

1. What are the main ideas discussed in these verses?
2. According to this passage, are men and women equal in marriage?
3. What does "Good News" refer to?
4. What does "outward beauty" mean?
5. Who should not be concerned with outward beauty?
6. Can you give the examples of proverbs or sayings from your own language or culture expressing the same idea?
7. What are words or ideas that can be used by men in proclaiming their superiority to women in marriage?
8. What are words or ideas that can be used by women in proclaiming their equal rights to men in marriage?
9. What are roles of wives and husbands in your religion or culture?

Below is a different translation of the same verses from Saint Peter:

> *Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of, when they see the purity and reverence of our lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. Husbands, in*

the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. (Peter 3:1-4, 7 , New International Version)

I use two different translations of the same verses for classroom discussions to focus on how different versions may be more or less difficult to understand or interpret, or, depending on the students, to debate the importance of translation in interpreting text. Such exchange of opinions may be followed by writing an essay. The topics for an essay may be the same as the topics for classroom discussions or something that was not emphasized before, for example, the changing roles of wives and husbands over time, who is more important in a Christian marriage, the roles of men and women in students' cultures, or whatever aspect of the topic students wish to elaborate on.

Sometimes, I ask my students to reflect on the quotes from the Bible dealing with virtues of a wife. All the following quotations come from Proverbs (New International Version):

A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.

(Proverbs 12:4)

He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord.

(Proverbs 82:22)

A wife of noble character who can find? She is far more than rubies.

(Proverbs 31:10)

To create links to their personal experiences, I tell my students that as a child and a young woman I often heard my atheist grandmother use what I then thought was an old Russian adage that in my translation from Russian would be "A clever wife will put her husband on a throne whereas a stupid one will send him to the poor house". I liked this saying then and I like it now, but I never thought that it was actually from the Bible until I started using it for teaching and discovered that it is a paraphrase of Proverbs 12:4. If you ask students to come up with their own examples of what is often thought as folk wisdom but actually is a saying from a sacred text, the answers may be surprising. I have been surprised many times over.

To continue the topic and embrace my students of non-Christian persuasions, I find a passage about marriage from a different sacred text, for example, the Qur'an.

Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other and because they spread of their property (for the support of women). So good women are obedient guarding in secret that which Allah hath guarded. As for those from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them to beds apart, and scourge them. (Holy Qur'an 4:34)

It is clear that it is quite difficult to understand the meaning of this verse for non-Muslims. The teacher might ask for volunteers. I can guarantee that there will be students, not necessarily Muslims, who would gladly offer the explanation or interpretation of the verse. Others will want to know more and therefore ask many questions; once again, this is exactly what every language teacher wants: genuine questions, which means genuine interaction. After clarifications, the teacher can ask the class to paraphrase the passage, another way to reinforce knowledge of linguistic and non-linguistic concepts.

If there are representatives of different faiths in the class and there is enough time, the teacher may divide the class into groups or pairs in such a way that people from different faiths are grouped or paired together. They may work together and find out what another religion says about marriage, what is allowed or prohibited. This activity may be followed by a brief report from each group or a brief three paragraph essay. I witnessed many times how my own and my students' misconceptions were shattered in the course of these classroom exchanges.

Alternatively, if possible, a teacher may find information about marital obligations of spouses in different religions and display it using the available technology, and then ask the students to guess what religion it may be. Of course, to make it a little bit more interesting and intriguing, the teacher may omit the items that make it too obvious. For example, in what religion is a husband supposed to protect his wife, to support her financially, to treat her with affection and kindness, to grant her conjugal rights so she does not become dissatisfied with the marriage, and not to obstruct her in the performance of her religious duties? I tried this many times with adolescent and adult learners, and almost every time students of other religious persuasions rarely if never think that it is taken from Islamic sites. On the other hand, my students will also discover that a Muslim husband has the right to divorce his wife if he is no longer satisfied with her. What is meant by a husband's dissatisfaction can be also established in further interaction.

Sometimes students ask me, "Are you trying to set us up for something?" My reply most often is a question "What do you think I am setting you up for?" Yes, I do try to make my students think, I do try to make them discover for themselves, and most importantly I try to make them learn about others through interaction in the target language. Are there fanatics of all persuasions who do not want to learn and change their views on anything? Yes, there are and probably always will be. I do not try to change anyone. I do not try to impose any religion on anyone. My goal is to involve all my students emotionally in a genuine conversation where they can both advance their views and develop their language skills. Once it is clear, everybody is happy.

All teachers know that when our students are happy, they learn. Giving our students an opportunity to express their ideas willingly about things they care about deeply and respecting their cultural and religious background creates a climate of trust and satisfaction from learning. In the atmosphere where there is no war on Easter, Hanukkah, or Dharma Day, there is a sense of fulfillment from being able to be heard and to understand others in

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a new language that can empower them to say more and better every day.

All my examples are based on the Bible and the Qur'an, but teachers may use any sacred text they think will be of interest to their students. All my examples deal with marriage; however, a teacher or students may choose any other issue of importance to them. They may be interested in how different religions deal with love, adultery, or homosexuality. As long as activities and assignments do not impose, promote, or denigrate any religion or culture, they can be used for reading, paraphrasing, discussions, essays, research papers, and group projects.

I remember I was exchanging opinions on the topic of the present article with students and faculty at my university, and I decided to post the following passage from the Bible:

> *Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* (1 Corinthians 13:4–7 New American Standard Bible)

A student from Jordan who actively participated in the debate and informed the audience about Islam said, "Wow, I have never seen or heard anything so beautiful about love. I cannot believe it is from the Bible." In a more recent event, my students stayed in class for 20 additional minutes when their usually passive classmates from Saudi Arabia and India were enthusiastically providing them with information about Muslim and Hindu marriage customs.

I think these episodes make my point clear. Let us learn from each other and let us respect each other regardless of our faith. Let us use what our students cherish most for pleasure of being educated, not conformed. Remember, Easter is as sacred to a Christians as Passover is to a Jew or Ramadan to a Muslim.

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Author Bio

I was born in the Soviet Union where I graduated from High School and Minsk State Pedagogical University with a Master's Degree in English, History, and Sociology. Shortly after graduation, I went to work in Burkina Faso in West Africa where I taught English first in a Lycee (High School) and later in the University of Ouagadougou. While working there, I got interested in teacher training programs for teachers of English and teaching methods for large classes. That led me to obtain another Master's Degree from Moray House of Education (Edinburgh, Scotland) in English Language Teaching and a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics/TESOL from State University at Buffalo (USA).

I have been teaching for almost 40 years at different levels and in different countries of the world. My former students teach all over the world as well. I have been directing the TESOL program in Troy University, Alabama for the past five years.

During my long career, I worked with students of different nationalities, cultures, and religious beliefs. This fact may explain my interest in promoting multiculturalism through the use of holy books and literature in language teaching. I am also a big fan of using humor in classroom activities.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE POST-METHOD ERA

By Angelica Galante, OISE - University of Toronto

A video that accompanies this article can be viewed at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyxVIAEYQVQ

Historically, English Language Teaching (ELT) methodologies have evolved from a constricted methodology-based to a complex post-method instructional practice. Several methodologies and approaches to ELT have been designed and applied in language classrooms worldwide, and while often successful, several challenges have emerged, possibly due to their limitation in nature. In my personal reflection as an English teacher, while ELT methodologies still have their place in language classrooms, several other aspects must be considered in language learning. In this article, I will provide a brief introduction of ELT issues as a preamble to discuss what I find the most critical aspects of language teaching in the post-method era. A metaphor will also be introduced to illustrate the argument that knowledge of teaching methodologies merged with an awareness of the aspects discussed are vital for anyone who wishes to become an English language teacher in the post-method era.

ELT Methodologies and Emerging Issues

Forty-seven years ago, Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL) was founded with the aim to offer teachers and administrators an opportunity to discuss issues related to ELT (Alatis, 1987). This prominent organization has been connecting professionals worldwide through conferences and publications by examining concerns related to the diversity of student populations, geographical and social contexts as well as methodologies and approaches considered more suitable for a particular class. Although language methodologies started being conceptualized as early as the 1880s with the Reform Movement (Danesi, 2003), I will provide an analysis from a more current perspective, when the ELT profession began to burgeon.

The history of ELT methodologies is somewhat extensive (see Brown, 2014 for a comprehensive overview). In the 1960s, the Audiolingual Method gained popularity with its overemphasis on oral drills and production. Suggestopedia emerged in the 1970s, proposing that learners could retain information through relaxation and extrasensory perception. Concurrently, the Silent Way introduced the belief that language students were responsible for their own learning and teachers remained silent most of the time during their classes. Subsequently, Total Physical Response (TPR) focused on listening accompanied by a physical response, similar to how children learn their first language. From the 1980s to 2000s, one of the most long-lasting methods was Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which mainly focused on linguistic communicative competence targeting meaningful communication. To this date, all methods were mainly concerned with teaching linguistic features, while other important aspects were being neglected, resulting in issues in language learning.

Until recently, one of the most infamous misconceptions was that methodologies were being implemented as a "one-size-fits-all" in classrooms across the globe and were expected to be successful. Using one single methodology was assumed to be effective in a class of young English learners in Japan as well as among internationally educated professionals living in Canada, for example. Also, these methods did not take affective or cognitive variables into account. Do learners who have very limited knowledge of the language feel anxious when making an oral presentation in front of a class? Do all learners have the same ability to recognize grammatical structures of the language and apply hypotheses when learning other structures?

The 2000s introduced the post-method era: a shift from using methods in the purist sense to recognizing that the nature of language learning is complex and non-linear. Choosing one method and expecting that a prescribed set of instructions will be effective with every learner is discouraged (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). Yet, having a solid understanding of these methods is invaluable as it equips teachers with several tools that can be implemented in their lessons. Ultimately, merging the knowledge of teaching methodologies with other aspects that are not only linguistic in nature will enhance ELT, and consequently English learning.

Critical Aspects in ELT in the Post-Method Era

ELT in the post-method era is rather complex. It is like being on a journey with a clear destination (learning English), but with an intricate itinerary (how?). Although teachers may assume they know which way to go, especially if they have a GPS (a.k.a. knowledge of methodologies), they will face a road sign showing multiple ways to choose from.

Figure 1. The post-method road sign

In this scenario, teachers can do one of two things: 1) return home because they fear being lost; or 2) take a chance. If they go back home, the choice of NOT becoming an English language teacher has been made, and that is an acceptable choice. If they take a chance, a complex, though rewarding, task is in store for them. In the post-method era, choosing the right path will not only depend on the teacher, but also on what the learners' goals are. Ultimately, teachers need to have this question in mind: "Why do my students want to learn English and how can I guide them through this path?"

My 20 years of teaching experience, which includes teaching English as an additional language (EAL) in both Brazil and Canada, has repeatedly hinted to important aspects that should be examined before choosing a suitable path. I will focus on what I consider the four most critical ones: context, identity, affective and cognitive variables, and critical practice.

Context

The context of language learning, including the use of pragmatics, cultural and social awareness, is an important aspect to be considered. Kumaravadivelu (2001) revives the notion that language is directly linked to society, and serves as a tool to suit speakers' own needs. The emphasis on context, including ethnic, social, and economic, corroborates with the underlying belief that one single method can no longer be applied to every classroom (Bell, 2003), if it ever could. Considering two distinct contexts, one in which learners share the same first language and their social and economic backgrounds are somewhat similar, and another in which learner's first languages and their social and economic backgrounds are diverse, ELT is likely to be applied in different ways. When faced by the post-method road sign, teachers might ignore learners' contexts and backgrounds and attempt to guide them all through the same path; this, however, does not seem to be logical, nor sensible. For example, some EAL learners in Brazil aim to be accepted by top universities and wish to learn English for a very particular purpose: Brazilian university entrance examinations test students' abilities in reading English; thus, having advanced English reading skills enhance their chances of gaining access to highly ranked universities. In this case, using oral communicative practices does not seem to be suitable for this particular student population whose major goal is to be able to read academic texts in English. Instead, the often criticized grammar-translation method seems to be a good alternative: a comparison of English-Portuguese cognates and false cognates can be helpful for developing advanced reading comprehension skills in English.

Identity

Recently, the concept of identity in language learning has been extensively explored with research suggesting that language learners' identities are multiple and subject to variations across time and place (Norton, 2000; Janks, 2010; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Kramsch (2009) argues that it is not uncommon for learners' identities to be ignored during the completion of communicative tasks in the context of EAL teaching. It is important to note that choosing one particular path to guide learners through their language learning while neglecting their identities is not an option in the post-method era. Cummins (2001) suggests that negotiating identities in the classroom is a necessary strategy, especially among learners from cultural diverse backgrounds. When learners' cultures, languages and experiences are affirmed, they are likely to be more engaged in learning a language that is still "foreign" to them. For example, some newcomers to Canada, enrolled in Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) or college programs, may struggle to adapt to a new country: providing them with a safe place (i.e., the classroom) to voice their feelings, values, beliefs and experiences while learning English is necessary for their engagement in language learning.

Affective and Cognitive Variables

Brown (2014) has raised important aspects to consider when guiding students through their language learning journey; essentially, beyond methods, teachers should implement metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies. Having students reflect on their own learning process, or learning about how they learn a language best, can be facilitative. At this point, teachers and students can collaborate and choose from the multiple directions available so they can get to their destination. For example, given that each learner has a preferred cognitive strategy for learning vocabulary items, simply asking them to reflect on what they find the most effective way to learn and remember vocabulary words can be helpful. Rather than having all learners conform to one particular path, it is important to remind them about the several strategies to learn vocabulary and encourage them to choose the ones they find most helpful.

A useful strategy suggested by Brown (2014) is to implement activities that lower learners' inhibitions, encourage risk-taking, and build self-confidence. In many English programs in Canada, learners are often required to make oral presentations in front of the class: students who do not feel confident speaking English might resist this type of assignment. One way to help students reach the final outcome is to start building their confidence early in the program by following a few steps. Teachers can ask students to: 1) write down sentences they plan to use in their presentations; 2) audio-record their speech and have teachers listen and provide constructive feedback; 3) listen to teacher's feedback and follow suggestions given; and 4) rehearse in pairs or in small groups. Guiding learners through this path can give them the confidence needed to present their speech in front of the class.

Critical Practice

Critical practice somewhat includes the three previous aspects and ELT methodologies. Also known as critical pedagogy, critical practice offers learners an opportunity to engage in a dialogue with other learners and the teacher(s), encouraging a reflective and critical questioning of the pedagogical material in relation to their own life, biases, social and historical contexts (Benesch, 1999). For example, raising students' awareness to the purpose of using a specific methodology can help them understand the reason of a chosen path: a given audio-lingual drill can be helpful for students who are struggling with pronouncing particular sounds of English. It is important to note that the assumption that oral drills will help learners reach "native-like" pronunciation levels can be questioned. Instead, oral drills can be seen as a facilitative strategy for improving comprehensibility in English, that is, maintaining an accent from another language, but becoming easier to understand. In another example, a unit in a given textbook being used in a language classroom may show issues or concepts from a perspective that differs from that of the learners'; it puts up a one-way sign and asks them to travel down a single path together. Once again, the post-method road sign reminds us of the many other directions: having learners share their knowledge about the world and their own life experiences is, in fact, an invitation to the development of critical concepts that may result into a discussion of social issues such as justice, democracy, and equity. Critical practice in ELT elevates learners' from being mere passive learners to being active participants in constructing knowledge in the classroom.

Conclusion: ELT is a Journey with No Clear Path

The shift from a methodology-based to a post-method instructional practice demands the involvement of teachers and learners as key players in the construction of knowledge. Teachers are no longer limited to choosing strategies from several different methods. Rather, they should invite learners to embark on a journey where their contexts, identities, affective and cognitive variables merge with critical practices in ELT. Rather than teachers dictating which way to go, it is important that they learn about their students and discover their aspirations. This will help both teachers and learners choose the right way. And if it is the wrong way, they can always go back and take another path. Teaching a language is an invitation for both teachers and learners to travel together to an undiscovered, fascinating place where possibilities are limitless. The post-method era requires that teachers are aware of several methodologies and the critical aspects described above for the journey to be rewarding for both teachers and learners.

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Author Bio

Angelica Galante is a Ph.D. candidate in Language and Literacies Education at OISE-University of Toronto. Her research interests include plurilingual and pluricultural education, identity in language learning, and critical literacies. She currently teaches EAP at Niagara College.

CRITICAL EAP: WHAT EXACTLY ARE WE TEACHING?

A lesson plan

By Lisa Tappenden-Der, York University English Language Institute

Level: Intermediate
Aims: Promote learner autonomy; collaborate with peers; critically respond to current issues
Duration: 45–60 minutes
Resources: various world map projections; poster boards/paper & markers

Introduction

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bonne_projection_SW.jpg

As international student enrollment increases, so does the importance of delivering materials that are both accessible and relevant to a variety of learners. The underlying assumption in an EAP classroom, however, is that students should accommodate themselves to their second language (L2) environment. (Benesch, 2001). While the ultimate goal is to prepare students for academic and professional settings, one cannot ignore how a learner's first language (L1), culture, and experience affect knowledge. (Cummins, 2001). When materials are presented in the classroom, miscommunication can occur as a result of the learners' past experiences and background knowledge. Critical EAP encourages students to question and transform their academic activities, actively collaborating rather than completing tasks and assignments passively (Benesch, 2001). By being encouraged to draw on past experience and knowledge, students can become more autonomous and effective language learners.

The purpose of this article is to share a field-tested activity that helps students to think more critically about their world and can assist instructors in delivering material that is more accessible to a wider range of students. The primary goal is preparation for higher study; however, many materials and curricula designed for EAP students are neutral in practice. Students are taught to think critically, yet it remains common to avoid provocative issues. As Sauvé (2000) explains, a "curriculum document is incomplete because we cannot account for everything all the time". (p. 17). To that end, instructors must recognize that many activities are creative acts as they are filtered through learners' experiences and memory. By presenting activities that respect students' identities, instructors can help their students to learn from each other and appreciate the value of their previous experiences. (Au, 2009).

This activity is intended to allow students to look critically at that which is normally treated as fact. By looking at sample maps from around the world, students will gain a better understanding of the countries from which they come and their place within the global community. Students will also discuss different ways to interpret their world and learn how their countries are perceived by other nations.

Pre-Activity

Ask students to bring in a copy of a map of their city, region, country, and/or continent. Specify that they should bring a map that best represents their idea of their home.

Warm-up

Put students into small groups ensuring that there are different countries represented in each. Students will present their maps to their classmates. They should explain why they chose this specific map and be prepared to answer questions about the location of their country in relation to other countries. (5-10 minutes)

As a class, discuss the different types of maps that were brought into class and ask students to report what they learned about their peers' countries. (10 minutes)

Activity - Part A

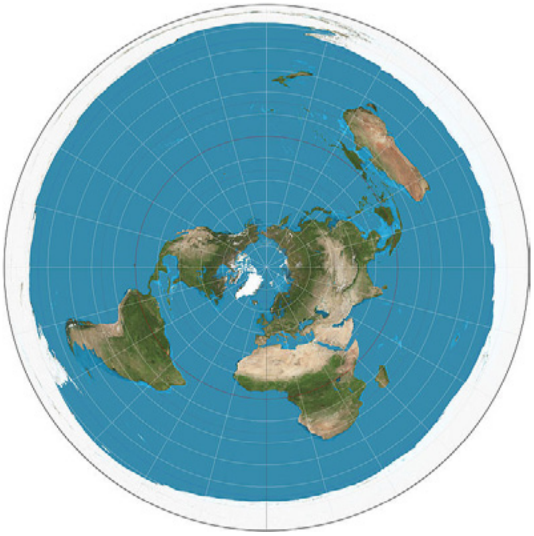
Display the Mercator projection, and ask students if they are accustomed to this map. Ask if this map differs from maps they have used in school before.

Display the Gall-Peters projection, an equal area map projection that limits the size distortion normally depicted in the Mercator projection. For example, Greenland is 2,166,086 km^2 while Africa is 30,221,532 km^2; however, Greenland appears larger than Africa in the Mercator projection. Lead a discussion asking students to explain why we continue to use a map that distorts the world and discuss the social or political implications of this distortion. (15 minutes)

NOTE: Students in the past, for example, have mentioned that they are often afraid of Russia or the United States because of their size. Many students have indicated that Africa is much larger than they previously thought.

Activity - Part B

Distribute different map projections to students. Working in pairs or small groups, students must use the compare/contrast vocabulary previously taught to discuss the similarities and differences between the maps. They should also choose which map best represents their understanding of the world. Ask students to use the poster paper provided to compare and/or contrast their maps and report back to the class with their results. (30 minutes)



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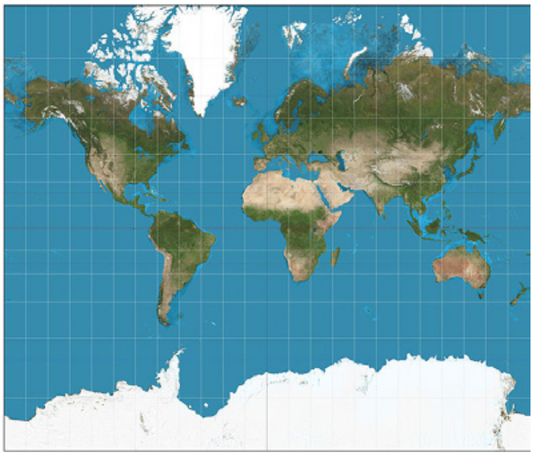
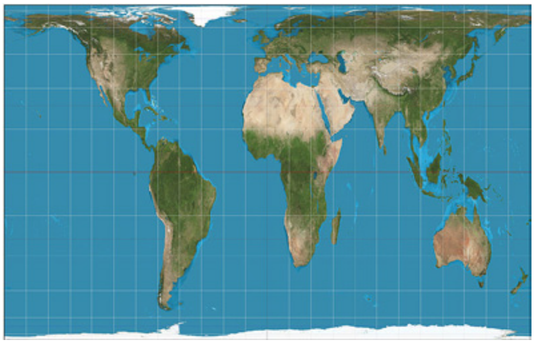


https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mercator_projection_SW.jpg



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gall%E2%80%93Peters_projection_SW.jpg

Activity - Part C

Journal Topic: Find a recent article about your country from a Canadian newspaper. Read and write a response comparing/contrasting the same news story in your country.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cassini_projection_SW.jpg

Caveats

According to Sauvé (2000), few teachers have the skill to address the inequalities that exist in our world. While the central message behind critical EAP requires educators to stand up against injustices rather than continuing to perpetuate the status quo, this "call to arms" can deter many from daring to broach controversial issues (Benesch, 2001). Given that it is the goal of academic language instructors to assist students in acquiring the necessary skills for higher study, should we even tackle issues of power in the classroom? In order to effectively deliver a lesson that addresses provocative issues, it is essential for instructors to know their students and anticipate how having such discussions will be received. When delivered in practice, this activity has allowed students to converse honestly about issues that are generally circumvented.

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Author Bio

Lisa Tappenden-Der currently teaches English for Academic Purposes at York University English Language Institute. Lisa has a Master of Education in Second Language Education from the University of Toronto and has experience teaching English in Toronto and Beijing. Her interests are in curriculum design and multicultural education.

YOUR FINANCIAL-PLANNING ROAD MAP:

Do you have one?

By James B. Gordon

Like most Canadians, English-language teachers are concerned about their finances. This article is starting with the basics, providing the reader with an understanding of what needs to be done first when we are trying to establish a financial-planning road map using our life values, goals, and needs. When it comes to financial planning, many Canadians are suffering from the willing-but-not-able syndrome. We have all heard some of the following statements and questions:

- Don't put all your eggs in one basket!
- I'll think about it for next year! I'll start my plan when I have money!
- Save at least 10% of your salary every year – '*The Wealthy Barber – David Chilton*'
- Most (89%) say they will count 'heavily' on the CCP when they stop working!
- When do I start my plan?
- My husband and I are both healthy – we will look at buying insurance when we have children?
- Everyone buys 'high and sells low'. Why?
- What kind of insurance do I need for myself and/or family?
- How do I put all the pieces together (Life insurance, health benefits, retirement savings, & estate planning)?

We all very busy working and have little time to concentrate on a financial plan that would best meet our needs. Most of us also don't have the time to understand the complexities of what we need to know to establish a sound plan. Sometimes we believe we are in position to follow an investment lead or tip from a close friend or that our limited knowledge allows us to make decisions we may not in fact be ready to make yet. This can be a dangerous road to follow with disastrous results.

Simple: we need a road map based on sound advisement. Keep in mind that some language learners do very well without a teacher, but many prefer to attend classes. Similarly, you may be able to plan your roadmap on your own, but most of us will benefit from the advice and assistance of a financial planner.

How do we do build a successful Road Map?

Here are the basic steps to building a personal financial plan. Follow these steps and your road map will take you from where you are today to where you want to be in the future.

1. Data Gathering

Teachers and programs usually gather a good deal of data from incoming students through the use of placement tests and questionnaires to ensure that the students get what they need. Do the same for yourself. Gather all your data specific to savings, life insurance, household expenses, and liabilities (debt), and use it to assess your current financial situation. This will ensure your personal documents are up to date and allow you to establish a current net worth statement and a cash flow worksheet. With these in hand, you've got a much better picture of your starting point on the map. You can find a variety of tools online to help you gather this data include:

2. Setting Goals & Objectives

Once we place students using the data we gather, cannot start lesson planning until we establish the students' goals and objectives. Financial planning is no different. This is the most important step because you need to find out where you are going to establish your road map. Just as some students require a high level of academic English while others are much more interested in following movie dialogue, some teachers will require significant life insurance while others would be better paying off debts.

Give some thought to your plan. Some may be short-term others long term. You may have to analyze your retirement, education, debt, or insurance needs. For instance, most parents agree that planning for their children's education is a very important long-term financial goal. Education costs continue to rise with an average cost of a typical four-year Canadian university undergraduate program estimated to be approximately $40,000 (inclusive of room & board; see the Education Savings Tool to calculate accurate costs for each child). You may decide, then, that one of your goals is to save 50% of that cost within 12 years.

One commonly overlooked goal is family protection. Life can be unpredictable regardless of age or personal situation, and we need to decide how much to provide for ourselves and our dependents should something befall us.

When you've listed your goals, assign each a time frame and prioritize them.

Analysis & Solutions

Now that you know where you're starting and where you're going, a strategy is needed. This is like curriculum development and lesson planning. Setting up a financial strategy will assist you in reaching your stated goals and will provide you with a road map to reach them. Just as a trained teacher is likely to develop better curricula and lesson plans, a trained financial advisor is likely to develop better financial plans.

A budget, like a curriculum, is vital for a successful road map. We budget knowing we have to make sacrifices in order to meet our deadlines. We also know if we save properly we can reduce our taxes by way of refunds through investing in RRSPS. We also know our daily habits and lifestyle. We may have to reduce the number of times we dine out or buy items that we don't really need to have. So we make adjustments so we can save more money that will keep us on our Road Map.

Important functions of the budget are debt management and savings. Debt management is the ability to handle your current debt and assume further debt if needed. Reducing financial debt is a primary financial goal and the budget will help you see where to get the money to do this.

When it comes to future protection goals, analogies to teaching break down. There's nothing in TESL very much like insurance, but it's a key part of financial planning. Life, critical, & disability insurance should be reviewed & invested in to achieve the goal of protecting our families and loved ones.

At TESL you have access to Group Plans that can reduce the expenses to maintain the needed Health & Dental Benefits. Also you have available access to other types of insurance at competitive prices. Being a member allows you access too many of the Top Financial Insurance Institutions in Canada for competitive rates.

Many of our long-term goals require savings. Apply a systematic approach here. Invest regular monthly amounts to your plan versus trying to come up with large amounts during a crisis. This will avoid stress and disappointment. There are several strategies to utilize. One is dollar cost averaging, a great investing strategy that automatically reduces the risk of a big loss by investing the same dollar amount to be taken from your account each month on a pre-authorized basis.

3. Implementation

The most important step in this process is implementation. We expect our student to attend class regularly and complete assigned homework. No amount of data gathering and planning will help if our students don't study or if we don't implement our plan. Based on your personal financial needs inclusive of debt reduction we can now set your plan in motion.

Implementing your plan means that you follow the plan whether it is the Education, Savings or Insurance Plan. You make sure the allotted funds are available if you have preauthorized debit/savings plan. The plan is like a baseball team, it needs synergy – meaning that the sum total of all the parts must be working together to make the plan successful otherwise it can fail.

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An important note is to remember that if the plan needs tweaking or adjustment due to decreases or increases in family income the plan continues regardless as long as the plan changes are being followed and implemented.

4. Follow-up & Periodic Reviews

Implementation isn't the end. On a regular periodic basis reviews by you your financial planner are critical to ensuring the success of your plan. Most ESL courses have various assessments built in. Similarly, you should continue to reassess your plan and make changes as needed resulting from your life cycle or economic conditions.

A good time to have periodic reviews should be established at the outset. Diarize these review dates on your calendars. It is recommended that you meet with your financial advisor no less than quarterly. This frequency can be changed based on urgency or reduced depending on the circumstances. The plan itself will necessitate the frequency and need for these meetings.

Achieving your goals and objectives for both short long term are the true measure of success in your financial planning road map.

Financial Advisors

So far we have discussed a financial planning road map as the best way for most individuals to establish successful outcomes. A financial advisor should be considered to complement and ensure the success of your road map, but it can be difficult to find an Advisor that you will be comfortable with.

In your search or checking on your current advisor the following information should assist you in making the right pick. You should meet with more than one advisor to interview them and have a question check list that you can get the answers you need.

To protect yourself you can check with the Canadian Securities Administrators website and the Mutual Funds Dealers Association website to see if the person is properly registered or has been previously disciplined. Next, ask your advisor candidate if they can give you names of persons that would be willing to give a reference so that you can contact them. You will probably want to establish their experience level (years as an advisor) and find out about educational designations and degrees that support their right to provide information for both investment and insurance products.

You should also find out if your advisor is needs based or sales based? A needs-based advisor is totally concerned with your financial needs and goals based on your life values.

An important area that you want explained is – how is your advisor is paid? Advisors can be paid on a commission basis or on a fee structure. Today an Advisor should have a Notice of Disclosure outlining how he is paid, plus outlining his responsibilities to you as a client regarding privacy of information etc. Make sure that you ask about this significant area of disclosure.

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These advisors assist coaching clients in putting financial issues into context of life, including:

- Vision & Values
- Health
- Work
- Family
- Leisure & life style
- Home
- Financial Comfort

"Advisors think clients have financial goals but, in reality, they have life goals. There is a relationship between money & life goals for all clients" –Barry LaValley- President Retirement Lifestyle Centre Inc. Toronto

Select your financial advisor to support you and your family in setting up your plan. This includes the completion of the five-step process and reviewing your plan on an agreed upon frequency.

In closing, financial planning is much like teaching. It is important to have a road map. This will ensure the achievement of your life and retirement goals.

Reference Material & Recommended Sites

http://practicalmoneyskills.ca/

http://www.advisor.ca/search/article+on+starting+a+financial+family+plan

http://www.investmentexecutive.com/-/fewer-canadians-buying-life-insurance-but-the-need-remains?redirect=%2Fsearch

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www.investmentexecutive.com/-/fewer-canadians-buying-life-insurance-but-the-need-remains

http://www.ADVISOR.CA

Financial Calculators – Savings, Education, Retirement, Income Tax & Debt Reduction; http://www.fidelity.ca/cs/Satellite/en/public/education_planning

Author Bio

James B. Gordon, BA. FICB. FCSI. is a needs-based financial planner with 35 years of experience having worked for top Canadian Financial Institutions. He is a Fellow of both the Canadian Bankers and Canadian Securities Institutes. He has served and raised funds for 'Children's Miracle Network' and 'Children's Health Foundation' for several years. He has two sons, a daughter, and three wonderful grandchildren. Jim is currently TESL's Representative for Health, Dental & Life Insurance Products. He can be contacted toll Free: 1.855.432.7361 or by e-mail at nodrogaj@sympatico.ca www.jamesbgordon.ca

SHOULD I LOOK, OR LOOK AWAY?

By Lee Clarke

I was sitting in the backseat, crouching down a little, as the maniacal cabbie weaved through the traffic like he was driving a slinky. Through the side window the scenes rolled by like a Jackie Chan movie. Overhead, neon signs, written in Chinese characters, flashed away, and well-lighted billboards had giant photos of fashion models posted on them. Eye level was taken up by taxis, buses, cars, motorcycles and bikes, competing for precious road space. At bus shelters, pockets of people stood waiting to crowd onto the next bus.

We stopped at a long red light. An amputee street beggar sat on the sidewalk, baring his four stumps to the well-dressed Chinese men and women passing him by. It's not the first time I have asked myself, "Look away, or take it all in?"

***

The classroom looked more "lived in" than a place to learn in. Ragged textbooks, magazines, water bottles, crinkled up potato chip bags, and binders littered the tops of the wooden desks. Dirty white blinds shaded what sun light shone through the dirty windows. I stepped up onto a raised, wooden platform and walked to the podium. According to the attendance sheet, there should be 28 first-year Computer Science students looking up at me, waiting to start their required course in English.

I introduced myself, picked up a piece of chalk, and wrote my email address on the board. The soft chalk left dust on my suit jacket.

These students probably lived in comfortable, new condos. Their parents probably drove comfortable, new vehicles. For their entire secondary education, these naïve looking faces had most certainly been tutored to after school, and catered to when they got home. Nothing was allowed to interfere with achieving the high marks required to get into China's best universities.

Even the government's strictly enforced one child policy reduces interruptions. There is never a brother or sister distraction.

After a little introductory chit chat with the students, I organized them into groups, to practice oral English. A group of six males had gathered together at the back, with the clear message they would be playing games on their iPhones. Potato chip bags, bags of candies and thermoses of green tea came out as the students started chatting. I wandered around and heard several levels of English, as well as a lot of Chinese being spoken, amidst laughter.

***

After class, I took a taxi to a bar and grill, where some other teachers were meeting for supper. When I stepped out of the cab, a begging palm was raised awkwardly up at me. This man had no legs and was face down, on his chest, on a board on coasters, twisting his neck and straining his eyes, trying to see me. I felt prickles go up my spine and made briskly for the restaurant door, never once looking down, but thinking, "why doesn't the government help these people?"

The other teachers were sitting at a big dining table, and talking a mixture of "what's good on the menu" and "what's new since I last saw you." I could hear sizzling on a grill and smell hamburger cooking, so I ordered a chef's special, with fresh, hand cut French Fries. The meat was juicy and the onions had been fried perfectly. Even the ketchup was Heinz, and, beside it stood a half-full bottle of cider vinegar. The only complaint I could come up with was, "there's no green relish."

We wrapped up after about two hours. When I was exiting at the door, a little anxiety crept up inside me. But outside the sidewalk was empty. I flagged a cab and headed home.

Two days later, I was tackled around my left knee while walking down a crowded sidewalk. I was on my way to an electronics department store to shop for an iPad. But now, in front of everyone, I was being held up from taking another step. I looked down. The dirty, desperate looking, little face of a girl stared up at me, holding her right palm open for some money, while clutching on to my leg with her left arm. Her shirt and pants were as dirty as her face. Her bare feet were grimy and look calloused from a long time of not wearing shoes on the sidewalk. I felt on the verge of panic. I had no coins in my pockets. I wasn't sure what bills were in my wallet. I reacted by trying to pry her off. But as soon as I got her arm loose, she grabbed on to my pants with all of her fingers and began yelling something in Chinese. I felt people staring as they walked by. I told the little girl to let go, and I would give her some money, but she didn't understand. She kept clutching my pant leg. I dug my wallet out of my suit jacket pocket and took out a couple of bills. She snatched them from me and ran about 10 metres to a shady looking adult, wearing a gray suit, who took the money from her.

I felt like I'd been mugged and robbed. I couldn't think about shopping now. It took forever to flag down a taxi. This driver drove carefully, so outside the neon lights rolled by a little slower than normal. But I looked away. I just didn't want to take it all in.

Author Bio

Lee Clarke has taught EFL/ESL in China, South Korea, England and Canada. He is writing a book about teaching, living, loving and travelling in the countries he has taught in.

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VIVA LA LINGUA FRANCA:

On Teaching My First ESL Class

By Eufemia Fantetti

11 p.m. I can barely sleep the night before I teach my first ESL class. Months of grammar reviews, pronunciation pitfalls, and intercultural awareness studies float through my wide-awake consciousness. I am trying to follow my father's advice to get a good night's rest, but my mind won't stop trying to prepare me for a worst-case scenario. (In my family worrying is elevated to an art form; it is considered both a mode of preparation and the best possible protection against the chaotic quality of everyday life—our motto is *Worry conquers all*.) I can't imagine standing in front of people and speaking about verbs and nouns, subjects or objects. I think about my friend Susan, a middle school drama teacher. Back when I lived in Vancouver, she'd suggested I look into teaching English. I valued her opinion but ignored her advice. I thought of myself as an average student, one with an above normal interest in vocabulary and a subpar ability to remember punctuation. I knew people who ran off to teach English in foreign locales in search of serious lucre, some armed with degrees, others armed with nothing more than a backpack and suntan lotion. I assumed I had more in common with the latter group partly based on my checkered academic past and mostly because I could never remember the difference between a semicolon and a full blown colon without looking it up. I always had to check and double-check.

2 a.m. I finally drift off and enter dreamland. In the hazy space of subconscious sensibility my anxiety is still running the show—stage managing a popular production of *The Phantom of the Phrasal Verbs*. In the dream I am standing at the front of a packed classroom, unable to locate my lesson plan. I shuffle papers as the students cough and clear their throats, rustling their notebooks like a theatre audience paging through a program. I wake with a start just after four. The shadowy world of the dream recedes quickly but I am left with a foggy sense that I'd been shouting "What about the semicolon?" at someone.

4:30 a.m. I get up and make coffee. No need to sort out the meaning of the dream; I'm nervous. I used to read Dream Dictionaries when I was a teenager, laughing with my friends at the explanations that began "*For a maiden to dream of…*" Everything was probable cause for alarm—abandoned farm houses, frolicking kittens, rushing rivers and rainbows—all "*indications that she must guard her reputation and take care to avoid entanglements*." Sipping my coffee without waiting for it to cool, I think more on the semicolon. A nightmare about punctuation seems out of place when I've prepped for a literacy-level class.

6:30 a.m. I fret for a few hours, then I call my father and interrupt his morning recitation of the Rosary. Everything I know about being a worrywart I learned from my dad, a Roman Catholic Southern Italian immigrant, he wrote the book on worrying while I was growing up. I explain that I haven't slept and tell him I had a bad dream.

My dad says, "The old people use to say the opposite of what you dream will be come true."

Not surprisingly, this doesn't settle my nerves. Back in Southern Italy, village elders held forth on the virtues of poultice cures for common colds and the evil eye.

I launch into my litany of concerns.

"Do your best, that's all you can do." My father's philosophical approach to life has changed since my childhood; he's become an optimist in his old age.

"Weren't you listening to me? What if my best isn't good enough?"

My dad offers his most dependable advice: "Ask Jesus for help."

"Maybe you could pray for me. I'm too busy being *worried*." I say I'll let him get back to doing his prayers if he promises to put in a good word for me again.

My father replies that he constantly prays for me.

"I don't think it's working," I say. "You must be doing something wrong."

"Imagine how good you will be feel after you are teach the class."

High Noon. I make myself eat a piece of toast slathered in peanut butter. One of the side effects of being nervous is losing my appetite. Searching through different online sources for last minute tidbits of teacher wisdom, I decide to check my horoscope: it doesn't sound promising. I go into research mode and check another astrologer's planetary predictions, someone guaranteed to be upbeat. No Mercury retrograde, no Mars squaring Venus but communication difficulties are bound to occur simply because that's life and I shouldn't have looked. I reread the emails from Janie, my practicum mentor focusing on any word that seems remotely negative.

5:15 p.m. I leave early to ward off the immanent subway calamity, or an Act-of-God-type natural disaster that's waiting to make me late.

I arrive at the school with forty-five minutes to sit and stress.

Class begins. There are two Hungarian men, a grandfather from Honduras, an older Mexican woman, and a young woman from Sierra Leone. Together we stumble through introductions. I tell them how excited I am to be teaching English, that my parents were immigrants and I appreciate how hard it is to learn another language. Their confused reactions say *appreciate* is too difficult a word, but I can't think of another. All my internet searching, wondering, and worrying and I am stumped in the first five minutes.

Janie sits at the back and offers assistance and help; she modifies the materials I've brought and suggests ways to draw out the lesson, adding extra items to focus on the four competencies beyond what I've prepared. She says I should slow down and speak up. I feel like I'm auditioning for the role of Teacher in a Broadway production, and yet—even with my notes, lesson plan prepping and reviewing—improvising all my lines.

I ask the students to teach me a few key phrases in their first languages and learn the Hungarian and Spanish for *good evening*, *good night*, and *thank you*.

Near the end of class, Janie gives me an encouraging smile and asks, "What's their homework?"

Homework?

Sometime after 9:00 pm. I reflect on the experience on my subway ride home, going over everything and picking apart my lesson plan. I'm exhausted from standing and circulating from student to student all night. I lean back in my seat and let the mixed feelings sink in; feeling satisfied that I survived the experience and vowing to do better next time. By the time I get home, I'm hooked—it's the teacher's life for me.

The American Zen Buddhist teacher Cheri Huber says that "worry is not preparation," an enormous contrast to the Fantetti clan's rallying cry of constant concern (our substitute slogan is *Seize the suffering*). Fussing certainly didn't vanquish my fear but what's one sleepless night to an Olympic-level worrier?

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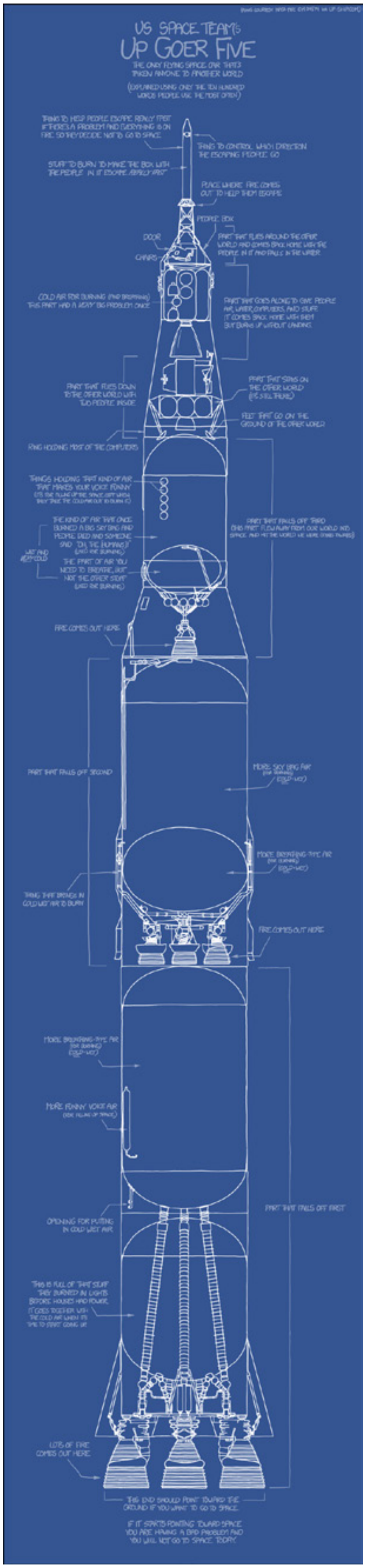
Months after that first nerve-wrecking class, I dream I have to give a presentation on "Foundations that Influence Success in the ESL Literacy Level Classroom" and the audience consists of a few current students, my TESL teacher/program director, a site manager from the Toronto school board and Sir Ian McKellen. A man knighted for his services to the performing arts and an activist, he is intensely interested in my stats about making sure students are well-fed and comfortable.

This time I wake up smiling. Then I get up, make coffee, and review the day's lesson plan again.

Most thrilling at 500% zoom (or more)

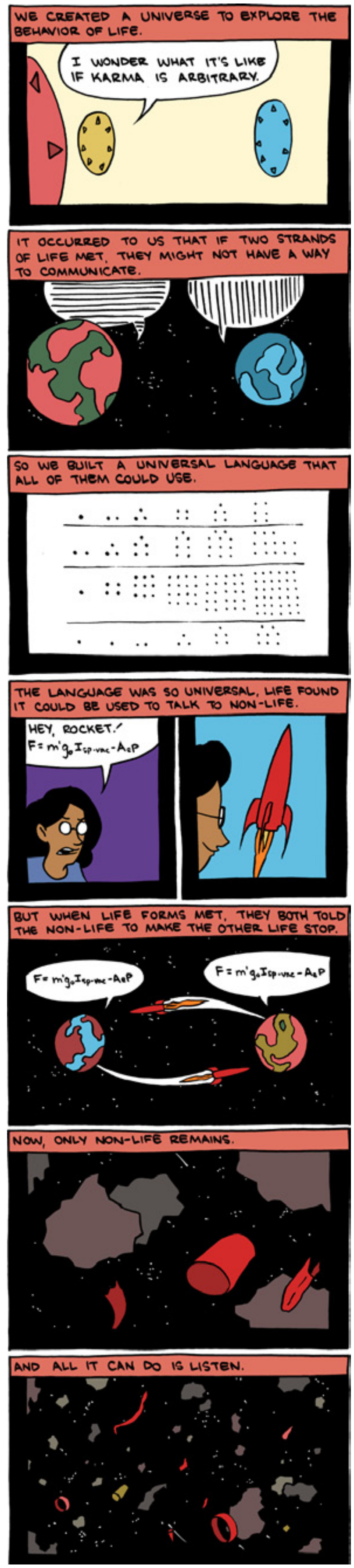
XKCD, by Randall Munroe



Another thing that is a bad problem is if you're flying up to space and the parts start to fall off your space car in the wrong order. If that happens, it means you won't go to space today, or maybe ever.

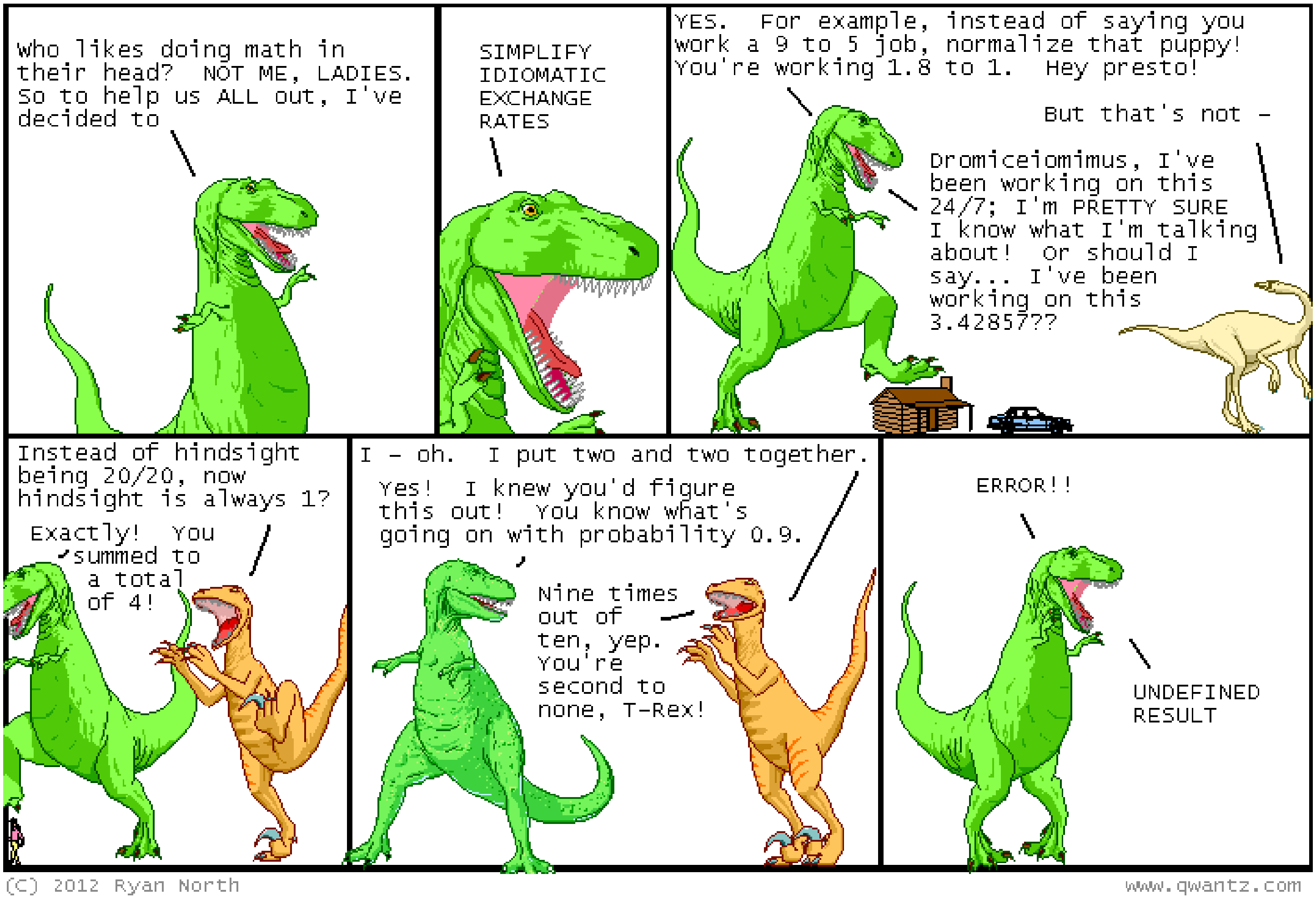
source:http://xkcd.com/1133/

Saturday Morning Breakfast Cereal, by Zach Weiner



http://www.smbc-comics.com/?id=2637

Dinosaur Comics



http://www.qwantz.com/index.php?comic=2168

Syntax Tree