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Contact

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Fall Conference 2009: Language for a Changing World



ESL teachers search for new ways to enhance classroom instruction

The theme for TESL Ontario's 37th Annual Conference was 'Language for a Changing World,' a singularly appropriate focus.

Over three days, from December 10th to 12th, more than 1600 teachers, assessors, administrators, graduate students and presenters gathered at Toronto's Sheraton Centre hotel to update their professional knowledge base, discover new learning materials, acquire technological skills and share their up-close-and-personal classroom discoveries and questions with colleagues.

Change often implies challenge and tension, whether that emerges in the current debate over the wearing of the niqab in Quebec classrooms or in adaptations pushed by technology. Fortunately, change also inspires creativity, something that teachers are good at.

Nowhere is this more evident than in ESL/EFL classes for internationally-trained professionals, whose integration into Canadian society is an is-

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From the Editor

The theme for the 2009 Annual Conference of TESL Ontario, "Language for a Changing World", could not have been more appropriate. Indeed our world is changing at a rapid – some would say alarming – pace, driven in large part by science and technology.

The internet, for example, has revolutionized the very meaning of time and space and integrated the world's economies, transforming a system formerly based on materials to one increasingly based on knowledge.

A revolution has also occurred in the modes and processes of language learning. Ten years ago Ray Clifford of the Defence Language Institute in California predicted that "While computers will never replace teachers, teachers who use computers will replace those who don't."

The accuracy of his prediction is borne out with each passing year. And the rapidity of technological change is such that new technologies that have appeared even in the last five years are quickly being integrated into second language learning.

Two articles in this issue of *Contact* report on workshops given at the recent TESL Ontario conference.

In the first, **Julianne Burgess** of Mohawk College in Hamilton describes a cooperative learning module for young adults in a multi-level (3-6) LINC class. The students work in groups, creating videos on social issues and themes of importance to their own lives.

The six-month course builds literacy skills and provides practice in inter-

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Contact us

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

Contributors should include their full name, title and affiliation. Text should be e-mailed to: teslontario@telus.net or mailed on CD to:

**Editor, TESL Association of Ontario,
27 Carlton Street, Suite 405,
Toronto, Ontario, M5B 1L2**

Deadlines are Jan. 30, Apr.30 and June 30.

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viewing, script writing, editing, project management and self-assessment. As the instructors describe it, the course offers an 'apprenticeship in thinking and multiple literacies' in which young adult learners take a giant step on the road to critical thinking.

In the second conference session report, "Environmentally Teaching: Greening your Teaching in ESL," Toronto teacher **Radmila Rakas** delivers a cornucopia of resources to help ESL teachers integrate environmental aspects into a wide range of topics in the LINC/ESL curricula, such as housing, food, health, transportation, weather, and clothing. A wealth of practical ideas.

Our regular technology contributor **John Allan** introduces an original web space called *social.esl.com* that ESL professionals can use to integrate Web 2.0 resources into their instructional mix, helping them gain confidence in computer-assisted language teaching and providing their students with a supplementary means of learning the language.

Martha Trahey takes a critical look at the practice of restricting high school students' use of their first languages, both in the ESL classroom and in their academic subjects. Heeding research into the beneficial aspects of 'additive bilingualism' on learners' linguistic, cognitive and academic growth, Trahey has made a 180-degree change in her own beliefs and teaching, concluding that the use of L1 in the classroom is a strength, not a hindrance, in second language learning.

Five books are reviewed in this issue. In the first, **Marg Heidebrecht** poses some of the questions we all have about texting (er... that should be 'texting'). Her review of David

Crystal's latest book, *Txtng, the gr8db8*, gives 'techno-geezers' a glimmer of hope that they can understand this latest manifestation of the human ability to be linguistically creative and to adapt language to suit the demands of diverse settings.

Tania Pattison is a teacher of English for Academic Purposes at Trent University. In this review she applauds Keith Folse, author of *Vocabulary Myths*, for drawing together recent research on vocabulary acquisition. Folse presents a compelling case for abandoning eight old 'tried and true' truisms about teaching vocabulary and replacing them with a fresh approach.

Jim Papple, the speaking coordinator at Brock University, has been a devoted hip-hop head since his teens. His review of *Flocabulary: The Hip-Hop Approach to SAT-level Vocabulary Learning*, will help all teachers befuddled by hip-hop to discover not only what it is but also its potential in the ESL classroom.

For lovers of words, **Evelyn Pederesen** of the University of Toronto's English Language Program reviews a tasty addition to the ESL pantry: Howard Richler's insightful and witty *Can I have a Word with You?*

This entertaining work explores the origins and implications of everyday words such as "enjoy," "okay," "geek," "Xmas" and "schmuck." Like Lynne Truss in *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*, Richler tackles problems of usage, such as the perennial misuse of "less," and the debate over whether or not "hopefully" may be used as a sentence adverb.

And finally, **Judy Pollard Smith** of Mohawk College in Hamilton gives a thumbs-down review to a recent *New York Times*

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best-selling non-fiction book, *The Kabul Beauty School*. The book's author helped to set up a salon to train 170 Afghan women, living under the strictures of the Taliban regime, giving them the chance of financial independence through offering haircuts, facials and beauty treatments.

The book gave prominence to its author, but in the opinion of this reviewer it prompted serious questions about her motives and methods.

Five Plenary Speakers addressed the December 2009 TESL Ontario conference. **Lynda Goldman** describes the complexity of communications in the Canadian workplace, where "yes" could mean "no" or even "maybe." Non-verbal misunderstandings, she explains, cause confusion, frustration and mistrust and are a potential minefield of intercultural disharmony.

Marina Nemat depicts the harrowing experience of being tortured in an Iranian prison during the so-called Islamic revolution in the late 1970s. Her first-person story is dramatically told in the book, *Prisoner of Tehran*.

Julie Kerekes explores three important concepts for teachers about the pragmatic aspects of communication in the workplace:

1. Meaning is co-constructed by both speaker and listener.
2. Successful communication is determined by getting the desired outcome, not by speaking in a perfect grammatical way
3. The rules for appropriate communication are evolving as modes of communication and technology change.

Carol Chapelle describes how computer technology offers learners valuable language learning experiences by providing comprehensible input (à la Krashen), help with comprehension, feedback on their performance, both spoken and written, and meaning- focused conversation.

Jayne Adelson-Goldstein examines the benefits and challenges of group work in ESL classes, showing how direct instruction in group processes can provide learners a menu of skills that help them learn language and enhance their careers, civic participation and academic success.

Finally, Toronto teacher **Derrick Hempel** summarizes the presentations of the four speakers in the fourth Annual Panel Discussion, whose theme was 'Future Directions.'

Each issue of *Contact* is the work of many contributors and to all of them we owe our gratitude and thanks. We hope that this issue will not only inform but inspire teachers in their professional endeavours by expanding their knowledge base and connecting them with educators from across the world during this time of challenge and change.

—Clayton Graves



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sue of personal, social, economic and ultimately national importance.

At the same time, new information-sharing technologies continue to emerge, and these are providing enhanced opportunities for active language learning both inside and beyond the language classroom. Teachers find themselves at once encouraged and challenged by the ubiquity of technology. Indeed, keeping up with rapid technological change has become a necessary part of every language teacher's professional life, mirroring the upgrading and retraining demands on other professions.

Moreover, as the planet is increasingly threatened by environmental degradation of all kinds, L2 teachers are urged to bring into their language curricula a heightened awareness of environmental issues, realizing that language learning happens best with content related to the real world concerns, needs and interests of all.

This year the range of conference sessions offered to teachers at all levels of practice was astonishing. Workshops were offered on using clickers in the ESL classroom, dealing with conflict in adult ESL venues, teaching syllabification to literacy level learners, emerging literacies and technology, and critical discourse, to name only a few themes.

Once again, the conference included a Research Symposium, coordinated by Dr. Hedy McGarrell and Dr. Bob Courchene, providing a window into issues of importance to our field.

Three broad themes gave focus to the presentations: changing needs and trends in classrooms; a re-visioning of communicative competence; and emerging directions and issues arising from the uses of technology in language learning.

Five plenary speakers explored subjects both interesting and thought-provoking for conference registrants.

The technology fair, organized by Sharon Rajabi and Kevin O'Brien gave participants a chance to upgrade their knowledge and skill set with computer-assisted language learning, and the fourth annual Panel Discussion covered a host of issues related to future directions in the provision of language learning services across the province, from elementary and high school levels, to adult education, enhanced language training for foreign-trained professionals, and advanced study at colleges and universities.

Once again, publishers and the developers of materials for language learning brought teachers up to date on the latest approaches to language skill development.

As TESL Ontario President Sheila Carson pointed out, every conference is the result of months of collaborative work of volunteers who, along with TESL Ontario executive director Renate Tilson and her staff, envision and organize a conference which responds to the professional development concerns of practitioners. To them we extend deeply-felt thanks. ■

WORKSHOP REPORT: PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

LINC for Youth Video Project: Learners Engaging to Change the World

Report by Julianne Burgess

“Before, I had a prejudice about Muslim people because of negative stereotypes in the newspapers and on TV. But from making this documentary, I’ve got to know more about their religion, their culture and their traditions, so those negative stereotypes are gone”.

—Ivana, 24 year old student in LINC for Youth Video Project, commenting on the student-produced documentary, “Under the Hijab.”

Our classroom is buzzing with activity. At one end, three students sit at a computer with Zach Arlow, our video technician. They are boisterously screening the footage they have just finished shooting, laughing at bad shots and bloopers. Another group is trying to choose a piece of music to add to their video. Three more are heading out with a camera to find a quiet spot to film a voice-over, while one more group huddles around a table to finish writing their script. At the centre of this is the teacher; I often feel like I am in the middle of a three—or four—ring circus, just trying to keep track of all that’s going on around me.

LINC for Youth Video Project at Mohawk College is a unique ESL program for newcomer youth in which students build their English skills by making videos. It’s project-based learning, but it’s so much more than that.

Our classroom is an inviting, if slightly messy, place where young people aged 18-25 are welcomed to an environment that meets

their social, developmental and academic needs. They do many things in English: they get explicit language lessons on grammar, reading and writing and so on. They also learn group decision-making as they plan, research and write stories, conduct interviews and shoot and edit those stories using industry-standard video equipment and computer software. They challenge themselves and each other. And in the process, they learn a lot more than English.

Definition:

What is project-based learning?

Project-based learning (PBL) is not new; educators going back to John Dewey have recognized the benefits of student-centred, experiential learning. In our PBL classroom, students conduct an in-depth investigation into a real-world question. The assignments are

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lengthy: usually from a few weeks to a few months to complete. The students work in teams, collaborating on topics that they find relevant and interesting. They have ownership of their work and teachers act as coaches/facilitators.

Students are required to use language in new contexts. This creates opportunities to be challenged in new and complex ways. In an ESL setting, project-based learning becomes a bridge between classroom English and real world English (Fried-Booth, 1997 and Bas, 2008).

Students use authentic language as they organize, negotiate and achieve consensus on the numerous tasks involved in completing their work.

Their projects become a real means of communication for a real audience.

PBL: The Process

In the LINC for Youth classroom, Mary-Anne Peters and I team-teach, dividing the week between us.

We introduce our students to project work by giving them a series of short assignments that become progres-

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Co-presenters Julianne Burgess and Mary-Anne Peters (front) and program coordinator Elizabeth Sadler

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sively more difficult. They begin with a simple 3-shot story, then a short feature on their favourite location in the city, then they have fun producing their own commercial, followed by a news report.

Their final project is a 10-15 minute documentary examining an issue of importance to newcomer youth. For each project, they are asked to rotate through all of the positions in their crew so that they become more comfortable using a digital video camera and editing their work using Apple's iMovie program.

Choosing the right projects might seem intimidating, but often the students themselves come up with the best ideas. Our project work has three identifiable phases; we begin with pre-project activities, moving to project work, and finally to post-project feedback.

A: Pre-project activities

The teacher introduces and defines the project for the class and the students choose topics and form groups based on interest. (We reserve the right to move people around to balance groups, if necessary.) The teacher then sets the stage by giving students real samples of the project they will be working on. Usually the teacher sets the time frame for the project, with some flexibility built in. Often, the teacher will have to prepare students for the language demands of information-gathering and conducting the activity; sometimes full lessons are required, sometimes individual groups need an informal lesson for a specific issue they are working on.

B: Project work

Once they receive their assignment the students become their own project designers, deciding what their video will look like and

what tasks will be necessary to execute the project. Together, students and teachers can negotiate evaluation criteria by isolating various skills for assessment.

We choose a language skill, a technical skill and a group work skill. Over the course of the project work, the teacher monitors the groups' progress and provides guidance and resources, while keeping an eye on group dynamics. During their assignment, students are constantly asked to reflect on and evaluate their work through journaling and informal discussions.

Once all of the projects are completed, students present their work to the class. We also find as many opportunities as we can to present our students' work to other classes at the college and to the local community.

C: Post-project feedback

Our students are asked to engage in frequent self-assessment. They communicate their frustrations and successes with their project work - or in their daily lives - in their journals. Students also keep video booklets to organize and track each project. And while presenting videos, we conduct a peer review in which students give "warm and cool feedback" for each video.

In addition, the teachers conduct their own evaluation of individual work by marking the video booklets. We also ask students to reflect on how the process has been valuable for them. Often, our 'graduates' come back to tell us how helpful and meaningful the program has been for them.

Challenges

Unquestionably, the project-based classroom can be a chaotic place. Students are

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How To Be Canadian, from: LINC YOUTH, August 12, 2008. Osama and Kris take some time to learn what it takes to be Canadian

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not all doing the same thing at the same time; it's exciting and fun, but it can also be frustrating. Because we are a LINC program with continuous intake, we have to deal with student turnover and poor attendance (depending on the weather or the holiday.) This can make group work a challenge, but we have found that each class has a core of dedicated students who really care about their learning and their projects. And the "older" students in the program have turned out to be excellent mentors for the newly-arrived.

We have found that some students are initially resistant to project-based learning because our classroom is not traditionally structured. We don't spend the day working from

textbooks, so some may not feel that they are engaged in legitimate learning. However, explicit language instruction during the first part of the day helps to offset this concern and it also provides the metalanguage to discuss English and how to use it better.

Occasionally there is conflict among group members. This is surprisingly rare, given the ages of our students and their various backgrounds. However, when conflict occurs, we have class meetings to discuss respectful communication: we define what that looks like and what it sounds like - additional and invaluable life and workplace skills.

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Bee Story, from LINC YOUTH, November 03, 2009 . A three shot story made in the first week of class

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Benefits

Project-based learning is empowering and motivating. Students pursue their own interests through hands-on activities and their learning springs from their passion for their project. Because of the collaborative nature of project work, students always have the support and guidance of their peers and their teachers. We have seen strong friendships form in our classroom, one of the many by-products of a positive and active learning environment.

In the 21st century, the workplace demands highly skilled individuals who are literate, who can work in teams, who have a sense

of civic responsibility. We believe project-based learning helps to meet those challenges. Project work, especially our students' documentary, is a collaborative process in which the teachers are also active participants. This allows us to give our students what Mercer (2002, p.142) describes as "an apprenticeship in thinking."

Our students learn to use vocabulary and ways of thinking through dialogue. As teachers, we use questions, summaries, elaboration and reformulation to develop students' skills in both critical thinking and using language.

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According to the New London Group, students today need to be literate in multiliteracies, several modes of communication. They need to use words, sounds, gestures and images and be comfortable working with the Internet, videos and traditional media. The New London Group (Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, Gee, et al, 1996; Warschauer, 2000) advocates immersion in authentic experiences of making meaning, in understanding the grammar of language and other media. They also advocate critical framing or looking at the social context and purpose of messages, and empowering students to use their voices effectively to change the world. Project-based learning is an ideal way of giving our students the skills they need to become competent in multiple modes of communication.

Conclusion

The LINC for Youth Video Project is now almost two years old – we are in our fourth session. Over the last year-and-a-half our students have produced documentaries highlighting newcomer youth in dead-end jobs, they have explored the way in which immigrant youth experience culture shock, and they have examined discrimination faced by Muslim women who wear the hijab. In each case, our students have shed light on an important issue that is not well understood or covered by mainstream media.

Our students have been invited to present their documentaries to local politicians, community groups, high school teachers and students, and, most recently, to a national conference. They have grown as students and as young adults as a result of working on projects that are meaningful to them.

At the end of the documentary “Under the Hijab,” Natalia, a 19-year-old from Colombia, reflects on her personal discoveries while making the video: “I’ve learned that under the hijab there is a woman like me.” We have watched our students blossom in their language skills, self-confidence and in their sense of purpose as they find their way in their new homeland.

As a teacher, what could be more rewarding? ■

Getting Started

Attempting project-based learning with your class may seem daunting, and for most of us it’s a big step outside our comfort zone. However, if you approach it as a shared experience with tasks to be negotiated as you go along, it will be less intimidating. To start, you need a manageable project idea. This can be as small as a set of PowerPoint slides put together by a small group. Start with a question that is relevant, open-ended and invites research. It can be a community issue or something more light-hearted: for example, what’s your dream vacation destination? Decide the parameters of the project together: it must be a PowerPoint with at least 20 slides, include music and one good sentence per slide. (You can draw in a particular grammar point here.) Students will bring their own suggestions and their own expertise; they will help each other and have fun mastering the technology together.

Allow students to form groups based on interest. Alternatively, spread people around according to their strengths, talents or languages. Set a flexible timeline for completion. Structure your class time to fit project work in comfortably. We devote

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afternoons to projects, but we often take part of a morning to get an early start when the tasks are big. You might want to give over a few afternoons a week to project work or allow full days for a few weeks.

Collaboration may be new for some students but most have no trouble with this. Give students vocabulary for agreeing, disagreeing and respectful communication. Don't rush in or offer quick solutions when students need help. Allow them the opportunity to consult with each other, search for their own resources and come to you when they really need you.

How will you showcase students' work? Have a first presentation within the classroom and ask students to give "warm and cool feedback" for each project – talk about what's good and what could be improved. You might allow time for students to modify their work based on the feedback they receive. Then, celebrate your students' work by inviting other classes or community groups to see their projects.

Helpful websites for getting started

- http://www.school.za/conference/sessions/ks/pbl/PBL_per_cent20Learn_per_cent20More/getting-started-with-PBL.pdf
- http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/ProjBase.html

Project-Based Learning at Mohawk College:

- View videos produced by LINC for Youth at LINC for Youth Video Project: <http://www.youtube.com/user/LINCYOUTH>

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WORKSHOP REPORT: ENVIRONMENTALLY TEACHING

'Greening' your teaching in ESL

By Radmila Rakas



Government, media and activists can provide a wealth of raw material for ESL teachers to engage learners in discussions about contemporary environmental issues.

The human species is an infant in the biological family on the earth. And yet, it has altered life beyond evolution. As world famous environmentalist David Suzuki puts it, "We have suddenly become a geological force, the most prolific mammal on the planet, endowed with powerful technologies, impelled by an insatiable appetite for stuff, and supplied by a global economy" (*Science Matters*, 26 Oct. 09).

Exploiting the earth's resources as if nature had an endless abundance has caused widescale environmental degradation, resulting in climate change, extinction of species and ecological diseases. However, the truth is that humans are the most vulnerable among the animals, as we are at the top of the food chain.

It thus becomes the task of our generation to heal the damage of our worldwide industrial civilization at this critical moment in human history. Millions of people have responded to the ecological destruction by changing their lifestyles and pressing governments for political change.

What a burden! we might say. But environmentalist and author Paul Hawken puts a positive spin on the challenge: "What a great time to be born in," he says. For we have the resources and communication networks to share the information that will ultimately help us to switch directions.

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Teaching for Change

What does it mean to teach environmentalism as an integrated part of an ESL program? For sure, it requires teachers first to become aware of the gravity of the problem and then make the most of the opportunities to teach about it in our classrooms, at all levels.

As Hawken says, every aspect of our life has to be redesigned. That is the good news for those who are eager to ‘green’ their teaching. With plenty of real-life material available as teaching and learning resources, we can integrate the environmental aspect into a wide range of topics in the LINC/ESL curricula: housing, food, health, transportation, weather, clothing, to mention just a few.

The teaching strategies we can use and the opportunities for students to learn are endless, whether you want to sneak in some food for some environmental thought in a grammar drill, show a video clip for comprehension, give a lecture on recycling or play an association game.

It is part of the role of all ESL instructors to help our learners integrate into Canadian society as responsible citizens. We need to take into consideration the fact that many of our students come from areas of the world even more polluted than Ontario, and some may not be aware of all the health risks of invisible contamination. They arrive in our classrooms with different degrees of understanding of environmental issues. In planning our lessons and units we have to assess how to introduce environmental topics and provide lots of clear background information which will help them develop not only their literacy skills but foster a sense of inclusion in the society which is growing in its environmental awareness.

The ultimate goal is that while we teach language we can raise consciousness about the damage inflicted on the earth, on ourselves and our children. This heightened awareness can then provide the groundwork for a sustainable and just world.

Environmentalism has become a broad, unifying human issue. The Community Right-to-Know Bylaw that has just been passed in Toronto should be used by new Canadians as well. Our democratic rights as citizens, voters and consumers are a highway to a sustainable world, where we will treat each other and all living things with respect and care.

Teaching Ideas

Food Theme

Eating locally-grown food is a great way to reduce our carbon footprint. Since the very concept of ‘carbon footprint’ is one that our learners may have never heard, we can begin with an explanation of it. If fruit and vegetables travel to our table from another part of the world, then in addition to the energy used to grow them and cook them, we must also add the fuel and other resources used to package and transport them. This notion is one of the cornerstones of the “eat local” movement.

There are good websites with information about the availability of local produce by the season, such as the following: www.edibletoronto.com, www.greenbelt.ca, www.localfoodplus.ca

Supermarkets such as Sobey’s have published their own flyers with year-round availability charts. Farmers’ markets are also present in many cities and we can add them to a list of field trip destinations (for addresses and working days for the Toronto Farmers

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Market Network, for example, check www.tfmn.ca). We should also help our learners avoid food with pesticides, insecticides, artificial colours, preservatives, additives and genetically modified organisms, or GMOs.

The Big Carrot on Danforth Avenue in Toronto has an excellent website: www.thebigcarrot.ca and is a reliable source for information on 'clean' food. Other useful web sites are provided by The Sierra Club of Canada (www.sierraclub.ca), The Canadian Health Food Association (www.chfa.ca), Canadian Organic Growers: www.cog.ca, and The Canadian Food Inspection Agency: www.cfia-acia.agr.ca.

Reading labels for ingredients and avoiding food in excessive and eco-unfriendly packaging are also skills that we can teach, to help our learners become conscious, informed and aware consumers. It is also worth reminding our students to slow down in supermarket aisles for the sake of learning what items are just "products" and not real food.

The concept of the 100 Mile Diet is also gaining wide popularity. This is a great way to start enjoying the diversity of food grown locally, by pointing our learners to the food scene of their new homeland.

As a counterpart to the fast food industry, the Slow Food movement is attracting more and more young people. Their web site www.slowfoodfoundation.org explores so-

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cial, cultural and ecological implications of world food production and consumption.

On the same note, we would recommend Wayne Roberts' column in the *Now* magazine, as well as his book, *The No-Nonsense Guide to World Food*. The recent movie *Food Inc.* is a must-see for everybody.

Have you ever taken your students on a pick-your-own trip? A very rewarding follow-up activity would be preparing a recipe in the school kitchen. Learning through doing has been proven as the most efficient way to making the information stick, because it involves hands-on engagement.

As many of our south Asian learners are vegetarians, it is worthwhile to give vegetarianism some attention in ESL classes as well. Students are often shocked to learn that raising cattle for meat uses thirty per cent of the Earth's usable agricultural surface, but only five per cent would suffice if we became vegetarians. Vast areas of the planet could be returned to CO₂-absorbing wilderness with a modest cut in meat production. Livestock production alone accounts for eighteen per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions!

The Toronto Vegetarian Association web site is very informative: www.veg.ca/environment.

Many of our learners are avid gardeners and at the beginning of the season we can acquaint them with native varieties of vegetables and herbs, such as blue corn or Break o' Day tomato. Seed or seedling exchange can be a social/fundraising activity, not to mention a community garden that you can start together (for organic local seeds refer to the Urban Harvest, www.uharvest.ca).

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Classroom Food Quiz

- Which of these does not grow in Ontario: fiddleheads, cranberries, coconut, blue potatoes, sun chokes, asparagus? (Answer: coconut)
- Order these fruits and vegetables by the intensity of pesticide use. (Scramble the following list. Numbers besides each item indicate the intensity of the use of chemicals in growing them, 100 being the largest amount.)

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Peaches – 100 | 9. Grapes (U.S. grown) – 44 |
| 2. Apples – 93 | 10. Cauliflower – 39 |
| 3. Sweet Bell Peppers – 83 | 11. Bananas – 34 |
| 4. Strawberries – 80 | 12. Eggplant – 20 |
| 5. Lettuce – 67 | 13. Cabbage – 17 |
| 6. Carrots – 63 | 14. Asparagus – 10 |
| 7. Spinach – 58 | 15. Onions – 1 |
| 8. Potatoes – 56 | |

Vocabulary Study

- What do the following eat: *carnivores, omnivores, fructivores, localvores, pescavores, vegetarians, vegans, freegans, raw foodists, slow foodists*?
- Who are they? *gourmands, epicures, connoisseurs, gluttons, gastronomes, chefs*?
- Complete the list with more names for people who eat different foods in different ways. Use a thesaurus.

For other interesting tasks on the subject of food, and related subjects, check our blog: <http://esl-radmila.blogspot.com>

Classroom Activities: Health and Wellness

Internet Search

- Visit some of the web sites listed above and try to find some products to add to the 2-column chart below.
- Find out why the products in the first column are not a good choice.
- Discuss: Is a low price the main reason you choose a product?

<i>Conventional product</i>	<i>Better alternative</i>
Tampons	Diva cup

Match a word on the left with a word on the right:

Gas	Attack
Toxic	Ban
Chronic	Protection
Pesticide	Disease
Respiratory	Exposure
Heart	Emissions
Environmental	Chemicals

Word Matching to Make Phrases

Research – Finding Out About Contaminants

- Recently, 200 000 litres of tritium was spilt by accident at the nuclear power station in Darlington, Ontario, just east of the Greater Toronto Area. Find out some information about the “safe” levels of radioactive material in our drinking water.
- What other contaminants are in our water that cannot be filtered? What can we do in our daily lives to conserve our water for future generations?

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Many supermarkets produce beautifully-designed and illustrated brochures of Ontario grown apples and other produce. These serve as attractive and well-organized reading or visual material and often include recipes.

Not all local food production, however, is sustainable; just remember that meat production has a huge environmental footprint and that the Canadian fishery is depleting our oceans of life.

There is an excellent online guide to buying fish at this site: www.seachoice.org.

Eating seasonal organic produce, if possible directly from farmers, is the way to conserve soil, air and water and support the livelihood of people who care for land sustainability, keeping future generations in mind.

In Toronto, the Greenest City web site is about urban agriculture and building local communities: www.greenestcity.ca.

It features a story of the HOPE community garden, where many literacy ESL classes from Parkdale Library have participated.

Health and Wellness Theme

What we have dumped into the environment invariably comes back to us in a perverse way. Ecological diseases (chemical and food sensitivity, for example) are on the rise. We are paying for our reliance on fossil fuels through alarming increases in asthma, cancer, hormonal disorders, birth defects, ADD, mental diseases, etc.

In Canada and other heavily industrialized societies we now need to work longer hours in order to be able to maintain our

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wealth, which in turn makes us more stressed out and susceptible to diseases. Moreover, many of our chronic diseases are exacerbated by the swift rate of environmental change occurring around us.

There is a growing movement in many countries to stop measuring the progress of a society by its GDP alone, and use wellbeing and happiness of the nation instead as important factors shaping its personal and economic security. In this regard, an interesting read for all is Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen's *Manifesto on Measuring Economic Performance and Social Progress*.

This document can be found at: www.worldchanging.com/local/canada/archives/010574.html

In our ESL health curriculum, mental health and allergies - among the most prominent of modern conditions - deserve more emphasis than just an occasional guest speaker endorsed by a medical association. There is now well-researched information readily available to all, including ESL learners, about the links between the pollution of air, water and soil and human health.

Compelling videos such as "Exposures" (about breast cancer) and "Toxic Trespass" (on children's health and the environment) are eye opening and can be obtained from Women's Healthy Environments Network (WHEN) a non-profit, charitable organization that educates the public on the links between environmental toxins and human health. Find out more by going online to: www.womenshealthyenvironments.ca.

In the past 20 years we have seen the burden of maintaining wellness shift from the doctor to the patient. In their 1988 book, *Clini-*

cal Ecology, authors George Lewith and Julian Kenyon call the process "demedicalizing illness." As ESL teachers we can alert our newcomers to the effects on human health of chemical cleaning products, harmful substances in body products, pesticides in food, and bisphenol A (BPA) used in the production of plastic food and water containers, and so on.

Useful websites for information on health, harmful substances and better alternatives are the following:

- www.ewg.org
- www.grassrootsstore.com,
- www.environmentaldefence.ca
- www.toxicnation.ca
- www.cosmeticsdatabase.com/index.php
- www.hc-sc.gc.ca
- www.cape.ca
- www.womenshealthyenvironments.ca

A new book by Rick Smith and Bruce Lourie, *Slow Death by Rubber Duck – How the Toxic Chemistry of Everyday Life affects our Health*, is a chilling story about the effects of many well-known products on human health.

Transportation and the Environment Theme

While climate change is the most serious issue that we are facing now, the good news is that individuals can help by reducing their automobile emissions.

As commuters, there are many practical things that we can do right away. By driving 10 per cent less and walking, cycling, carpooling or using public transit, we can save 200 kg to

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Sentence Ordering

Order the words in this text to make a readable paragraph:

Note: This exercise will be made easier if you cut word strips, rather than have them printed on a handout. The three sentences can be in three different colours or in different fonts.

Your the and Planet Help Wallet

fuel just can year by save a you hundreds of dollars, a and reduce Reducing your tanks personal consump-
 tion emissions ten by almost tone.

because kilograms litre gasoline carbon every burned in a car's atmosphere releases 2.3 That's of of dioxide
 into the that's earth's engine.

is change dioxide greenhouse primary Carbon the climate contributing gas to.

Comparing and Reading Numbers

Look at the estimated annual fuel costs for different cars. Compare the costs (Exercise in reading numbers.)

	Best in class	10th best	Median
Hybrid	\$1,025	\$1,925	\$1,825
Compact	\$1,575	\$1,850	\$2,268
Mid-size	\$1,700	\$1,925	\$2,754
Full-size	\$2,000	\$2,400	\$3,105
Van/Minivan	\$2,100	\$2,775	\$3,575

Based on 20,000 km, \$1.25/litre, \$1.35 premium and NRCan fuel efficiency ratings for 2008.

Note: each year, Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) produces a free booklet that compiles fuel efficiency ratings for all new cars. Online fuel consumption ratings can be found at: www.oee.nrcan.gc.ca/transportation

Grammar – Articles

Insert an article: a, an, the or zero in the paragraph below:

Welcome to the Idle-Free Zone (for Individuals)

As ___ individual, you can be instrumental in reducing ___ environmental impacts. If every driver of ___ light duty vehicle avoided ___ idling by three minutes ___ day, collectively over ___ year, we would save 630 million litres of ___ fuel, over 1.4 million tonnes of GHG emissions, and \$630 million annually in ___ fuel costs (assuming fuel costs are \$1.00/L).

Gas Guzzler Quiz		
Which of these features are :		
✓ Fuel Savers		✓ Gas Guzzlers
✓	1. Large Engine	✓
✓	2. Overdrive	✓
✓	3. Trip Computer	✓
✓	4. Power Seats	✓
✓	5. Air Conditioning	✓
✓	6. Tinted Glasses	✓
✓	7. Sunroof	✓
✓	8. Heated Seats	✓
✓	9. Manual Transmission	✓
✓	10. Tachometer	✓
✓	11. 4-Wheel Drive	✓
✓	12. Power Locks	✓
✓	13. Cruise Control	✓

Answers: 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 13 are gas Savers.

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800 kg per year.

To learn more about Canadian efforts to fight climate change, visit www.climatechange.gc.ca

Do you have clean air where you spend your day? Do drivers idle in front of your classroom window (if it opens)?

An interesting group, called Dads Against Dirty Air distribute small cards warning drivers of unacceptable behavior. Check their web site, www.dadacanada.com. Con-



David Suzuki is an award-winning scientist, environmentalist and broadcaster, as well as a world leader in sustainable ecology

scientious parents will change the way they look at driving forever. Start a similar action with your students – nobody wants to suffer from asthma!

Encourage biking to school and praise that good habit. Teach about bicycle parts and safe riding, lobby for more cycling paths in your city. Buses on 145 routes in Toronto are now equipped with bike racks. Residents of Toronto can find a Toronto Transit Commission flyer about bike-friendly facilities and on their web site there is an instructional video, *Rack It and Rocket*. Additional info can be found at: www.toronto.ca/cycling.

For actions towards solutions, visit David Suzuki’s website and check “Sustainability within a Generation” for more everyday life challenges to change our lifestyles. Go to: www.davidsuzuki.org/NatureChallenge/What_is_it/Transportation

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Transportation is the single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and air toxins in Canada. There are approximately 17 million light-duty trucks (SUVs, passenger vans and pickups) on the road these days — together they are responsible for about 15 per cent of Canada's total carbon dioxide emissions.

There are many learning tasks that can be used in ESL classrooms, based on the Eco Driver material available at the web site: www.ecoDriver.org. ■

Resources

Radmila Rakas and Anne Cairns are Toronto teachers who have developed two presentations around environmental themes.

The first presentation explores the theme, "Inconvenient Truths" (presented at TESL Ontario 2008), with facts and stories about threats to our world. The second is titled "ESL Teaching for Sustainability" (TESL Ontario 2009) with ideas for solutions and adaptive living.

We are happy to present these workshops to interested audiences. Both themes are supported by visual and factual material and offer extensive teaching ideas. Handouts, as well as web casts of these two workshops can be found on the TESL Ontario website.

We are also developing two TESL Environment blogs, with a wide range of exercises in all four skills, as well as useful resources for teachers.

The first blog (<http://esl-radmila.blogspot.com>) is student-oriented and features a long list of tasks labeled by the topic or linguistic components. For example, practice if-clauses and at the same time raise the environmental consciousness of your students. We update the blog regularly with hot topics and fresh ideas and even offer some incentives to keep you on the edge.

The second blog (<http://esl-green.blogspot.com>) is teacher-oriented with a glossary of environmental lingo, acronyms, educational resources, scientific data, etc. For example, What does HDPE stand for? What is an environmental "hoofprint?" You can find the answers there.

If you want to check our slides on "Litter," "Fair Trade," "The Story of Stuff" video and "Teaching for Sustainability," please email us at: radmila.rakas@gmail.com with the subject line "green ESL teaching" for links to our Google documents.

We hope to inspire more teachers to teach responsibly and help learners get more awareness of eco-sustainable choices.



Radmila Rakas is a LINC instructor at South Asian Family Support Services in Scarborough. She is an environmental activist and a chocolate maker. Together with Anne Cairns of TCDSB she develops ESL materials on the environmental theme. She can be reached at: radmilarakas@yahoo.ca

PICTURE GALLERY

From the TESL Ontario Fall 2009 Conference

See more at: <http://teslon.org/galleries09.html>



Socialesl.com: One stop Web 2.0 for ESL teachers

By John Allan

Over the past two years I have been informally researching the new generation of Web tools in terms of their application and effectiveness with TESOL, particularly in creative applications that can make the learning process more dynamic, fun, cooperative and effective.

As my colleagues and I looked into this new wave of technologies, we discovered an unlimited potential for harnessing them for language teaching.

This short article serves as a model for this community as a “how-to,” to create and distribute learning opportunities or learning materials in an open source fashion.

The result of our exploration has been an entirely original web space that TESOL professionals can use to integrate into their instructional mix, or at the very least to help them become more aware of the potential of Web 2.0 in their teaching. We created **socialesl.com**.

Socialesl.com has several practical areas of interest for TESOL professionals. Each of these is described below.

The most powerful set of tools is the TESOL2.0 section. I hope the information will help teachers to become more fluent in computer-assisted language teaching and provide students of English with a supplementary means of learning the language.

Course Preparation: Prep Links

This section provides teachers with web resources that can be used mainly to generate activities for the classroom. There are over 20 tested and useful links here.

SpellingCity is a free spelling tool that can help make teaching of spelling more exciting. With online spelling games, spelling reviews, and spelling quizzes, students can memorize those weekly spelling words while having fun, and teachers will have a new tool in

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Google translate



Scribd.



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their arsenal for teaching spelling. All activities can be printed for traditional modes of instruction.

Go2web is an amazing inventory of Web2.0 sites organized into orderly categories for quick discovery.

Scribd is a social community that shares all sorts of resources. It may be a place to seek out or share documents, slide shows or other media that can be incorporated into a lesson plan.

Activities: In-class Links

These are tools that can be used with the students. Each entry has a description and a hypertext link to the resource. Of course they will require some familiarization, but they are interactive, enjoyable and engaging.

Resources such as **WriteBoard** allow students to collaborate on a common digital document that can be shared within the school or published for the world.

Google Translate is another useful tool that can be utilized as a part of an activity or to clarify an unfamiliar term.

On a more practical level, **Type Racer** allows students to practice and upgrade their basic typing skills.

As well, **Forvo** provides students with the ability to compare their pronunciation with regional accents in addition to national standards. To assist with listening and pronunciation, **Forvo** offers sorted vocabulary and terms for ESP purposes.

The resources in this section have been used and recommended as useful by ESL teachers.

Blogs

The blogosphere is enormous. Blogs about TESOL are too abundant to list on a site. Moreover, many of these blogs are suffering from atrophy. Well-intended educators start a blog either to experiment with the new technology or start a blog with good intentions to deliver expertise to the world, but the time and

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energy in maintaining a specialized blog wears down even the most dedicated educator. In the “socialesl” blog section, the links are only to bloggers who are focused on improving the use of new technologies as TESOL professionals. This section only includes bloggers who have demonstrated continued existence and exceptional standards on the Internet.

Articles

The Articles section of **socialesl.com** provides an archive of current and older articles written about computer-assisted language learning (CALL) concepts and applications. Recent articles are focused on applying Web 2.0 in TESOL situations as well as the Open Source movement.

TESOL2.0

This section of the website provides teachers with a “print and facilitate” collection of the CALL lab activities. It is broken down into three sub-sections. Each has documents that are addressed to the instructor for their consideration before attempting an activity with students. It is recommended that student lessons be delivered in a hybrid or blended mode. That is, the students and the teacher are in the same physical room while the on-line activity is attempted and completed.

Commonalities

Web 2.0 offerings have common traits. These are: association, community, interaction, contribution, tagging, fuzzy logic, multi-site distribution, marketing, rich medium of focus, and personalization. This section explains each of them in simple language for the teachers. It also provides at least two practical activities

that help reinforce these concepts with the students and the teachers.

Activities

This is the central focus of the website. It is where teachers and students use Web 2.0 resources creatively, (but with training wheels included) to achieve language-learning outcomes. The pedagogical goal is to educate the teachers on the merits of Web 2.0 while gaining confidence in their ability to function effectively with computer-assisted language learning. For the students, this section helps students to use social networking tools so they can learn in an entertaining, cooperative and yet structured manner. Each activity poses an extended challenge that may lead to all sorts of unanticipated outcomes.

Teacher Tips

The Teacher tips section provides TESOL professionals with some technical short cuts and experience on the how-tos of utilizing free internet resources. These tips should help teachers to become more self-sufficient. In addition, they may require fewer interactions with their local information technology support team.

Resources include: **Media-Convert**, **Picnik** and **Delicious**. Respectively these products provide media conversion of any sort, allow image optimization and enable the digital organizing of Internet resources for a class.

Furthermore, the site includes links to over 40 original educational technology slide-shows with plans to augment these through the cooperation of the community. Also the Web 2.0 and TESOL web links are growing; therefore, the site can be an evolving resource for both teachers and language learners.

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Licensing

This site is licensed under the Creative Commons arrangement. The site's official license is the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 United States License. Educators are free to print, copy, distribute and transmit the contents of this site. They can also re-mix the contents of the site to tailor the activities to the requirements of their students.

The conditions include attribution, non-commercial and "share alike." The original or altered activities must attribute the work to the original author or licensor of the resource. Changed works must be attributed but are not endorsed by the original author.

Altered versions can be distributed under the same license for the benefit of the TESOL community. Others cannot use the site's activities or lessons for commercial purposes.

Development Platform

The site is hosted on the Internet using a program called Joomla. It is an open source course management system or CMS. All details can be located at www.joomla.org. It has been chosen because of its indexing and expansion possibilities.

Unlike normal websites, it has a range of tools that allow for full community participation, file indexing, search functions, templates, scalability, web page authoring with a WYSIWYG interface. Simply, for free, you get a lot of functionality, which can be used without a degree in Computer Science.

Pilot Testing

Student and teacher activities in PDF form were tested in blended (face-to-face and online) and online modes. The materials are quickly altered, as they are not in print, and replaced at the site.

The most interesting test group was the TESOL sponsored Electronic Village Online participants. Over 200 educators from across the globe worked with these materials. They offered excellent suggestions that shaped and refined some of these activities.

Future development

Expansion of this site depends on the multiple factors involved in creating an open community and the identification of a specific target audience. Open communities of benevolent contributors such as in most Web 2.0 ventures can add life and direction for projects. An invitation for community registration for teachers and students is available as of March of 2010. ■



John Allan currently teaches at Niagara College and is working with New Media Language Training on the LINC learning object delivery project.

Bilingual education in a multilingual context: Incorporating L1 into linguistically diverse classrooms

By Martha Trahey



Welcoming a learner's first language into the classroom
turns a page in ESL philosophy.

Throughout my 20 years in English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching and training, the use of the first language (L1) has been discouraged and indeed often prohibited.

Nevertheless, despite my best efforts, my high school ESL students persist in reverting to their L1, and debates about bilingual education flourish in the literature (Cummins, 2007; Walqui, 2007). This has led me to take a critical look at my own classroom practices and embrace a new role for the L1 in teaching English language learners (ELLs).

Why use the L1?

According to Cummins (2000), "There are close to 150 empirical studies carried out during the past 30 years or so that have reported a positive association between additive bilingualism and students' linguistic, cognitive, or academic growth" (p. 37).

Perhaps the most convincing reason for including the L1 in linguistically diverse classrooms, however, concerns student identity and motivation.

By prohibiting the L1, the message is sent, whether intended or not, that there is no

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place for L1 in the classroom, school, and community.

If they are restricted to English only, L2 learners cannot access the complex subject matter learned by their peers, they cannot participate in the classroom, and they cannot possibly catch up (Lucas & Katz, 1994). In a reference to adult ESL which applies equally to high school ELLs, Auerbach (1993) concludes:

Thus, a monolingual approach to ESL is rejected ... because it denies learners the right to draw on their language resources and strengths; by forcing a focus on childlike uses of language and excluding the possibility of critical reflection, it may ultimately feed into the replication of relations of inequality outside the classroom, reproducing a stratum of people who can only do the least skilled and least language/literacy-dependent jobs (p. 22).

Reality check

In my own secondary ESL classroom, where hearing ten or more different L1s is not uncommon, the L1 has always played a significant role in the acquisition of English. I believe that learners will, whether permitted or not, refer to their L1 to translate vocabulary, comprehend input, make cross-linguistic comparisons and eliminate performance anxiety. However, I have also always had an “English-only” rule – specifically, once the bell goes, it’s all English all the time, *unless* the student is

- (a) Translating vocabulary.
- (b) Giving instructions to fellow students.

- (c) Talking to siblings.
- (d) Discussing texts.
- (e) Explaining grammar.
- (f) Upset.
- (g) A beginner, etc.

Not surprisingly, it has always been a losing battle. So, in a somewhat reluctant acknowledgement of the failure of this cherished rule, I wish now to provide the opportunity for the ESL students in my high school to use their L1 as a strength – to make L2 content accessible, to develop knowledge, and to enhance the acquisition of English. Below is a list of the minimal ways in which the L1 is currently used, and suggested ways to increase the use of the L1 in my own multilingual ESL classroom and mainstream classrooms in my school.

Current uses of L1

Presently we:

1. Arrange, monitor and reward L1 buddies and peer tutors for in-school/in-class assistance (Coehlo, 2004).
2. Arrange linguistic exchanges (i.e. weekly hour-long meetings) among mainstream students studying foreign languages and native-speakers in the ESL class.
3. Encourage students to make announcements in the L1 for holidays, birthdays, every day.
4. Introduce new vocabulary by dividing the class into L1 groups and assigning a subset of the new words to each group. After translating the new words into L1, small groups are re-formed to

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include one student from each L1 group. Students then teach their sublist to partners with different L1s.

5. Provide beginner students with bilingual picture dictionaries for use in the initial courses.
6. Encourage students to support peers in L1 throughout the school day.
7. Encourage students to bring music from the home country for school choirs and bands to learn.
8. Organize an ESL Film Club presenting movies from the home country, played in L1 with English subtitles.

Suggested uses of L1

Using L1 sources:

1. Conduct multicultural literature circles (Coehlo, 2004), using L1 literature as a basis for L2 projects.
2. Find L1 materials on the topics covered in mainstream classes with the help of the Internet, libraries, and adult volunteers to supplement L2 texts.
3. Recruit advanced ESL students or adult volunteers to prepare or translate existing study guides or review questions in L1 for upcoming tests and exams.
4. Have students:
 - Base L2 writing on L1 sources, such as narratives and movies for language arts or websites and reference materials for research projects.
 - Use L1 news sources (e.g. newspapers, websites, radio) for L2 tasks such as recording a news broadcast or criti-

cally analyzing differences in news reports across countries (Cummins, 2001). For multilingual newspapers, see *The paper boy* www.thepaperboy.com or *Ecola* www.newsdirectory.com.

- Interview members of their own L1 community for projects involving adult interviews - common in career development classes (Cummins, 2001) or interview L1 peers to prepare for writing tasks (Coehlo, 2004).
- Use L1 information to answer questions from the perspective of their home cultures in content classes such as social studies (demographics, history, geographical features), language arts (literature, film), and physical education (sports, exercise habits, health).
- Compare literature across languages, such as different versions of fables or movies, analyzing their similarities and differences.
- Select well-known figures from the home country as the focus of author studies or biographical reports, basing research on L1 information and presenting quotations and excerpts in the L1.
- Present art, posters, graffiti, political cartoons or other visuals from the L1, for projects requiring visuals.
- Re-present material from L1 in a different form in L2 (Walqui, 2007). For example, an L1 documentary on a social issue of importance in the home country could be presented in a poster in English for social studies class. Recipes, kitchen tools and cooking techniques from the home country could form the basis of assignments for nutri-

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tion classes. (See Coehlo, 2004 for other suggestions.)

Producing in L1

1. Assign regular journal writing and encourage students to insert an L1 word if they don't know the English word (Coehlo, 2004).
2. Encourage beginning students to write projects and reports in L1, with the help of L1 peers if available. If not, instructions can be typed into a computer and translated using web translation (e.g. Google language tools, Yahoo Babel fish, Freelang, SDL Freetranslation etc.). Students can type their work on computer for translation back to English, or an L1 peer or adult volunteer can mediate between the teacher and student to review the student's work.
3. Have students:
 - Complete preparatory activities for L2 projects and writing tasks in L1, such as brainstorming, outlining, and planning (Coehlo, 2004).
 - Produce first drafts of academic papers in L1 (Coehlo, 2004; Lucas & Katz, 1994).
 - Write autobiographies or biographies of other students in L1 (Cummins, 2001).
 - Create dual-language projects in all courses (dual-language narratives/cartoons/videos/poems in language arts/ESL; dual language posters/websites/presentations/

brochures in science/social studies/math) (Cummins, 2007). Exemplary models of bilingual projects can be found at the Dual Language Showcase — <http://thornwood.peelschools.org/Dual/> and also at the Multiliteracies web site www.multiliteracies.ca (Cummins, 2007).

- Write letters home to parents in L1 describing courses, grading, and school requirements (Cummins, 2001).
- Practice for upcoming presentations in L1 groups, reviewing the presentation in L1 as needed before practising in English.

Using L1 for comprehension

1. Make sure students can translate headings, titles and subtitles into L1 before continuing with a lecture or reading.
2. Provide L1 subtitles for films and documentaries used in mainstream classes where possible (Cook, 2001).
3. Have students:
 - Use heuristics in the L1 to aid comprehension of mainstream materials. These can include L1 note-taking, graphic organizers, diagrams, or preview/prediction materials (e.g. KWL charts, anticipatory guides) (Walqui, 2007).
 - Work together in L1 groups to read textbook materials in content classes.

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Translating into L1

1. Provide mainstream textbooks/notes in electronic format (or locate materials of similar topic/level on the Internet) so students can use online translators to help with comprehension.
2. Use translation in ESL classrooms (e.g. translating conversations or expressions into L1, translating L1 input (TV program, movie, text) for summary in L2).
3. Have students:
 - Write in their L1s and translate into English using web translation (see list above). Beginner students can express themselves, and more advanced students can correct the version generated electronically.
 - Use bilingual dictionaries, especially at the lower levels (Cummins, 2007; Lucas & Katz, 1994) and whenever possible make reference to the L1 when teaching English vocabulary.

Using L1 around the school

1. Display materials in other languages around the class or school (e.g. poems in L1 for a unit on poetry, multilingual versions of signs around the school) (Coehlo, 2004; Cummins, 2001).
2. Provide multilingual reading material in libraries (Cummins, 2001), such as Penguin dual-language readers (Cook, 2001) or through the International Children's Digital Library www.icdlbooks.org (Coehlo, 2004).

3. Arrange and monitor between-school tutoring with older (i.e. high school) students helping elementary or intermediate-level L1 peers (Coehlo, 2004).
4. Display multilingual posters of technical vocabulary related to the content area on walls of mainstream classrooms. These can be prepared by students themselves.
5. Have students learn expressions and linguistic information about each other's L1s (Cummins, 2001) and arrange lunch-time "language classes" where ESL students teach their L1 to peers or teachers.

Connecting through L1

- Use technology to connect with L1 speakers through coordinated e-pals projects (Cook, 2001) or sister class exchanges (Cummins, 2007).
- Connect students with fellow L1 speakers in other cities nationwide or internationally to compare experiences and cooperate on writing projects, such as a guide for newcomers to the host country or a comparison of topics being studied in mainstream classes.

Certainly, incorporating and monitoring these strategies can be a challenge; making sure students are on task when the teacher is not sure what they're talking about can be daunting at best and intimidating at worst. However, in my experience, the potential benefits of students' becoming engaged with learning, especially beginning students in main-

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stream classes, far outweigh the drawback of my own discomfort.

The teacher's unfamiliarity with the students' L1s is by no means an impediment to welcoming these languages into the classroom. L1 use can still be validated and fostered to promote acceptance of the L1, a crucial part of the student's identity, and to maximize the potential for the student's prior knowledge to enhance L2, and other, learning. ■



Martha Trahey is an ESL teacher in the Eastern School District of Newfoundland and Labrador, and is presently a PhD candidate in Second Language Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto.

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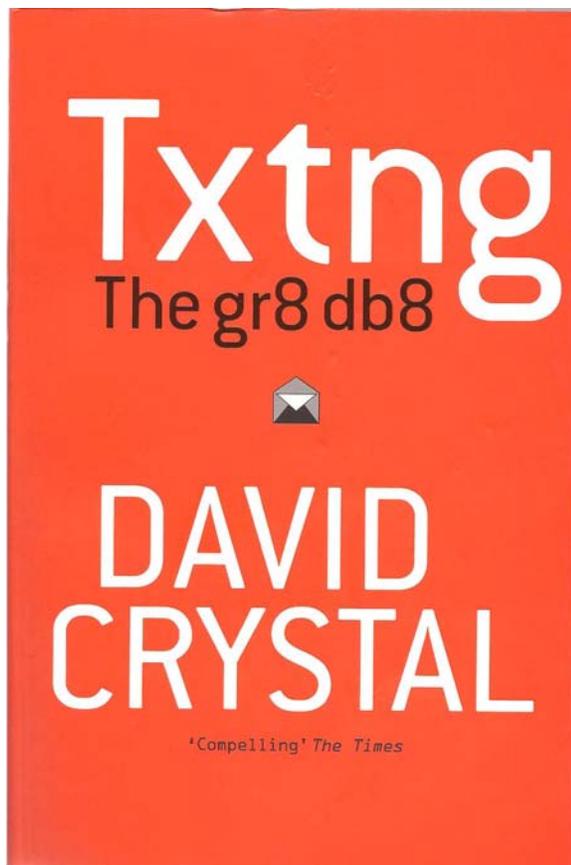
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BOOK REVIEW

Txtng, The gr8 db8

by David Crystal

Review by Marg Heidebrecht



Txtng, The gr8 db8 by David Crystal (Oxford University Press, 2008.)



The sky is falling. Again. The pervasive, intrusive ringing of cell phones has been somewhat silenced, only to be replaced by downward stares and fumbling thumbs as text messages are launched into the e-air. The sky is falling as articulate communication is reduced to a series of abbreviations and emoticons. Or is it?

David Crystal, the linguist, scholar and author (*Language and the Internet, English as a Global Language, The Language Revolution* to name a few) recently partnered with Oxford University Press to tackle the

subject in his book *Txtng, The gr8 db8*. As someone who fields linguistic questions, Crystal was inundated with concerns about the impact of texting on language. This book is the result of his exploration of current research on the topic.

His eight chapters take a journalistic approach with a variation on the five *wh*-questions, and the highlights include a *who*, two *whats* and two *whys*.

Who is texting? None of us are sur-

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Has there ever been a linguistic phenomenon which has aroused such curiosity, suspicion, fear, confusion, antagonism, fascination, excitement, and enthusiasm, all at once?
And in such a short space of time?
Less than a decade ago, hardly anyone had heard of it.

-David Crystal, *Txtng the gr8 db8*, p.4



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prised to find out that teens and 20-somethings are the dominant texters with a few geezers and geezer-ettes (my word for my peers...) using the tool. We suspected, and Crystal confirmed, that parents caught on after their offspring, but it was his statistics about Americans and women that grabbed me. He cites Naomi Baron, an American linguist, who explains that in contrast to their European counterparts, American young people had home computers, were familiar with keyboarding, had more dollars in their pockets, more free minutes on their cell

phones, bedrooms of their own (aka privacy) and drove cars to get around — all of which resulted in their initial reluctance, need, desire or time to text.

Richard Ling, a Norwegian researcher, found that the frequency and style of text messages differed between men and women, with women texting more often, writing longer and more complex messages as well as using more abbreviations, salutations and farewells.

What makes texting distinctive? Visually, it includes pictograms, logograms,

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initialisms. Don't worry – he includes a glossary to remind you what those are. Vowels are often drppd, spelling is non-standard which isn't much of a stretch for Canadians who flip between standard forms all the time, and short forms abound — makes sense given how many times you have to push each phone button to get the letter you want!

Creatively, it's the word play that is unique, as the short forms, images, puns and jokes merge in a way not possible on a legal pad or word document.

What do people text about? Without court orders or TMZ (distributors of that oxymoron called celebrity news), it's hard to gather the data to find out for sure, but Crystal's list includes social functions (greeting, encouraging, reminding, and updating as well as bullying, harassing, firing), informational functions (ranging from “which Tim's are you at?” to Amber Alerts), marketing and, less essential but surprisingly frequent, gathering large groups of people together for the purpose of public stunts! Personally, my favourite is the one where everybody's dancing in a train station...

Why text? Crystal imagines “a pitch to a potential investor. ‘I have this great idea (for) ... using your phone. The users won't have a familiar keyboard. Their fingers will have trouble finding the keys. They will be able to send messages, but with no more than 160 characters at a time. The writing on the screen will be very small and difficult to read... Oh, and every now and again you won't be able to send or receive anything because your battery will run out.’” and concludes that the popularity of texting defies logic.

So why text at all? It's cheap, immediate and private. In most parts of the world it's cheaper to text than talk, and people own cell phones but not computers. The message reaches its recipient right away, wherever he/she may be. In large families, on crowded streets, trains (and classrooms) no one but the sender (oh yeah, and those pesky reporters when athletes behave badly) knows what's being written.

Contrast this to a cell phone conversation – the entire subway car knows that you just picked up a latte, will be getting off at the next stop and no, you haven't seen the movie Avatar yet.

Why abbreviate whn u txt? One reason is technical: individual text messages, also known as SMS for Short Message Service, are limited to 160 characters. (For a more complete technical explanation see “How SMS Works” at the website <http://communication.howstuffworks.com/sms.htm>).

Furthermore, it's fast and fun. But infuriating. Especially to the aforementioned geezer/ettes, which is a good segue into his second why in the final chapter.

Why all the fuss? Crystal reminds us that short forms have been part of our language for a long time. An MP said something on the CBC news at 2 p.m. about NAFTA and the UN. Caught you! YOU use them and even though they don't look as strange (= unfamiliar) as TTYL, LOL, :-)) they are short forms that may have upset and baffled people when 1st introduced.

The chapter explores various fears parents and educators have about the impact of texting on academic assignments. Crystal

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suggests that learning appropriate use is the key. Another concern is that with the shift to brevity, people may not be able to give answers and explanations that, like in the old song, are deep and wide.

In addition to these no-nonsense *wh*-questions, Crystal includes something delightful and something superfluous. Delightful? The entries to *The Guardian's* text message poetry competition, including this 2002 winning poem by Emma Passmore (p.74):

I left my pictur on th ground wher u walk
so that somday if th sun was jst right
& th rain didn't wash me awa
u might c me out of th corner of yr i & pic
me up

Word's spellcheck is going crazy but I love that poem!

Superfluous? Appendix A which includes English text abbreviations. It's faster to look them up on-line or ask any 15-year-old. And Appendix B which includes text abbreviations for 11 other languages which would only help me if I actually *spoke* one of those 11 languages, in which case a 15-year-old native speaker of Czech or Finnish, or the other nine languages would, again, be more helpful.

Text happens. Sometimes right under our noses and in our classrooms. Sometimes in the office, hallway, washroom. It's how literacy is taking shape in the 21st century.

As a language teacher I agree with Crystal when he says, "I am fascinated (by texting) for it is the latest manifestation of the

human ability to be linguistically creative and to adapt language to suit the demands of diverse settings. In texting we are seeing, in a small way, language in evolution." ■

Number please:

- In 2000, people in U.K. sent 12.2 billion text messages. By 2004 it had doubled.
- Christmas day 2006 in the U.K., 205 million text messages went out.
- Worldwide in 2000, 17 billion text messages were sent.
- One year later, worldwide in 2001, 250 billion text messages were sent.
- Industry analysts have predicted that this year over 2.4 trillion text messages will be sent worldwide.



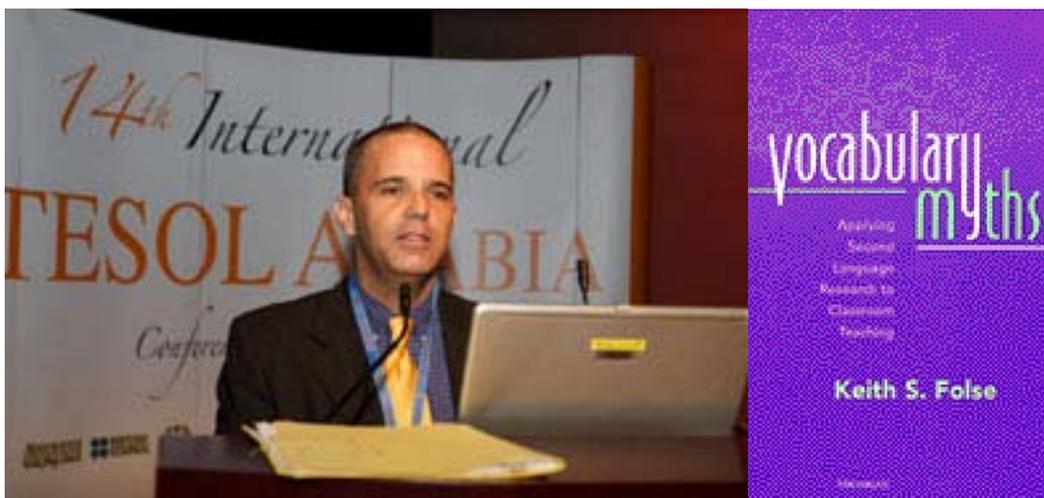
Marg Heidebrecht is still clearing clutter in Dundas while she looks for a bungalow on a bus route. She teaches what's been nicknamed "lovely LINC 6" at Mohawk College. Her grown-up kids taught her to text, but her feeble attempts to abbreviate make them ROTFL (roll on the floor laughing).

BOOK REVIEW

Vocabulary Myths: Applying Second Language Research to Classroom Teaching

by Keith S. Folse

Review by Tania Pattison



Author questions common conceptions in compelling style, but his words may not convince everyone.

Early in his teaching career, Keith S. Folse entered a small store in Japan craving home-made biscuits and looking for the flour he needed to bake them. Knowing basic Japanese grammar but lacking the word for *flour*, he tried to get around this with an explanation (“before bread”), only to be met with blank stares from the storekeepers. He knew no synonyms, and he couldn’t draw flour. Eventually, Folse noticed one of his students outside the store, ran outside, and asked for the Japanese translation of *flour*. Returning to the store with the answer, he found himself directed to the produce section and shown chrysanthemums...*flowers*. Folse never did make his biscuits.

So begins the first of Folse’s eight myths about vocabulary learning: **In learning another language, vocabulary is not as important as grammar or other areas.**

Throughout his book, *Vocabulary Myths: Applying Second Language Research to Classroom Teaching*, Folse attempts to re-examine and debunk this and seven other commonly held beliefs about vocabulary learning and teaching.

It was with a mixture of curiosity and trepidation that I agreed to review this book. I had just finished the second edition of my own 50-page booklet on vocabulary-learning strategies, written for EAP students here at

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Trent. In this booklet, I emphasize the importance of strategies like guessing meaning from context. Reading on the back cover of *Vocabulary Myths* that another fallacy is *Guessing words from context is an excellent strategy for learning L2 vocabulary*, I was interested—and a bit nervous—to find out what else I had been doing wrong.

Vocabulary Myths starts with an opening chapter in which Folse discusses the nature of vocabulary. No controversy here—this is a general overview, first, of what we mean by the term *vocabulary*, and second, of what we mean by *knowing* a word. Folse identifies various types of vocabulary—single words, set phrases, idioms, and so on. He goes on to examine the ways in which a learner can “know” a word: meaning(s), spelling, pronunciation, usage, frequency, and more. Folse’s point here is “that a word is not just a single word and that knowing a word is actually a multipart task.”

Then, we get to the main section of the book—the eight myths. These are:

- In learning another language, vocabulary is not as important as grammar or other areas.
- Using word lists to learn L2 vocabulary is unproductive.
- Presenting new vocabulary in semantic fields facilitates learning.
- The use of translations to learn new vocabulary should be discouraged.
- Guessing words from context is an excellent strategy for learning L2 vocabulary.
- The best vocabulary learners make use of one or two really specific vocabulary learning strategies.
- The best dictionary for L2 learners is a monolingual dictionary.
- Teachers, textbooks, and curricula cover L2 vocabulary adequately.

Some of this may come as a shock to those of us who warn our students about the difficulty of learning words in lists, or who urge them to forgo their electronic bilingual dictionaries in favour of English-only ones. Yet the evidence presented by Folse to counter these assumptions is both entertaining and compelling.

Each chapter follows the same structure. First, Folse starts with a section called *In the Real World*. Here, drawing upon his 25-year teaching career and his own experiences as a learner of six other languages, he presents an anecdote designed to show the fallacy of each assumption. We learn how knowing one simple word (*komugi*) would have enabled him to buy flour in Japan and cook the biscuits he craved. We sympathize with his struggles to make sense of a Japanese lesson until a fellow student whispered the meaning of the single word that was holding him back (“It’s a kind of hors d’oeuvre”). We smile at his attempt to break down the Spanish word *repollo* into *re-*, meaning *to a great extent* and *pollo*, meaning *chicken*, and coming up with “a really, really, really big chicken” instead of the correct meaning—*cabbage*. Through all this, we nod in agreement because it all makes so much sense.

Then, to further prove his point, Folse moves on to *What the Research Says*, an explo-

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ration of the research that demonstrates the mythical nature of each assumption. When discussing the myth that *Guessing words from context is an excellent strategy for learning L2 vocabulary*, Folse presents a comprehensive overview of the literature on this topic, clearly summarized in a table and described in detail in the text of the book. In fact, one key strength of Folse's book is the amount of recent research that he cites to support his claims of mythology. The book includes an extensive bibliography, much of it from the last ten to fifteen years.

Finally, true to the subtitle *Applying Second Language Research to Classroom Teaching*, Folse presents at the end of each chapter a section entitled *What You Can Do*. Here, we find generalities and truisms rather than a wealth of specific activities ("Use thematic presentations of new words when possible" or "Make use of the vocabulary software as well as resources on the Internet"). While some of this may seem obvious to the experienced vocabulary teacher, Folse's suggestions serve as a welcome reminder of the various approaches we can take to vocabulary instruction.

Compelling as Folse's arguments are, the individual teacher may not immediately accept all of them. Some of us will continue to urge our students to use context clues to learn new words, or to buy monolingual dictionaries. On the other hand, others of us will breathe a sigh of relief when Folse says that it is actually OK to look a word up in a bilingual dictionary. Different teachers will respond to Folse's myths in different ways . . . and there is nothing wrong with this. Perhaps the greatest strength of *Vocabulary Myths* is that Folse draws together in one volume the recent re-

search on the topic of vocabulary acquisition, analyzes it from a fresh perspective, and gives us plenty to think about.

As Folse points out, vocabulary acquisition has, until recently, not been given the respect it deserved; studies on grammar, pronunciation, composition, reading, culture, and even body language have received more attention. As the back cover states, the goal of this book is "to foster a paradigm shift that correctly views vocabulary as fundamental in any L2 learning process and demonstrates that research supports this goal..."

If *Vocabulary Myths* can attract a little more attention to this topic and further the conversation on what works and what doesn't, Folse will have achieved his goal.

As for my own booklet on vocabulary-learning strategies . . . I haven't changed anything yet; for now, I am keeping an open mind, but I will certainly think about Folse's myths when I see my own students peppering their reading passages with Chinese translations of individual words. And when the time comes to write the third edition of my booklet...well, time will tell. ■



Tania Pattison teaches EAP at Trent University.

BOOK REVIEW

Flocabulary — The Hip-hop Approach to SAT-level Vocabulary Building

By Blake Harrison and Alexander Rappaport

Review by Jim Papple



Educators who rock: Co-founders of *Flocabulary*, Blake Harrison (left) and Alex Rappaport, kick back. They head a creative team producing hip-hop-related language learning materials.

Learning vocabulary doesn't have to be dull routine anymore. Rap music, once stigmatized as having little socially redeeming value, is actually a great way to teach tricky academic expressions. Sound crazy? Hip-hop in the classroom is not as wild an idea as one might think. There are already many associations between the hip-hop world and the classroom.

For instance, you have Professor Griff from Public Enemy, KRS-One, "the teacha,"

having lectured at Harvard, and self-proclaimed poet laureate Can-i-bus. Scholastic books have even published a series of children's books featuring the rhyming couplets of famous rappers such as L.L. Cool J! (*And the Winner Is...*, Scholastic, 2002).

Now comes *Flocabulary*, a text that melds hip-hop beats with SAT-level vocabulary instruction and takes it one step further. Founders Blake Harrison (aka Emcee Escher) and

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Alex Rappaport struggled with vocabulary in school as teens. They hit upon the idea when they realized that they were far more able to recall rap lyrics than the drills from their English classes (Bradley, 2005). *Flocabulary's* primary purpose is to increase student retention of academic vocabulary, but in a fun and inspiring way. Rappaport provides the beats while Harrison writes the lyrics, which range from topics of Shakespeare and mathematics to dating and fast food. In the song FLO + CAB, Harrison introduces themselves:

“Like a boomerang we’re back, together again, the collusion, two people huddled and making a plan. Rocking iPods to Etch-A-Sketches, it’s Escher, urgent and exigent, exerting mad pressure.” (*Flocabulary*, p. 50)

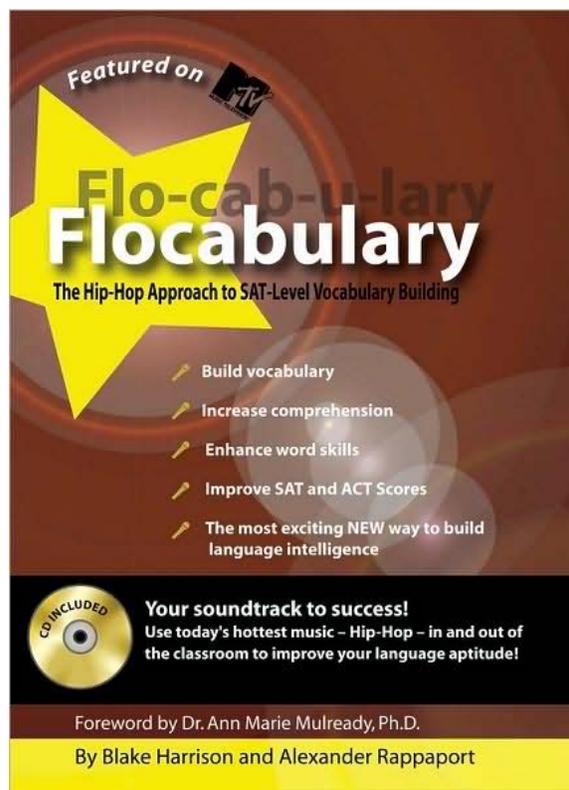
Mainstream rap is often accused of pandering to the lowest common denominator with songs like “The Thong song” or “Because I got high,” but Harrison never writes down to his listeners, engaging them with big ideas. Nevertheless, the vocabulary is always the central focus. Each song contains highlighted SAT level words with clear but succinct definitions in the margins. Each song is complemented by vocabulary exercises like synonym matching, sentence completion and reading reviews.

The book also contains a chapter that explains the narrative of each song along with its extensive list of allusions and figurative language—a lifesaver for ESL students as the text is besotted with cultural references of the likes of Judge Judy, Tony Danza, and Mos Def. Of course, the text wouldn’t be complete without an audio CD to listen along with, and surpris-

ingly enough the tunes are catchy and the lyrics are insightful with a certain kitschy appeal that will keep your head bobbing.

For anyone who thinks that the hip-hop stylings of *Flocabulary* sound like a retread of Carolyn Graham’s successful series *Jazz Chants* or even the time-worn *School House Rock* videos, this is the rare exception. The combined efforts of Harrison and Rappaport have created a slick sounding, easy-to-use program that is just cool enough to be engaging for high-school ESL students, while challenging enough to please their teachers. It also provides a way

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Flocabulary - The Hip-hop Approach to SAT-level Vocabulary Building, by Blake Harrison and Alexander Rappaport. Cider Mill Press, 2006 (Book and CD)

Flocabulary, the website is at www.flocabulary.com

most part manages to blend them into a convincing narrative. Still, it is not uncommon to have one SAT word defined by another as in this example from Myriad operations:

“A **travesty**’s the same thing as a **tragedy**, ‘cause a **tragedy** is the opposite of a comedy. A **travesty** is a bad imitation or a **parody**.” (*Flocabulary*, pp.59-60)

However, with songs that feature, on average, 50 new words, it is no surprise that a few of them are a bit of a stretch. Academic words come into frequent contact with street slang too, which at times makes for a jarring experience.

Part of the appeal of listening to conscious-rap is its counter-culture/anti-establishment stance that distances itself from mainstream culture.

According to University of McGill professors Sarkar & Winer (2002) hip-hop is an eloquent expression of rage functioning as a “particularly biting form of local social commentary” (p. 185). As a result, the ideas and subject matter of hip-hop have a certain appeal that most school material cannot match. Yet, *Flocabulary* bridges the ‘crunk’ with the curriculum.

Of all the musical genres, hip-hop has spread the most globally. Rap acts exist on nearly every corner of the globe and represent nearly every social stratum from urban American youth to Muslim women (McMurry, 2008).

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for improving students’ listening and speaking skills.

Unlike its predecessors, *Flocabulary* positions itself as one small component in a whole lifestyle that includes hip-hop music, break-dancing, freestyling, and street fashion.

Are the rhymes ‘dope’ enough to support such lofty goals? Not quite, but there are plenty of rappers spitting polysyllabic rhymes today like Nas, Rakim, Killah Priest, or the group Cannibal Ox, each with a vocabulary rivalling the work found on this disc. However, content, regional accents, and expletives are all controlled for in *Flocabulary*. And it is no easy task to make rhymes out of mouthfuls such as *ratiocinate*, *loquacious*, *circumlocution*, and *meritorious*, but to his credit Harrison for the

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For ESL students rap provides a way to incorporate both their first language identity and their second.

The sociolinguist Alastair Pennycook (2007) acknowledges that hip-hop can be used to explore youth identities, the politics of language and the processes of 'glocalization.'

Last year I had an experience with a student who was a big fan of the Chinese-born rapper Jin, formerly of the Rough Ryder crew.

My student adopted his hairstyle, looks, and even began performing his own material much like his hometown hero. For this student, hip-hop was very much a part of his identity, a point that has not been lost on Harrison and Rappaport. They have tapped into the transformative power of hip-hop and language identity, by encouraging junior hip-hop disciples to take part in freestyle rap battles, through their online components.

Just as rap crews like Rip Slyme (from Japan) and Drunken Tiger (from Korea) use extensive code switching from their L1 to L2, ESL students will be able to take the source material of *Flocabulary* and shape it to conform to their own individual tastes and perhaps even language(s). Harrison and Rappaport have taken great care to create more than just your average listening and vocabulary text.

Cider Mill Press has taken the same amount of care in putting the book together. The text itself is constructed almost like a board book with a sturdy cover, spine and thicker pages, making it very durable for either self-study or in-class work. The playful watermarks and icons also elevate the usual dryness of vocabulary learning.

As Pennycook (2007) notes, hip-hop "is inevitably part of school culture and becomes either formally or informally, part of the school

curriculum" (p. 90). If you think hip-hop is not appropriate for the classroom, you would be surprised by this little vocabulary-building book. *Flocabulary* is for students who want to move away from illiteracy and arrive at illiteracy. Word up, indeed! ■

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Jim Papple is the speaking coordinator at Brock University, where he has worked since 1999. A devote hip-hop head since his teens, Jim lists Xzibit, KRS-ONE, and Sick Jacken as his personal favs.

BOOK REVIEW

Can I Have a Word with You?

By Howard Richler

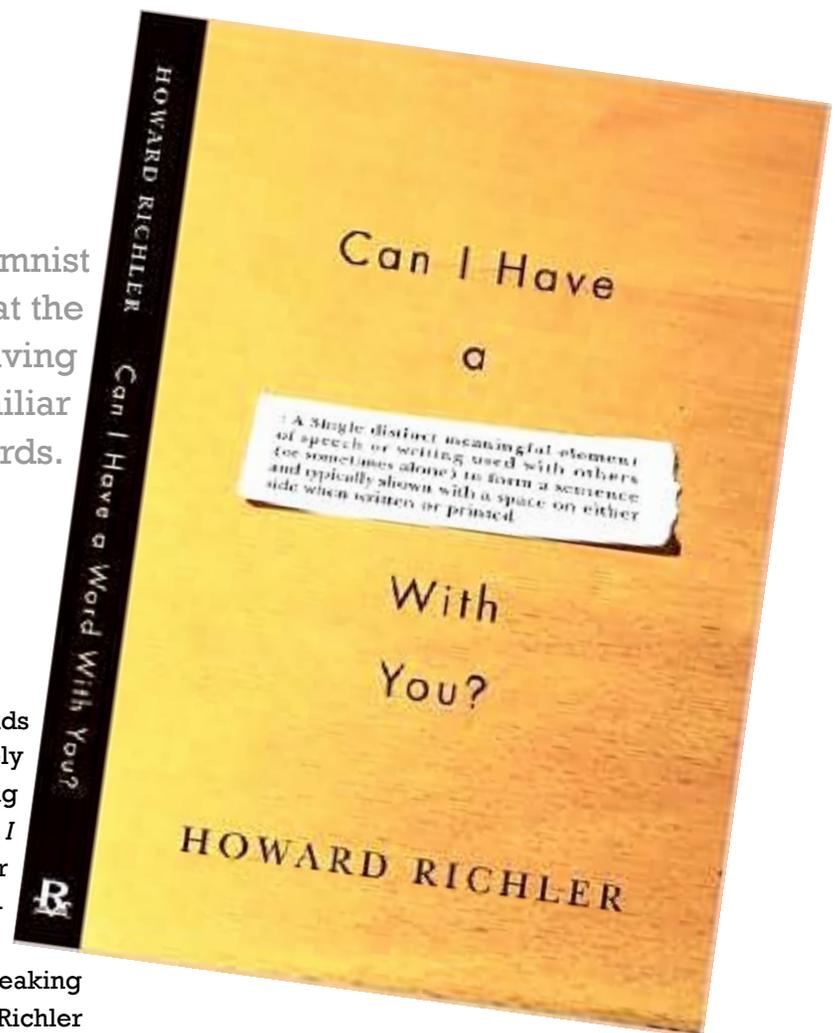
Review by Evelyn Pedersen

Newspaper columnist cleverly looks at the dynamic and evolving nature of familiar English words.

If grammar is the cement that holds utterances together, then surely words are the most basic building blocks of oral communication. In *Can I Have a Word with You?* Montreal writer Howard Richler considers the evolution of a wide sampling of English words. Drawing largely from his “Speaking of Language” columns for the *Gazette*, Richler has compiled a neat little volume for readers to ponder over their morning coffee or keep on their bedside tables.

With insight and wit Richler explores the origins and implications of everyday words such as “enjoy,” “fun,” “marriage,”

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Can I Have a Word with You?

By Howard Richler. Ronsdale Press, 2007;

soft cover, 187 pp.

(Continued from page 44)

“nickname,” “okay,” “phobia,” and “resident,” as well as the more recent inclusions “geek,” “Spanglish,” “cyber,” “yada-yada-yada,” “Xmas,” and “fuhgeddaboutit.”

In the same vigilant spirit as Lynne Truss in *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*, Richler tackles problems of usage, such as the perennial misuse of “less,” as well as the ongoing debate over whether or not “hopefully” may be used as a sentence adverb. He also examines a number of foreign borrowings, including “schmuck,” “malaprop,” and “portmanteau.”

Now a volume such as this may not seem to have any direct classroom application, but this much is certain: an understanding of the dynamic nature of the words we employ on a daily basis can help inform our instruction. We must be able to demonstrate to learners that language is a living organism, and that the English of today may have significantly different connotations than the English of twenty years ago.

The entire collection is infused with humour. In the entry on “mondegreen,” Richler relates that “The term was coined by writer Sylvia Wright. As a child she had heard the Scottish ballad *The Bonnie Earl of Murray*, which she interpreted thus:

*Ye Highlands and Ye Lowlands
O where hae ye been?
They hae slain the Earl of Murray
And Lady Mondegreen.*

Sylvia Wright was wrong in thinking that a double homicide had occurred. The ‘Lady Mondegreen’ was a projection of her



Howard Richler was born in Montreal in 1948, and graduated from Concordia University in 1969. For three decades he worked in the steel industry. In 1992, he began to write a weekly column, ‘Speaking of Language’, for the Book Section of the *Montreal Gazette*, in which he highlights idiosyncracies of the English language. His books include *The Dead Sea Scroll Palindromes*, *Take my Words, A Bawdy Language*, and *Global Mother Tongue*.

romantic imagination, for the last line in fact was not ‘Lady Mondegreen,’ but ‘*laid him on the green.*’” (pg. 101; emphasis mine).

Granted, you may not want to bring audio recordings of old Scottish ballads into your classroom, but an awareness of the possibilities caused by misperceived linking and blending is useful for TESL practitioners, making us more sensitive to learners’ struggles to understand spoken English. *Hopefully*, our learners’ misunderstandings are less distressing than Ms. Wright’s. ■



Evelyn Pedersen teaches in the University of Toronto’s English Language Program. Since reading *Can I Have a Word With You?* she has been eavesdropping on conversations all around her in an effort to identify malapropisms and mondegreens.

BOOK REVIEW

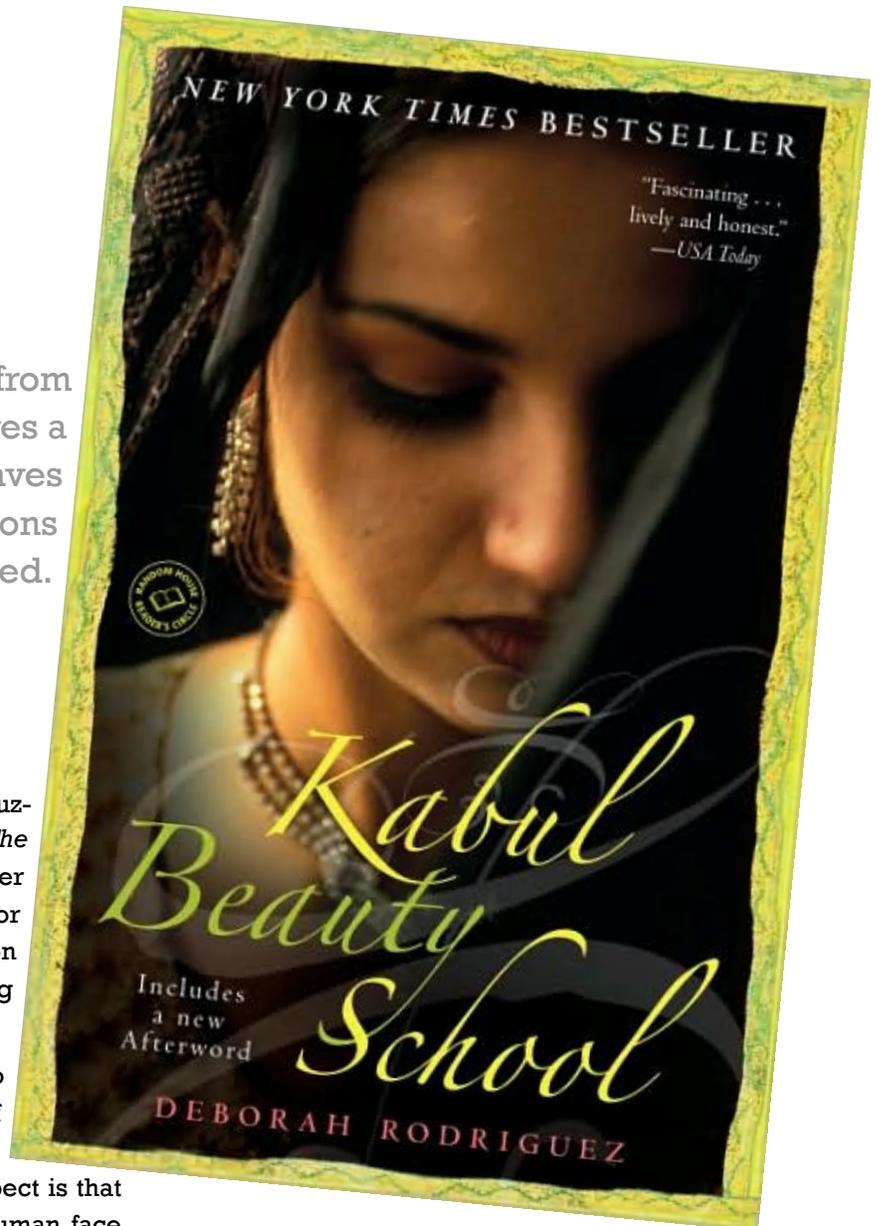
Kabul Beauty School
by Deborah Rodriguez
Review by Judy Pollard Smith

Popular story from Afghanistan weaves a colourful tale but leaves some critical questions unanswered.

K*abul Beauty School* is a puzzling little book. It was on *The New York Times* bestseller list, which can be a detriment for some readers, but this non-fiction offering does have enough riveting anecdotes in it to keep us going.

ESL professionals like to celebrate those bits and pieces of other people's lives and mores that are uplifting, moving. What we expect is that multicultural literature will put a human face on the world. Unfortunately, this book does not put a human face on men at all. The women are dear, but the men, well...

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Kabul Beauty School by Deborah Rodriguez. Random House 2007 Non-fiction paperback 278 pages, plus

Reader's Guide

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Ms. Rodriguez leaves us little to celebrate, in spite of the fact that she claims to love Afghanistan for a variety of reasons. Given the violence, the sewers running with filth, the muddy roads, the lack of running water or electricity, the choking dust that covers the city, the cheating neighbours, the bullying and violence towards women, the rules that state who you can kill and who you cannot, and the malevolent presence of the gun-toting Taliban, it becomes difficult for the reader to ascertain what the author's reasons might be for loving her life in Kabul.

For any book of non-fiction to have credibility it helps if the author has some herself. In this case, it is difficult to trust Ms. Rodriguez's take on the world. It's a gargantuan display of naiveté; she walked into a masochistic, violence-infested culture and decided that the women needed a beauty school to train them for jobs outside the home. While her mission was noble, it was apparent that it was she herself who needed an escape from a troubled life in the U.S. It tests the reader's limits upon realizing that she left her own two sons back home in Michigan with her mother so she could spend five years helping women in a land she knew nothing about.

Ms Rodriguez did help a lot of women no doubt, but the culture barrier was huge. She married a man she had only just met. He was already married, spoke only Dari and was a former *mujahideen*. She spends a lot of the book talking about their stressful relationship. (Hello Ms. Rodriguez! What were you thinking?) As a result, I had no way of knowing if the stories she presents about Afghani life are pure fact or are embroidered.



Teaching with style: author Deborah Rodriguez and her beauty students.

“The Kabul Beauty School provides a safe haven for my students and the women who work in the salon. We go through family crises, celebrations and hardships together.

Because I'm a foreigner, I bring up subjects that my Afghan teachers would not.”

There are too many intricate tales of so many women that the reader stops trying to straighten out the Shaz's from the Baseera's. Everybody's story is worse than sad. The singular moment of joy was when the women graduated from the Beauty School. Otherwise it's all about beatings and vicious cigarette burns on soles of feet, scars on the back, hair-pulling and rapes, all at the hands of Afghan men.

This book won kudos everywhere, but not from me. The story it tells may be all true, but I need more author trust to accept it at face value. ■

Judy Pollard Smith teaches at Mohawk College in Hamilton.

2009 FALL CONFERENCE PLENARY SPEAKERS

Reviewing the Guest Speakers from TESL Ontario's 37th Annual Conference

Five guest speakers explored topics of importance to the work of ESL professionals at the TESL Ontario 37th annual conference.

Here they are, in review.



Lynda Goldman

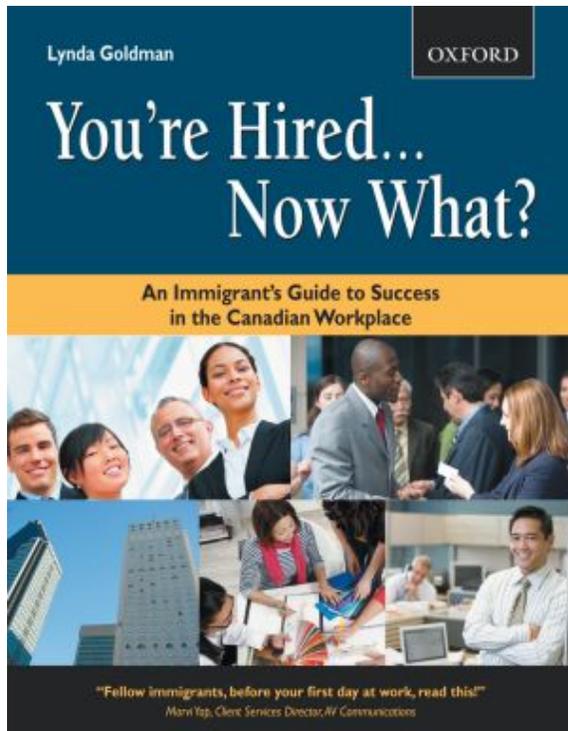
Lynda Goldman is engaged in corporate communications and marketing, with an emphasis on cross-cultural communications.

For 15 years she worked as an ESL instructor at Concordia University in Montreal, teaching international students from diverse cultural backgrounds. She has co-authored 27 best-selling ESL textbooks. In the business sector she has worked with corporations such as Pfizer and TD Bank. Her newest book is *An Immigrant's Guide to Succeeding in the Canadian Workplace*, published by Oxford University Press (2009).

Lynda Goldman focused on how ESL instructors can help L2 learners understand non-verbal communication—body language—in the workplace. Body language is a highly important aspect of all human communication and used inappropriately it can have negative outcomes.

As an example, Goldman pointed to the recent public furor across the U.S. when President Obama, on a state visit to Japan,

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You're Hired ... Now What?: A Immigrant's Guide to Success in the Canadian Workplace by Lynda Goldman.
Published by Oxford University Press, 2009

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bowed to the Emperor. Some Americans saw it as 'inappropriate, subservient, weak, or ugly'; others viewed it as 'an appropriate sign of respect' and 'showing a culturally-appropriate recognition of cultural difference'. "Indeed," says Goldman, "people's body language often speaks louder than their words."

Reading body language accurately is one of the trickiest aspects of human communication, but very important for foreign-trained professionals. On the job, native-born North Americans can interpret each others' body language automatically, but in culturally and

linguistically diverse workplaces it's a different matter, and many misunderstandings result from the messages conveyed.

In job interviews, for example, North Americans look the interviewer directly in the eye. In other cultures, however, such directness can be interpreted as confrontational. A non-native job applicant who avoids direct eye contact is often seen as lacking confidence and subservient, two qualities that may disqualify that person from getting the job or being promoted into supervisory positions.

Another confusion for newcomers is the amount of personal space expected by Canadians. Some cultures are much more 'touchy' and close than is the norm here. Four feet is usually regarded as the appropriate personal space in North America for people outside the immediate family.

Cultures also differ in how they regard crossed arms and legs. North Americans tend to interpret them as signs of defensiveness, or that the person has something to hide. Moreover, in the workplace and elsewhere, Canadians often interpret a limp handshake as evidence of unassertiveness and indecisiveness. Similarly, we regard a sprawling posture while seated as indicative of laziness, inattentiveness, disrespect.

Though some cultures don't show a lot of facial expression in business situations, others do. Frowning, too, is read differently across cultures. And in many cultures, covering one's face when laughing or smiling conveys politeness, but not so here. In fact, so great are the differences in interpreting body language across cultures that 'yes' in one culture often means 'no' in another.

Newcomers to the Canadian job scene quickly discover that they need to be careful

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about their verbal communication as well—what they say and when they say it. In many cultures, for example, saying “I don’t know” while on the job is a display of ignorance which can be accompanied by regrettable results. Not so here, where it reveals a sincere and honest openness to learning.

Immigrant professionals often run into what business calls ‘the sticky floor syndrome’. Once hired, they often don’t progress above their entry level. In fact, some are fired from their positions or quit because they don’t ‘fit in’. Among the causes, inappropriate non-verbal communication and lack of proficiency in business communications are high on the list. Canadian business communication uses both direct and indirect language, and employees who are not able to switch smoothly from one to the other limit their advancement prospects. Newcomers need to quickly acquire the jargon of the workplace and use it, both in speaking and writing. In addition, they need to learn how to do presentations, a skill not commonly taught in many foreign education systems.

Using appropriate language in e-mail messages is another business skill that newcomers sometimes lack. In today’s business world, adoption of new communication technologies is very fast, and the buzz words change from month to month. Currently the terms ‘brain dump’ (receiving too much information all at once), ‘drop-dead date’ (the absolutely final date for a project or dire consequences will follow) and ‘granular’ (too detailed) are in use and must be acquired and understood by newcomers.

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The Canadian Workplace — a Snapshot

- Immigrants overall have 50 per cent more university degrees than Canadians.
- In the GTA, 49.5 per cent of the population is comprised of visible minorities.
- Five per cent of Toronto’s senior corporate executives are visible minorities.
- It takes the average immigrant 10 years to attain the job level that’s achieved in one year by a Canadian counterpart.

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The language of business can be quite confusing for non-native speakers. For example, what sense would a newcomer make of a sentence such as the following, collected recently in a sample of recent workplace communication about a marketing plan: 'Let's drill down and go after the low-hanging fruit'?

Indeed, even the question, 'How was your lunch?' can be misinterpreted, as it was by a recent Indian immigrant working in a large corporation. His North American colleague was seeking information about the business-related content of the conversation during the meal.

The Indian employee reported on the specific dishes he ate.

Another aspect of business communication that befuddles recent arrivals is the significance of small talk in the workplace. When an immigrant employee found himself increasingly isolated in his job, his supervisor watched his interactions with co-workers, especially at the beginning of the week. In a follow-up meeting, when the newcomer revealed that he wasn't particularly interested in the personal lives of his co-workers, the supervisor advised him to ask his colleagues every Monday morning about their weekend. Relations with his fellow workers began to thaw after that, and in fact saved the newcomer's job.

Small talk is big talk when it comes to job security and advancement.

In this overview of communication in the workplace, Goldman underlined the critical role ESL teachers can play in transmitting cultural information which will help newcomers increase their chances of success. □



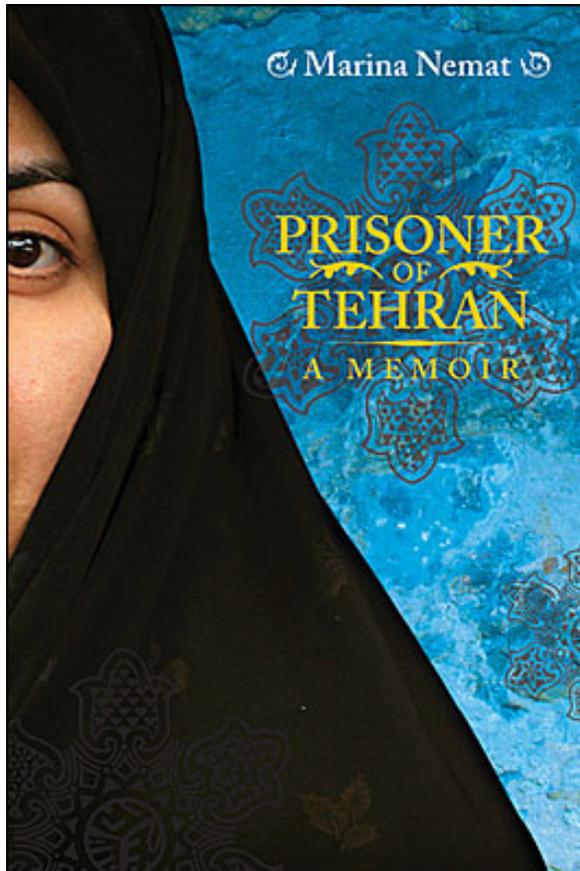
Marina Nemat

Marina Nemat was born in Tehran in 1965 and immigrated to Canada in 1991. Her memoir, *Prisoner of Tehran*, tells the shocking story of her arrest, imprisonment and torture by the Iranian National Guards in 1982, at the age of 17, during the Islamic revolution that led to the ouster of the ruling Shah. In 2007, Nemat was a finalist in the CBC's Creative Non-fiction Awards. At present, she is engaged in a new project, documenting the effects of torture on children.

In this plenary session, Nemat shared some of the gripping experiences detailed in her moving memoir of life in Tehran as a teenager.

Nemat began by describing her childhood as 'quite normal' for a daughter of educated parents in Iran. While opponents of the existing political system under the Shah were dealt with severely, her family lived a relatively tranquil life; her father taught ballroom

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Prisoner of Tehran — A Memoir by Marina Nemat. Penguin

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dancing and her mother was a hairdresser. Describing pre-revolutionary Tehran, she noted that few women and girls wore the hijab; in fact, many young women wore mini-skirts and tie-dye T-shirts or those bearing the photograph of the popular revolutionary icon, Che Guevara.

Though Iranian society was 90 per cent Muslim, Nemat came from a Christian family that had immigrated from Russia, and

she went to a Zoroastrian school. At the onset of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, she was a precocious teenager, starting to show an interest in boys, listening to popular music groups like the Bee Gees and watching American TV shows such as *Little House on the Prairie*. She read Jane Austen and Charles Dickens and looked forward to a future where a well-educated woman could become a judge or lawyer, a medical doctor (her goal), a civil servant, a business executive, or even the Prime Minister.

In 1978 she happened to meet a young Iranian from Toronto who warned of a coming revolution in Iran, but she pooh-pooed the idea. “When you live in a closed society like Iran, you can be oblivious to the warning signs,” she recalls. As for the Ayatollah who later played such a pivotal role in the revolution, she remembers asking, “Ayatollah who?”

However, that very summer she arrived home from school one day to find a tank parked at her family’s front door, and over the next few months from her bedroom window she watched the revolution unfold. The early fervor was focused on ousting the Shah and his repressive, westernized regime and establishing freedom and democracy. Under increasing pressure and a destabilized civil order, he was deposed in January 1979 and Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran.

Iranians soon discovered that a revolution could quickly dismantle the society piece by piece, as all the old social roles and structures began to collapse. Within this upheaval, a new set of rules came into play. Returning to high school, Nemat was shocked to discover that her accomplished and beautiful principal had been executed and the teachers had been replaced by under-educated women of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard.

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One after another, liberties began to disappear. Reading Jane Austen, for example, became illegal. Instead of studying calculus and literature, the curriculum changed to six hours a day of revolutionary propaganda. Nemat reflects, "When we realized what had happened, it was too late."

Soon students from her school began disappearing and the more outspoken ones were even executed for transgressions such as walking out of class in protest. Then on January 15, 1981 the Revolutionary Guard showed up at Nemat's house and she was arrested and taken blindfolded to Evin Prison. When confronted by her interrogators, she admitted that she had started a strike against the changes at her school and written articles against the Islamic revolution for the school newspaper. "I had no clue," she now confesses. "I was naïve enough to truthfully answer the inquisitors' questions about the activities I had been involved in."

The next few months were a nightmare. Nemat was beaten on the soles of her feet and listened to the screams of classmates and other prisoners being tortured and killed. She survived only because Ali, one of her guards, intervened on her behalf and had her death sentence reduced to 15 years in prison. He then threatened to have all her family ar-

rested if she refused to marry him. A shariah judge pronounced them married, though Nemat still remained in prison.

In a cruel irony, Nemat was befriended by Ali's mother, who revealed that her son had himself had been a political prisoner and was tortured. Within 15 months Ali himself was assassinated by a rival revolution-

ary faction, but not before he and his family had bribed Nemat's way out of Evin. After two years of imprisonment, Nemat was freed, a young widow, and shaken forever by the experience.

The return to society, however, did not provide the respite she had hoped for. A thick wall of silence about her experience in Evin descended on the family. Noone empathized with her, and relatives pretended nothing had happened. This isolation from her own feelings numbed Nemat. With a determination to survive, she remarried and eventually made it to Canada.

Though she was now safe, the normal adjustments experienced by newcomers were exacerbated by what Nemat calls 'my psychological coma'. "I lived in a bubble," she remembers, "unable to trust anyone, and besieged by nightmarish memories. I needed a buffer zone of time to recover from what is now called post-traumatic stress disorder. My flashbacks came only later, and they proved to be a tsunami of hatred and fear."

**"I lived in a
bubble," she
remembers, "unable
to trust anyone, and
besieged by
nightmarish memo-
ries. I needed a
buffer zone of time
to recover..."**

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Therapy helped Nemat come to terms with her horrifying life history, but writing about it became the most useful method of dealing with her distress. “It took me two years to be able to trust people, and only after that was I able to talk about what had happened to me,” she recalls. Her own writing, she confesses, was a desperate act, but it saved her life. “Since that time, I have felt the need to help the average person understand what I and other tortured people, have experienced,” she says. “And that is what my next book will be about.”

For ESL teachers who may have students who have been tortured, Nemat recommends what has been termed ‘narrative therapy’, beginning with literature that details what others have gone through. She finds that holocaust literature, whether written for children or adults, often works best. “In order to help the victims of torture, you have to first build trust,” she advises. “And that can only happen by talking with them, often for a long time, about happy things, not their troubled experiences of the past. The reason is that it’s always easier to talk about other people first. Your own horrible stories will come only after trust has been established.”

For young ESL students who may have been terrorized, Nemat recommends a book called *Hana’s Suitcase*, a biography of a Czech girl who died in the Holocaust, told in alternating chapters with an account of how the curator of a Japanese Holocaust center learned about her life after Hana’s suitcase was sent to her. “It’s important to ask the students what they make of the story,” says Nemat. “Always let them take the lead in talking.” □



Julie Kerekes

Julie Kerekes is an Assistant Professor in the Second Language Education program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. Her research and teaching focus on language and power in conversational and institutional settings, particularly workplace ESL. Her current projects examine cross-linguistic comparisons of interlanguage pragmatics in electronic communications, interactional dynamics in employment interviews and other institutional ‘gatekeeping’ encounters.

Kerekes began with a short explanation of the title of her plenary session, titled “A Pragmatic(s) approach to teaching and learning English as a Second Language.”

Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics which studies the ways in which context contributes to meaning. It encompasses speech act theory, conversational implicature (i.e. the implicit communicative content), and talk in interactions and explores how the transmission of meaning depends not only on the lin-

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guistic knowledge (grammar and lexicon being most critical) of the speaker and listener, but also on the context of the utterance, knowledge about the status of those involved, and the speaker's inferred intent. Pragmatics also explains how language users can overcome apparent ambiguity in communication, since meaning relies on the manner, place, and time of an utterance. Pragmatic awareness is regarded as one of the most challenging aspects of language learning, and comes only through a lot of experience.

At every turn people also make pragmatic choices in the nature, form, content and desired result of their communicative acts. This dual nature of the term pragmatic thus becomes a subject of interest and use to second language teachers and researchers.

Pragmatics shows how meaning is co-created by both speakers and listeners through speech acts. If we take, for example, an apparently simple sentence such as, "Does anyone else think it's hot in here?" we can explore what meaning/s the speaker intended to convey, and for what reason. But its meaning is not simply dependent on those factors at work in the speaker; the meaning/s the receiver understood is also a part of the communicative interchange. Success in communication, then, is determined by the communicative outcome, not by perfect performance of the language.

**“The talk of one
speaker is always
mediated by the
response it
receives... Who you
are and what you are
doing are
important when you
say it.”**

Kerekes' current interests have taken her into the exploration of a wide range of questions and issues, for example, the concept of 'interlanguage'. What is it and how does it work? And how do second language learners get their communication skills to interact appropriately? Moreover, what exactly is meant

by ESL, when for many learners in our classes, English may be their third, fourth, or even fifth language?

Another element explored in pragmatics is the effect of changing modes of communication, especially as new technologies emerge. The 'rules' of communication evolve and change with technology. Pragmatics also studies how language is affected by factors such as gender, socio-economic status, cultural background and context.

Most research on pragmatics is in its infancy, and is still largely reliant on traditional instruments. It is no longer easy, for example, to even identify what 'native speaking' is. The world is now populated by many Englishes.

Kerekes has been studying the communicative characteristics of 'gatekeeping encounters', in which one person has the authority to judge another person, for example in job interviews, where the outcome of the interchange will have an effect on the interviewee's future.

Kerekes looked at the language of four staffing supervisors – how they arrived at deci-

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sions on the success or failure of interviewees, based on language. Interestingly, she found that native speakers and non-native speakers succeeded about equally in their job interviews. What, then, can we discern about their somewhat different levels of fluency that might account for this?

Kerekes found that job interviews had three shared features:

1. Mistakes in the job interview included: the desired salary was too high; the interviewee used inappropriate references; there were gaps in the interviewee's work history which couldn't be satisfactorily explained
2. Compensatory characteristics that helped L2 interviewees included: flexibility regarding employment (shift work, location, etc.); and positive self-presentation – for example by showing the interviewer how you have taken initiative in the past. Using sentences such as 'I am dependable' or 'I enjoy my work' were interpreted favorably, since they revealed a capacity to self-promote in a positive way. Other examples included, "I'm self-taught in using Excel," or "I think I am a good listener."
3. Solidarity or rapport with the staffing supervisor helped overcome linguistic issues. Successful interviewees could chit-chat and make small talk as a way to establish relationships, an indirect way of aligning themselves with the interviewer. But, as Kerekes pointed out, establishing rapport takes cooperation. It

is co-constructed; however, once it is established it gives a sense of solidarity with others, including supervisors, in the workplace. It is furthered by displaying similarities and matching the personal characteristics between two people.

From a pragmatics perspective, a successful communication is one which produces a mutually acceptable outcome and does not rely primarily on target-like, 'native-like' or 'appropriate' use of the language. For the workplace, successful communication is critical, since it contributes to cooperative, interactive collaboration and thus the health of the enterprise. Building rapport in the workplace through effective communication means finding commonalities.

Since much communication – in business, government, and elsewhere – is now done by e-mail, that mode has assumed great importance when looking at the success or failure of messages sent and received. Helping second language learners adapt to the fluid and flexible communicative conventions (the 'rules' and 'no-nos') of e-mail messaging is a growing interest in the field of pragmatics, and ESL teachers can play an important role here.

Kerekes collected 500 e-mail messages of both students and professors, with a view to discerning whether and how their e-mails were similar or different. In one part of her analysis, she looked at how students framed polite requests to their professors so as to achieve a specific outcome, such as changing a course or asking for a professor-student consultation.

In the first example, 'Connie' (a native speaker) sent a 10-sentence e-mail in which she made an administrative request, gave thanks to the professor and offered a compli-

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ment. The language was soft and indirect, an approach that researchers term 'downgrading' the message. Connie achieved her desired outcome.

In a second example, an L2 speaker framed her e-mail request to the professor much more directly. The verbs 'I want' and 'I expect' had prominence in this student's message, not uncommon in e-mails by second language learners but not by native speakers. A host of pragmatic considerations becomes part of the interpretation of the message, and these did not benefit the supplicant. The pragmatic lesson is that L2 learners should avoid using 'want' and 'expect' when they ask superiors to do something for them.

The good news for ESL teachers – and the learners in their classes – is that formulas for requests can be taught, practiced and perfected in the ESL classroom.

E-mail and internet chat rooms, on the other hand, have different measures of politeness and call for different approaches in framing a message, and the conventions are generally more flexible and fluid, evolving as the technologies themselves evolve.

In a business world in which workers from a diversity of cultural backgrounds and languages is now the norm, the problem, says Kerekes, is how to get employers to attend to pragmatics in their interviewing.

In general, she says, businesses and other institutional need to do more to understand intercultural communication so that interviewers can be more accurate in their work.

While many L2 speakers want to sound more 'native-like' to avoid discrimination and achieve a greater degree of success in their jobs, Kerekes says that the likelihood of an

adult coming to sound like a native speaker is very low. As part of the adjustment and adaptation required in recruiting, retaining and promoting highly qualified foreign-trained workers in the business world, we need to educate people who have prejudices against accented English.

While we as ESL teachers have become accustomed to hearing and understanding L2 speech, it's hard for many others to be objective when they hear accented speech.

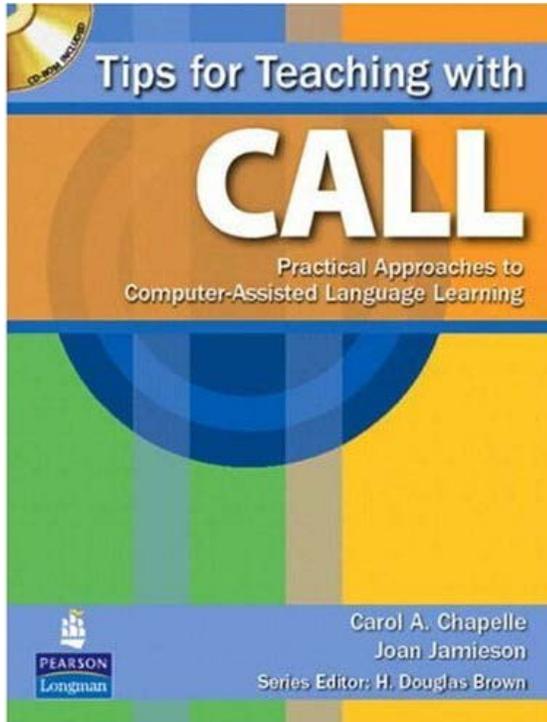
However, as teachers and employers become more aware of the pragmatic aspects of communication, the result will be more successful communication as people learn to convey and understand each other's messages effectively. □



Carol Chapelle

Carol Chapelle, Professor of TESL/ Applied Linguistics at Iowa State University, is the co-editor of the *Cambridge Applied Linguistics* series. Her research explores issues at the

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intersection of computer technology and applied linguistics. She is widely published on such themes as computer applications in second language acquisition and teaching, testing, and research on communications technology and language learning.

Though Chapelle teaches in a semi-rural area of the US, the technological changes occurring in metropolitan areas around the world are also happening in her locality. She pointed out that today's second language learners — wherever they are — are able to explore the world and develop their language in ways undreamt of twenty years ago, working with the most advanced technologies.

Computers, in a sense, have democratized learning in many ways, allowing for study, instantaneous communication and information exchange with an international audience across the globe.

Chapelle's address explored two important questions for ESL teachers: 'How can our English language learners – and teachers – benefit from technology?' and 'What does technology offer by way of good language learning experiences?'

One benefit, she pointed out, is that technology provides L2 learners infinite sources for data and thus the opportunity to study many Englishes. In addition, as students reveal their interests and goals, teachers can use this as a resource to enhance their teaching by meeting individual needs.

There are four aspects of language and learning in which technology can enhance language learning.

1. Technology can provide a source of comprehensible input.

Twenty years ago, Stephen Krashen showed how learners benefit from a focus on meaning and how rich, contextualized language adds to their overall knowledge. As they learn the meaning, they also learn the forms that language takes.

The internet is now the source of a lot of comprehensible input, and much of it can be derived from local sources. This provides an immediate living context for learning by providing the language that learners see in their daily world. The new knowledge can be linked to actual, lived experience and provide a stable knowledge base.

But the internet also greatly expands the scope of comprehensible input for all language learners. Teachers can point their students to websites from Australia, India, England, or California where they are exposed to varieties of English. This expands their knowl-

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edge base not only of lexical features, but also of pragmatics and socio-cultural aspects of language use. Technology becomes the key to a universe of discourse which formerly was very difficult to open.

The internet helps learners search for topics important to them, for example in academic study. In a college or university ESL/EFL class of 25, for example, students may be studying 20 different disciplines. While it is difficult for a teacher to tailor language instruction to satisfy all of those interests, with the help of technology meeting individual needs becomes possible.

As they access content across the disciplines, students discover that language about different disciplines is really different language. In computer science, for example, they may read a sentence such as, "IT outsourcing continues to be a booming business." This language is opaque for many L2 learners; the threads of its meaning need to be teased apart, 'unpacked', to reveal such critical information as who the agents are, since this is not immediately evident. Understanding that different conventions of language operate across the curriculum subjects is critical to overall language development and especially in academic study. Technology can help.

With the help of online language corpora, for example, L2 learners can look at an array of language samples from academic subject areas and find how words are typically used, their collocations and meanings.

This information helps L2 learners, and before the advances provided by technology it was largely inaccessible.

2. Technology provides an aid to comprehension.

When learners are reading or listening to a text they now have access to a range of new devices to help them make meaning connections and comprehend even long, complex texts. For example, there are now many useful interactive Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) resources to help students connect the linguistic form with the meaning.

A product such as "Longman English Interactive", for example, provides contemporary content, both video and audio, accompanied by printed transcripts with clickable definitions of separate words, so that learners can instantly begin to link meaning and form.

Instructors who keep themselves aware of technological aids in language learning do a great service to students by helping them to help themselves.

3. Technology can provide feedback to the learner.

Creative publishers are now developing interactive online resources, so that learners receive immediate feedback on language tasks. Whether it involves instant correction for a gap-fill exercise about appropriate verbs in an e-mail, or interactive participation in a monitored chat room, such resources now have a pedagogical structure, and are not just random conversational interactions where the interlocutors' primary purposes may be anything but advancing the learners' language development.

In generating written language products, learners can now also get back feedback via the computer through written recasts which point out specific details about their language.

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This application is a great boon to teachers, who normally can't do all of the corrections for the learners in the class. Now the computer can provide individualized feedback.

4. Technology provides a source for meaning-focused conversation.

Meaning-focused conversations via the internet now give the learner opportunities both to comprehend others and to produce language, and - if the language is not understood - to negotiate meaning when comprehension breaks down. That is often the point where the language itself must become the focus rather than the content.

The challenge in developing meaning-focused conversations was how to set them up so that they would produce a negotiation of meaning. Voice chat was the answer. The developers of a program organized between the Universities of Georgia and Iowa, for example, sought to establish tasks that were informal but also called upon learners to get information preceding their chat.

One theme pursued was how to write a recommendation message about graduate school. In the voice chat, researchers found the learners often dropped back to text chat (written) when their comprehension broke down. This built-in help procedure proved to be a strong support for their oral language.

In a related study, researchers wanted to discover who would do better on a speaking test: the students who participated in a two-hour per week speaking class supplemented by text chat (written output), or those who had a four-hour-per-week speaking-only class, but no access to written text support. The study revealed that learners who had the additional

written text, which combined technologies, performed better on the test.

In exploring meaning-focused conversation beyond the classroom, researchers at Penn State University explored a process they termed 'telecollaboration' in two languages, involving students in the U.S.A. and France.

One aim was to study pragmatic knowledge, one example of which involved the American students' learning appropriate usage of 'vous' and 'tu' in French, a distinction which matters greatly in French but not in English.

The students in France displayed great annoyance at their counterparts' constant reverting to the inappropriate 'vous' even after repeated correction. Their telecollaboration helped the Americans to acquire new pragmatic knowledge.

Another study documented the disgusted abandonment of regular classroom English studies by a Chinese foreign student in San Francisco, who opted to go into technology instead. He built a website which became the centre for fans of a Japanese pop singer, but in which the common language was English. In the real academic world he failed to advance in English, but through the internet he thrived.

Other computer applications such as Facebook and Twitter are also creating new avenues of learning English by opening up a world of discourse in which learners have constant access to resources, individuals and communities.

In sum, technology has in some ways revolutionized language learning and teachers who acquaint themselves with its possibilities are helping students acquire the new language more quickly and with greater enthusiasm and commitment. □

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Jayme Adelson-Goldstein

Jayme Adelson-Goldstein is the author of numerous ESL titles, including *The Oxford Picture Dictionary* and *Step Forward: English for Everyday Life*. In addition to classroom instruction, she has focused on curriculum development and teacher education. Her workshops and talks on multi-level instruction, vocabulary development, cooperative learning, questioning strategies and learner-centred instruction are now available online.

Goldstein began by describing herself as an inter-personal learner – a ‘group person.’ This distinction she uses to differentiate her preferred learning style from that of others, such as her husband, whom she describes as an ‘intra-personal’ learner.

The first challenge that many ESL teachers face, especially with adult learners, is convincing them that working in groups is an effective way to learn language, since some

resist such an approach as ineffective and unfocused. However, teachers who wish to use the process of group learning can be confident that there is a close relationship between theory, research and teaching practice showing that learners’ active involvement in group learning increases their ability to comprehend and retain new information, regardless of the content.

Group work fosters social cohesion, and teachers report positive effects on learners’ motivation largely because they help each other; they are not isolated in the learning process. Ancillary benefits from group work include improved attitudes to learning, the acquisition of a broad range of transferable skills such as group management and communication skills, and the development of an inclusive, harmonious and vital environment.

Group members working on a project bring their own individual strengths and learning styles, and these in turn serve as a resource for everyone. Moreover, group cohesion is essential in most workplaces, so the approach yields benefits beyond language learning in helping adults succeed in their roles as citizens and community members, parents, and family members.

Using Clickers (Student Response Systems)

Classrooms in which a lot of interaction happens in groups, means, of course, that there is a constant buzz, and teachers need to have effective ways to bring groups together for re-focusing, sharing, emphasizing, and so on. In this session Adelson-Goldstein demonstrated several, including the student response system (an SRS) called the ‘clicker,’ a

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small hand-held device which allows learners to silently communicate answers to teachers' questions, record their opinions, choose answer options from a menu provided by the teacher, and have the results tabulated onscreen.

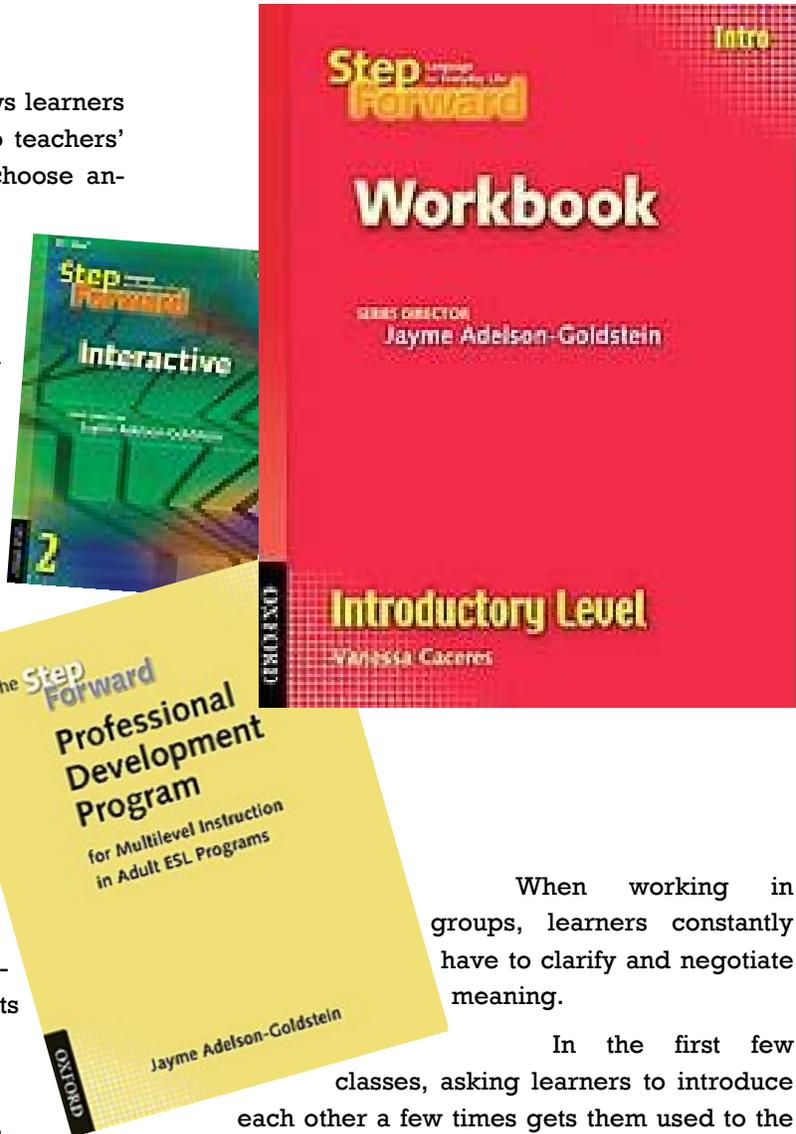
An important element for teachers is to connect the content of their courses and the tasks they set to the goals of the learners themselves. And to do this, they need information that only the learners themselves can provide. Technologies such as the clicker help to provide that, since the feedback is individualized, anonymous, instantaneous and accurate.

One of the advantages of this new technology is that it provides both teachers and students with instant feedback on such things as whether a concept is fully, partly, or barely understood. This helps teachers tailor their instruction and introduce new concepts in an effective and efficient way.

Meeting Students' Learning Needs

Group work, says Adelson-Goldstein, meets students' learning needs in three ways, by:

1. Reducing the stress of being singled out and of working alone.
2. Making communication work.
3. Providing the interaction that is necessary for language growth and elaboration.



When working in groups, learners constantly have to clarify and negotiate meaning.

In the first few classes, asking learners to introduce each other a few times gets them used to the process of attending to names, an important element of social cohesion.

When learners work in groups they also develop trust and a feeling of safety in the learning context. This, in turn, encourages risk taking, an essential element in language learning.

Adelson-Goldstein made a distinction between collaborative and cooperative ap-

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proaches to group work. Cooperative learning entails a division of labour among the members of the group, achieved through assigned roles and tasks. Group members achieve the common goal of resolving the problem or completing the task.

Collaborative learning, on the other hand, can be defined as group members' mutual and synchronized engagement in a coordinated effort, without roles being assigned.

There are five key values in cooperative group work.

1. It promotes positive interdependence, meaning that the participants rely – but not depend – on each other.
2. It promotes face-to-face talking, or 'promotive interaction.'
3. It builds individual accountability into the process, where everyone has a role to carry out. Some examples of these roles are: director, facilitator, interviewer, monitor or observer, recorder, researcher, reporter, time-keeper.
4. It helps learners develop interpersonal skills such as shared planning, organizing, negotiating, expressing feelings and ideas, and working out a consensus.
5. Cooperative group work allows for reflection and processing of the whole shared process to determine how it worked and whether learners achieved their goals as participants talk it through.

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Cooperative Learning Skill Sets

To learn to work effectively in groups, most people need a clear understanding of how groups operate. All of these skills can be taught explicitly in the ESL classroom.

Group Cohesion Skills

- Encouraging
- Using first names
- Praising
- Using humour appropriately
- Showing appreciation
- Offering assistance

Group Management Skills

- Turn-taking
- Working with Time Limits
- Role responsibilities
- Noise control
- Facilitating participation
- Consensus-building by checking for agreement

Communication Skills

- Active listening
- Requesting help
- Clarifying
- Asking for clarification
- Paraphrasing
- Summarizing
- Requesting information

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Challenges to the Group Dynamic

Personal attributes of learners sometimes militate against successful learning in groups. For example, some group work suffers when one person becomes ‘the dominator.’

Adelson-Goldstein suggests helping dominators adjust their role to become effective facilitators by showing them how to elicit participation from team members, record the group’s thoughts, echo what they have heard and circulate with a checklist to indicate the use of target language structures.

In other groups, the ‘translator’ earnestly tries to help by constantly translating into L1 for one or more group members. Effective teachers can ask the translator to help demonstrate how few hours a day everyone has to practice English, by showing a pie graph of language use. Another is to have that person act as an English language monitor, asking the others to “Please speak English.”

Sometimes groups are hampered by a member who just will not buy into the group work approach. Solutions for this person include assigning them an observer role, asking for their reflections at the end of an activity, and assigning them the role of researcher for the group.

It is natural for people to develop ‘pals’ and form sub-groups who sometimes stake out territory in the classroom. This social division can be bypassed by building a sense of the class as a community from day one, allowing learners to meet and talk away from their desks, and by creating random heterogeneous groups.

Time management in completing tasks is another challenge in group work. Assigning a time keeper for each activity helps, and teachers should always have a ‘next step’ for groups that finish a task early. Teachers can also check in at various stages of the task to see if the time limits need adjusting, and monitor slower groups, helping them to prioritize parts of the task to complete.

To help groups focus on their reporting procedure, ask them to determine one or two items to share with the class and use tear sheets to post the results of their group work so the class can walk around and read each other’s group sheet.

For ESL instructors just beginning to feel comfortable with group work, Adelson-Goldstein emphasizes the importance of always demonstrating what you want the learners to do, especially for visual learners.

Secondly, clarify the tasks, the skills, the forms of interactions, the language used, the goals, and the outcomes.

Thirdly, stay connected with the process; watch what the groups are doing and think about how they are doing it. Be prepared to intervene to help them help themselves get back on track when things go wrong.

And finally, affirm their work, their successful efforts and failed attempts, their achievements and their investment in the whole process. ■

4TH ANNUAL TESL ONTARIO PANEL DISCUSSION

Future Directions

Report by Derrick Hempel



Panel discussion speakers: (from left) Catherine Finlay, Darlyn Mentor, Patti Redmond, Richard Franz

Four panelists, four perspectives on the outlook for public immigrant, training and language services in Canada.

A packed audience listened closely as four representatives from both the provincial and federal governments outlined plans to streamline services for immigrants and refugees, eliminating much of the current confusion that has existed when learners try to determine which options are available and appropriate for them.

Attendees also had an opportunity to get a perspective on the range of services offered by the provincial Ministries of Education; Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU); Citizenship and Immigration, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC).

Catherine Finlay, Director of Immigration Programs for Ontario’s Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration outlined how they

are aligning non-credit language training objectives and coordinating federal and provincial programs to provide a single learning stream.

Ms. Finlay related how immigrants in the recession are experiencing disproportionate unemployment rates compared to Canadian-born workers. While the recovery appears to have started, immigrants have not yet experienced increased employment opportunities.

She outlined five key priority areas for the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration: attraction initiatives and pre-arrival services; coordinated settlement services; comprehen-

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sive language training; labour market integration; and community and employer engagement. Of these, Ms. Finlay focused on the language training area.

Based on a three-year plan, MCI will phase in a redesign of their language training program, starting in the 2009-10 school year. There are five key objectives to the program redesign: access to training; program accountability and standards; labour market language training (LMLT); coordination with the federal government; and funding and program design flexibility.

MCI's vision for the future of adult language training consists of a single entry program, the Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral System (CLARS) and a single language training program, the Coordinated Language Training System (CLTS). Together, CLARS and CLTS direct adult learners into the appropriate language training stream: adult non-credit; specialized language training; bridge training; Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC); Enhanced Language Training (ELT) and Occupation Specific Language Training (OSLT).

Darlyn Mentor, Director of Settlement Programs for Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) in the Ontario Region, continued with the message of streamlining processing by announcing how CIC is modernizing the immigrant intake process so that there is a single program delivering a suite of services.

Mentor described Canadian immigration patterns, focusing on Ontario, which was the recipient of over 43 per cent of all immigrants to Canada. Canada has the highest rate of immigration among all western countries and intends to continue this pattern through 2010 and beyond. Mentor highlighted the \$1.4

billion increase in funding over a five-year period that the federal government has committed to assist newcomer integration in the areas of language training, job counselling, and information services.

Mentor also outlined how CIC would be using CLB (Canadian Language Benchmark) levels instead of LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) levels. This news was welcomed by the audience, judging by the murmurs of agreement and nodding of heads throughout the room.

The Ministry will develop language portfolios, which are intended to coordinate language assessment, referral, and training. These portfolios feature an outcome-based method of managing performance and supporting students, while developing a standardized curriculum and increasing the professionalization of teachers. Needs assessment will be funnelled through a single stream, commencing as early as possible, with the ideal start being in the applicant's home country. Unlike a language test, a portfolio approach enables CIC to capture a student's increasing grasp of LINC's non-language content (Canadian civics, values, job search skills, etc.) These language portfolios are to be used in CLB 1-4.

For students above CLB 4, the intent is for Part II of the plan to, over time, provide proof of language proficiency required for employment and/or post-secondary study. The test will be standardized and Canadian-focused, based on the CLB. Test-takers may not be limited to LINC students. This highly portable and nationally-recognized language credential is intended to facilitate the flow of newcomers into education/training and the labour market. Provisionally, milestones have been set at CLB 4 and 8.

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Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral System (CLARS)

The new language assessment and referral system will ensure newcomers are assessed in a standardized manner throughout Ontario. Access, promotion, and outreach will be facilitated. Stakeholders such as newcomers, employers, and the community will have an increased understanding of language skill levels. Coordination of programs will simplify the process for newcomers so that their learning path is clear.

An advisory committee has been created by the two Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA) government partners (CIC and MCI) to advise on implementation of the new CLARS. This committee provides advice to government partners on the development of the overview, protocols, and standards for a coordinated language assessment and referral system in Ontario. Consultations for input are being scheduled throughout Ontario.

Patti Redmond, Director of the Programs Branch at the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, delivered an overview of the “10 Things TESL Ontario members might want to know about Post-Secondary Education and Training”. The MTCU mandate includes the vision that Ontario is hoping to “have the most educated people and highly skilled workforce in North America.” MTCU’s goals are that Ontario focus on outcomes, measured by participation and graduation rates and promote a high level of research and innovation.

Overseeing the many educational choices in Ontario, including 19 universities, 24 colleges, 550 private career colleges and 17 private universities, Redmond stated that

the total base operating grants to Universities and Colleges will rise to \$4.25 billion in 2008-09.

In the areas of employment and training, MTCU invests over \$1 billion for a number of programs that assist laid-off workers, newcomers, and youth.

Employment Ontario has 37 programs offering services such as:

- **Second Career:** helps recently laid-off unemployed workers retrain in order to make the transition to a new career in a high skill occupation,
- **Literacy and Basic Skills:** provides free literacy, numeracy and essential skills services to adults who are out of school and have less than Grade 12 skill levels,
- **Employment Services:** provides job search, resume writing, interview skills and other services to help unemployed individual find and keep employment .

These three services have helped more than 900,000 Ontarians in 2008-09, including over 140,000 employers, across almost 900 locations.

Redmond shared that 30 per cent of new immigrants coming to Ontario speak neither of the official languages. Only 58 per cent (or 4.8 million) of Ontarians are currently at, or above, high school completion-level literacy. Since 88 per cent of the jobs of the future require at least high school literacy, this is a problem to be solved.

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All 24 colleges of Applied Arts and Technology have ministry approval to offer French/English as a Second Language courses and programs. In 2009-10, 13 colleges have received funding from CIC to pilot the delivery of occupation-specific language training (OSLT) in Business, Health Sciences, Human Services, Automotive Trades, Construction Trades and Technology.

This new occupation-specific language training will provide communication and socio-cultural workplace training to newcomers to help them succeed within their chosen careers. The courses are for newcomers who have training or experience in the designated sector and have relatively high-level English or French language skills.

In 2008-09, MTCU provided almost \$1M in operating grants to colleges for F/ESL activity.

As part of their overall operations, colleges provided education to 8,025 international students and operate over 50 bridging and language training programs for newcomers to Canada.

CIITE Program

The Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) project is a 3-phase initiative administered by Colleges of the Ontario Network for Education and Training (CON*NECT) designed to improve pathways for internationally-trained immigrants (ITIs) through the Ontario college system, from pre-entry services through employment transition and into the workforce. MTCU is providing \$8 million for funding CIITE Phase 3.2 (\$4 million in 2009-10 and \$4 million in 2010-11).

CIITE provides critical support to internationally-trained immigrants, helping them get the advice, education and skills training they need to find work in their field.

In addition to guidance and consultation CIITE is planning to implement a web-based application which will lead to the creation of a Record of Education and Experience (REE). This should assist in making more effective educational and training decisions which meet the needs of the newcomers while maximizing the available resources.

TCU also funds colleges, school boards and community organizations to deliver the Literacy and Basic Skills Program (LBS)

ESL/FSL and literacy are at the opposite ends of the same language development continuum, and learners are found at all points along this continuum. While LBS and ESL/FSL providers have developed protocols on suitability and eligibility of learners, work is required to fill in some of the inevitable gaps in the process.

The Ontario Literacy Coalition has been funded to document the needs and characteristics of the second language learner entering LBS and implications for the LBS curriculum.

Project Read will develop a model for improving the pathways between LBS, ESL and LINC programs in order to assist adults to reach their employment and training goals.

Second Career is another initiative that has proven very popular with mature students. The response has been phenomenal. Within 16 months of the launch date, MTCU had more than 20,000 people participating in the program.

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Many Second Career clients have not completed high school and/or they require upgrading in order to be able to successfully participate and complete their higher skills training through Second Career. This upgrading includes language training for some clients. These clients are being referred through Employment Ontario to appropriate language training providers.

Richard Franz, Acting Director Students Success/Learning, from the Ontario Ministry of Education focused on the areas of adult and continuing education, in addition to providing an overview of admission of newcomers to Ontario credit courses. The Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process is a key tool.

The government is committed to increasing opportunities for adults to acquire basic education and foundation skills. It invests close to \$200M annually and supports more than 90,000 adult learners. This includes basic programming reviewed in the *Ontario Learns* report (EDU adult high school credit programs, TCU Literacy and Basic Skills and Academic Upgrading and MCI ESL/FSL/Bridging programs.)

Over 50 school boards offer adult and continuing education programs, of which 31 offer adult education programs funded by all three ministries (credit, ESL/FSL and Literacy and Essential Skills).

English Language Policy and Program

A process, including Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), to evaluate student proficiency in international languages will be implemented in Ontario school boards. Students challenging for credits will

be assessed using the expectations outlined for any of the Level 1–4 international language courses in the provincial curriculum policy documents in order to earn credit(s) towards the secondary school diploma.

First Language Challenge Assessments

School boards developed challenge assessments in Persian (Farsi), Punjabi, Mandarin, Cantonese, Arabic, Spanish and Russian that newcomers can use to demonstrate their proficiency and earn credits toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

CESBA (Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators) and ILEA (International Language Educators Association) received funding to develop the *First Language Challenge Assessment Resource Guide* to support school boards with the implementation of these PLAR assessments

These assessments will be available in an online format using the provincial Learning Management System after field testing is completed in spring 2010.

While the information was well received, there were some in the audience who questioned whether the governments could actually deliver on their promises. Some believed that funding cuts would be inevitable, given the current economic climate. The panellists insisted that the money has already been committed, however, and will not be taken away. Overall, there seemed to be a consensus that the coming integration of immigrant services is long overdue. ■