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Contact

Changes and Challenges in the 21st Century

Newsletter of the Association of Teachers of English as a Second Language of Ontario

Conference Proceedings 2000

IELTS (International English Language Testing System): Testing Transferrable Skills

by Carol Trotter

What skills do students require in order to be successful at post-secondary studies and how can educators and institutions assess candidates' levels in those skills? Answers to these two questions are critical in helping ESL professionals guide their ESL/EAP students to make choices to ensure their future academic success.

Teaching EAP at a college for the past ten years and having the opportunity to observe the progression of graduates as they continued through their college and university studies underscored for me the need for rigour at all levels. Students need EAP programs which hone their skills in listening, reading, writing and speaking. Institutions need language tests which assess those skills completely, accurately, and in a manner which reflects the types of skills required at a college or university. With test results in each of these four areas, institutions can then determine how a candidate's ability relates to the language demands of the various programs they offer. It

is also helpful when the language testers are able to offer institutions some guidelines relating to band levels required for acceptance into various programs.

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is an internationally recognized assessment of a candidate's ability to study or train in the medium of English. Jointly managed by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, the British Council and IDP Education, Australia, IELTS has two versions. The Academic version is used for admission to undergraduate and postgraduate studies, and the General Training version is used for candidates completing secondary education, work experience, training programs or for emigration purposes.

The IELTS assesses candidates' ability to use English effectively in the four key skill areas –

(cont'd on page 3)

Inside

Strategies for
Retaining and
Using Vocabulary

A Study Compares
TOEFL to CLBA

Working with
Paraprofessionals

Community Agency
Profile: Toronto's
A.C.C.E.S. and its
ESL Cafe

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Table of Contents

	Page
IELTS (International English Language Testing System): Testing Transferrable Skills	1
TalkEnglish Café at A.C.C.E.S.	9
The CLBA-TOEFL Comparison Study	10
Vocabulary: an Interactive Systems Approach	14
Community Contact Assignments	20
Problems and issues in working with paraprofessionals: Teachers' perspectives	22
The CLBA and the Measurement and Development of Proficiency through Language Education	29
Mutual Expectations: Instructional Supervision and Effective Teaching	32
Five Korean Adult Learners' Propensity for Learner Autonomy Revealed in Their Beliefs about Teacher-Student Roles	41
Teaching Word Stress – a Must at All Levels	44
Materials for Review	46
Book Review	47

From the Editor

As you have probably already noticed, this issue is somewhat late. I guess we're still recovering from putting out the mammoth Special Research Symposium issue. I apologize if they did not reach you before you left for summer break.

In our regular Conference Proceedings issue, we bring you write-ups from many of the sessions you may have missed. Carol Trotter explains how the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) tests transferable skills and Marina Engelking offers strategies for teaching vocabulary that make learners remember new words.

Wendy Wang alerts us to teachers' perspectives of working with paraprofessionals, while Julie Chemali suggests how supervisors can offer helpful advice to bring out the best in their instructors. In addition, David Watt and Deirdre Lake share results of a study comparing the CLBA with the TOEFL, and Maria Kim Oh presents findings of her study of five Korean adult learners and their views about teacher and student roles.

Our community organization profiled in this issue is Toronto's A.C.C.E.S. (Access to Commu-

nity Counselling and Employment Skills Services). Their unique Talk English Café has provided after-class entertainment and helped a lot of ESL learners during the past two years since it started up.

Theresa Hyland responds to a response in our last issue of Lee and Hyland's paper on the CLBA published last year in *Contact*, and John Sivell expresses his dissatisfaction with my article on the Ontario College of Teachers' proposed Language Proficiency testing in the Spring issue. I would like to point out that I did not write this piece as an editorial or as the official opinion of TESL Ontario; instead, I chose to present a balanced article representing several points of view.

We have some great photos of the conference, including the soprano and dancers who entertained during the dinner. The 2000 conference will be a tough act to follow.

Wishing you a safe and relaxing summer,
Brigid Kelso, TESL Ontario Editor

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To the Editor

Dear Brigid, I must say that I was a little surprised by the approach taken in “College of Teachers and Ministry at odds over teacher language proficiency testing”

(*Contact*, Spring 2001). Surely, issues around language and culture are central to the expertise of TESL Ontario, and I would have been more comfortable if *Contact*, our professional organization’s official voice, had taken a more active and confident leadership role in this debate.

Questions like these draw attention to the kind of linguistic and social concerns that TESL practitioners, based on their professional expertise in Applied Linguistics/TESL Methodology, are the Ontario group best qualified to raise with respect to the language-and-culture dimension of education.

No doubt it is true that some “associate teachers ... have complained about errors in handouts...” etc. And no doubt, as well, that is a problem. But there is far more to this issue. I do not believe it is appropriate for the TESL profession to restrict its contribution to the debate by seemingly accepting the limitations of a narrow and potentially self-serving definition of the problem advanced by two groups – the OCT, and a vocal self-selecting minority of associate teachers – neither of which have specific professional qualifications to pronounce on crucial language-and-culture policies with such enormous implications not only for the education of pupils but also for the careers of many teachers.

TESL Ontario would, by contrast, be excellently qualified to offer well-informed, expert in-put. Constructive comments might include questions like –

- a) why test only for English language proficiency and not, as well, for knowledge of descriptive/pedagogical English grammar (since, especially in elementary school, all teachers are language teachers)?
- b) indeed, when testing for grammatical knowledge as well as language proficiency, why not test all native speakers as well?
- c) given the high proportion of ESL/ESD students in our schools, why not test all teachers for (or give credit for) proficiency in a second language, as a measure of empathy and common experience with pupils’ own challenges?
- d) and, indeed, by the same token why not test for (or give credit for) extended experience in living abroad and adapting to a foreign culture, once again a measure of empathy and common experience with so many pupils’ own challenges?

I believe that these pointed questions, and others like them, are what TESL Ontario members should be able to expect from their professional association. Questions like these draw attention to the kind of linguistic and social concerns that TESL practitioners, based on their professional expertise in Applied Linguistics/TESL Methodology, are the Ontario group best qualified to raise with respect to the language-and-culture dimension of education.

But in my view it is the responsibility of the TESL Ontario professional organization to speak about these matters forthrightly and directly. We have a leadership responsibility here.

And posing such questions might, into the bargain, begin to lift the veil on the way in which the proposed OCT testing policy systematically focuses on the chief anticipated weakness of second-language teachers while also systematically ignoring that group’s anticipated strengths. Reciprocally, of course, the policy just as systematically values monolingual English native speakers’ chief anticipated strength while ignoring that group’s anticipated weaknesses.

In other words, it would appear that the “gate-keeping role” recommended by Professor Gagne – as quoted in the *Contact* article – may be fulfilled in ways that I very much doubt she would actually support. Ms Muir’s remarks – also quoted in the *Contact* article – come closer to addressing, at least obliquely, the equity issues that I think are important. But in my view it is the responsibility of the TESL Ontario professional organization to speak about these matters forthrightly and directly. We have a leadership responsibility here.

Teacher testing of some sort may perhaps be fine, and in fact more recent news on the OCT proposal seems to indicate that there definitely will be a test of some description. But tests must be well-informed and unbiased.

TESL Ontario, surely, has an interest in promoting the dignity and well-being of ESL speakers beyond helping them in LINC and other relatively elementary classroom settings. Do we not also have a duty to stand up for their right to equal treatment in the professional life of Ontario society at large?

John Sivell

listening, reading writing and speaking – as well as their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary in the context of language use. There are four modules – all candidates take the same Listening module and Speaking modules, but choose to take either the Academic or General Training Reading and Writing modules. Band scores are recorded on a Test Report Form showing overall ability as well as performance in listening, reading, writing and speaking. There are 9 bands from:

BAND 1 - NON-USER

Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.

to

BAND 9 - EXPERT USER

Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate, and fluent with complete understanding.

Test Report Forms are issued within two weeks of the testing date and are valid for two years.

This presentation will discuss the academic version which assesses whether a candidate is ready to study or train in English at the post-secondary level.

LISTENING

The listening module consists of four sections played on a cassette tape in order of increasing difficulty. It takes 30 minutes. During this module, time is given for the candidates to read the questions, enter and then check their answers. Examples of unfamiliar question types are given. When the tape ends, ten minutes are allowed for candidates to transfer their answers to an Answer Sheet. There are 40 questions in total.

The first two sections are concerned with social needs and consist of a conversation between two speakers and then a monologue. An example of section one would be a conversation between two students discussing a list of authors whose books have been given to the library and the need to classify the authors as writers on cooking, sports, or travel. In this section, the IELTS candidate would have to complete a table by writing C for cooking, S for sports and T for travel beside the names of the list of authors.

The monologue could be a talk by a student advisor who is inviting new students to a welcoming party. In this section IELTS candidates would

have to look at the invitation, tick if the information is correct or write in the changes. Then they would have to write short answers to questions concerning instructions the advisor is giving to students who are travelling to the party by car.

The final two sections are concerned with situations related more closely to educational or training contexts. There is a conversation among up to four people and then another monologue.

An example of part three would be a conversation between two students who as part of their general science course have to describe how a lawn sprinkler works. IELTS candidates would have to label the parts of the sprinkler on their diagram. They would then hear another conversation between the two students and their instructor and then answer six multiple choice questions concerning information discussed in the conversation.

An example of the monologue in part four would be a talk about student health issues, particularly about headaches and how to avoid them. Using the vocabulary list given, IELTS candidates would have to complete a summary of the talk.

You can see from these examples that IELTS candidates are required to demonstrate a variety of listening and note-taking skills including evaluating and noting relevant information while a discussion or talk is in process. These are precisely the skills they need for success during their post-secondary studies. I do not believe that these skills can be accurately demonstrated on exclusively multiple-choice tests.

READING

From my experience teaching EAP Reading, I feel that candidates must have the following readingskills:

- skimming and scanning for topic or for specific information
- identification of thesis, main arguments and supporting details
- identification and evaluation of different types of support
- analysis of reading selections for author's point of view and bias

The IELTS Academic Reading test takes 60 minutes and includes three reading passages with

Band scores are recorded on a Test Report Form showing overall ability as well as performance in listening, reading, writing and speaking.

This presentation will discuss the academic version which assesses whether a candidate is ready to study or train in English at the post-secondary level.

a total of 2,000 to 2,750 words. Texts are taken from magazines, journals, books and newspapers and are written for a non-specialist audience. Topics are of general interest and deal with issues which are interesting and accessible to candidates entering undergraduate or postgraduate courses.

At least one text features a detailed logical argument. A text may contain non-verbal materials such as diagrams, graphs or illustrations.

At least one text features a detailed logical argument. A text may contain non-verbal materials such as diagrams, graphs or illustrations. If texts contain technical terms, a simple glossary is provided. Texts and tasks become increasingly difficult throughout the paper. The suggested time to be spent is given in the instructions at the beginning of each reading passage.

A variety of questions are used and may include:

- notes/summary/diagram/flowchart/table completion
- sentence completion
- short-answer questions
- identification of writer's views/claims - yes, no or not given
- classification
- matching lists/phrases
- multiple choice

All answers are entered on an Answer Sheet during the 60-minute test. No extra time is allowed to transfer answers.

An example of the first reading passage would be an article on how researchers are using the chemical compound diethyl zinc (DEZ) to help preserve valuable library books. Questions include: identifying the writer's opinions, choosing 4 attributes of DEZ from a list, and completing a flow chart on the DEZ method of preserving books.

An example of the second reading passage would be an article on Drugs and Obesity which compares the view that obesity is caused by an eating disorder requiring a combination of diet and exercise versus the view that obesity is a genetic disorder requiring drug therapy. Questions include: matching treatments with disadvantages, completing a paragraph using words and phrases from a given list and four multiple-choice questions.

An example of the third reading passage would be a historical outline on the introduction of the

old-age pension in Australia. Questions for this reading include: identifying the person associated with summaries of opinions on care for the aged, and completing sentences with information on dates and demographics concerning the introduction of old-age pensions.

You can see from these examples that a variety of reading skills are assessed in a way which parallels how colleges and universities expect their students to be able to perform.

WRITING

The Academic Writing module takes 60 minutes. There are two sections to complete. The IELTS candidates are advised to spend about 20 minutes on Task 1 which requires them to write at least 150 words. Task 2 requires at least 250 words and should take about 40 minutes. Topics are of general interest and it makes no difference what subjects candidates study. The issues raised are interesting, suitable for, and easily understood by candidates entering undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

In Task 1 candidates are asked to look at a diagram or table and to present the information in their own words. Depending on the type of input and the task suggested, candidates are assessed on their ability to:

- organize, present and possibly compare data
- describe the stages of a process or procedure
- describe an object or event or sequence of events
- explain how something works

Examples of Task 1 could include a diagram showing nitrogen sources and concentration levels in the ground water of a coastal city, or a table showing consumer preferences for features of automatic washing machines in four different countries - Germany, France, Sweden and the UK. In both of these examples, candidates are asked to write a report for a university lecturer describing the information shown.

In Task 2, candidates are presented with a point of view, argument or problem. They are assessed on their ability to :

- present the solution to the problem
- present and justify an opinion

You can see from these examples that a variety of reading skills are assessed in a way which parallels how colleges and universities expect their students to be able to perform.

- compare and contrast evidence, opinions and implications, and
- evaluate and challenge ideas, evidence or an argument

An example of Task 2 would be to present a written argument or case to an educated non-specialist audience on the following topic:

Are computers an essential feature of modern education? What subjects can be better taught using computers? Are there aspects of a good education that cannot be taught using computers?

Candidates use their own ideas, knowledge and experience and support their arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

In the Writing module, each task is assessed independently, but the assessment of Task 2 carries more weight in marking than Task 1.

You can see that Task 1 requires candidates to be able to analyse the question making note of vocabulary which may be useful in the answer. They should identify the topic of the graph or diagram, determine the measurements being used in the diagrams, and identify the general trends and most striking features of the graph. Then using good paragraph writing structure, they describe the graph or diagram. A candidate's opinion is not required.

On the other hand, for Task 2, candidates are required to write an academic essay which answers the posed question convincingly by presenting evidence or reasons for their point of view. Analysing the question and determining the exact task are critical in this task. Since this is an academic essay, examiners will be looking for an introduction with a thesis statement or point of view, a body with main ideas and evidence to support them, and a conclusion which reiterates the thesis or final opinion.

As noted in the other two sections, these skills are critical for candidates contemplating a post-secondary career.

Writing scripts are marked by trained and certified IELTS examiners who are tested and recertified every two years. Detailed performance descriptors have been developed which describe written performance on the 9-band IELTS scale. These descriptors are confidential. Task 1 scripts are assessed on the following criteria: Task

fulfilment, Coherence and Cohesion, and Vocabulary and Sentence Structure. Task 2 scripts are assessed on performance in the following areas: Arguments, Ideas and Evidence, Communicative Quality, and Vocabulary and Sentence Structure.

SPEAKING

The Speaking module up to June 30, 2001 takes about 15 minutes and consists of an oral interview, a conversation between the candidate and an examiner. There are five sections.

In the **Introduction** phase the examiner and candidate introduce themselves. Candidates are made to feel comfortable and encouraged to talk briefly about their life, home, work and interests.

During the **Extended Discourse** phase candidates are encouraged to speak at length about some very familiar topic of general interest or relevance to their culture, place of living, or country of origin. This involves explanation, description, or narration.

In the **Elicitation** phase the candidate is given a task card with some information on it and is encouraged to take the initiative and ask questions whether to elicit information or to solve a problem. Tasks are based on 'information gap' type activities.

In the **Speculation and Attitudes** phase candidates are encouraged to talk about their future plans and proposed course of study. Alternatively, the examiner may choose to return to a topic raised earlier.

In the **Conclusion** the interview is concluded.

The Speaking Module assesses whether candidates have the necessary knowledge and skills to communicate effectively with native speakers of English. Detailed performance descriptors have been developed which describe spoken performance at each of the 9 IELTS bands. Assessment takes into account evidence of communicative strategies, and appropriate and flexible use of grammar and vocabulary.

The interviewer is a qualified teacher and certified examiner appointed by the test centre and approved by The British Council or IELTS Australia.

All interviews are recorded.

Based on new developments in language testing theory, technological advances, and changes

Candidates use their own ideas, knowledge and experience and support their arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

As noted in the other two sections, these skills are critical for candidates contemplating a post-secondary career.

The revised Speaking Module will take between 11 and 14 minutes. It will consist of an oral interview between the candidate and the examiner.

Once in the institution, they often have difficulty communicating effectively with native speakers. They also are daunted by the prospect of having to make presentations, contribute opinions in seminars or present case studies.

in perceptions from learners, teachers and test users, the IELTS partners (the British Council, IDP Education Australia, IELTS Australia, and the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate) regularly review and revise IELTS. The Speaking Module has been undergoing a process of review and revision since 1998 and the revised format will be introduced world-wide in July 2001.

The revised Speaking Module will take between 11 and 14 minutes. It will consist of an oral interview between the candidate and the examiner. There are three main parts and each part fulfils a specific function in terms of interaction pattern, task input and candidate output.

In **Part 1**, the candidate answers general questions about themselves, their homes/families, their jobs/studies, their interests, and a range of similar familiar topic areas. This part lasts between four and five minutes.

In **Part 2** the candidate is given a verbal prompt on a card and is asked to talk on a particular topic. The candidate has one minute to prepare before speaking at length, for between one and two minutes. Candidates can make notes if they wish. The examiner then asks one or two rounding-off questions.

An example of the verbal prompt would be as follows:

Describe a teacher who has greatly influenced you in your education.

*You should say:
where you met them
what subject they taught
what was special about them*

and explain why this person influenced you so much.

In **Part 3** the examiner and candidate engage in a discussion of more abstract issues and concepts which are thematically linked to the topic prompt in Part 2. The discussion lasts between four and five minutes. All interviews are recorded on audio cassettes.

The Speaking Module assesses whether candidates can communicate effectively in English. Detailed performance descriptors have been developed which describe spoken performance at the nine IELTS bands on four analytical subscales: Fluency and Coherence, Lexical Resource, Gram-

matical Range and Accuracy, and Pronunciation.

During the past ten years of teaching EAP, I have noticed that while colleges and universities state that entrance requirements for foreign learners include a speaking assessment, candidates rarely provide one – and are accepted in spite of this omission. Once in the institution, they often have difficulty communicating effectively with native speakers. They also are daunted by the prospect of having to make presentations, contribute opinions in seminars or present case studies. This situation is compounded at the graduate level where candidates may have to lead study groups or deliver lectures to small groups of native speakers.

By including modules in all four skills areas, the IELTS assures candidates (and institutions) that they are ready to fulfill all the language requirements for courses in further and higher education where English is the language of communication. IELTS provides a holistic approach to language testing in a way which tests a range of transferrable skills. IELTS is readily available at test centres around the world which arrange test administrations according to local demand. It is recognized as an entrance requirement by British, Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian universities and for secondary, vocational and training programs. After being introduced to the U.S.A. two years ago, IELTS now has 4 tests centres and is recognized by 55 major public and private universities.

Examples and information used in this presentation have been taken from the IELTS Handbook from October 2000 (which is available through the Conestoga College website listed below) and from the text *Prepare for IELTS Academic Modules* written by Vanessa Todd and Penny Cameron and published by Insearch Language Centre, University of Technology, Sydney.

Additional information on IELTS can be found on the following websites:

www.conestogac.on.ca/ielts
www.ielts.org
www.cambridge-efl.org.uk

Carol Trotter has taught ESL at Conestoga College since 1968 and for the past 10 years has been teaching English for Academic Purposes. She became an IELTS examiner 4 years ago.

TalkEnglish Café at A.C.C.E.S.

www.accestrain.com

Since, 1986 A.C.C.E.S. (Accessible Community Counselling and Employment Services) has developed expertise in helping newcomers find and maintain employment.

Both program participants and employers have made it clear that a lack of facility in English continues to be one of the biggest work place barriers faced by many newcomers. Although they regularly attend the many ESL Programs offered citywide, an opportunity just to “Talk English” is in constant demand.

Good English communication skills are critical to finding work in Toronto – for cold calling employers; for describing your skills in an interview; for networking with contacts and community members. They are also critical to job maintenance - for formal workplace communication; for trouble-shooting and problem solving with co-workers and supervisors; for more informal “water cooler” conversations where workplace relationships are often established.

In response, ACCES began offering a unique, fun-filled service called the **Talk English Café**. Every Thursday night the agency’s resource centre is transformed into a café. As soon as participants enter, a qualified ESL teacher and an ACCES employment consultant warmly greet them. The night begins with an informal chat and coffee.

Each session includes fun warm-up activities and small-group conversations on a variety of workplace-related topics. Participants feel comfortable to practice their English conversation in a safe and encouraging environment.

“I think the English Cafe is really good for me because I need to practice English and I never thought someone could make this idea.”

Carlos Bernail, Participant, Auto Mechanic

“I like the presentation part because I feel comfortable because no one is judging me and everyone is trying to learn. I feel I can be part of this group and participate.”

Cristina Aquino, Participant, Human Resources

In just one year, The Talk English Café has served over 500 participants. Café participants tell us that they gain a new sense of inspiration, a bigger support network and motivation to optimistically pursue an effective job search and begin their new lives in Canada.

Allison Pond – Operations Manager
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Shawn Mintz - Employment Consultant
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Every Thursday night the agency’s resource centre is transformed into a café.



The night begins with an informal chat and coffee.

The CLBA-TOEFL Comparison Study

David L.E. Watt & Deidre M. Lake, University of Calgary

Introduction

English Language Proficiency (ELP) and the types of standardized assessments that are used in determining ELP can play a major role in the life opportunities of adult immigrants to Canada. The outcomes of ELP assessments directly affect their right to access language training programs, their inclusion in professional associations and their admissibility to colleges and universities. ELP and its assessment are critical to addressing the problem of lost human capital among Canadian immigrants.

At present, the two most commonly used tests in Canada for determining ELP are the Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment (CLBA) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Typically, the CLBA has been used to determine the eligibility of recent immigrants for funded language training programs and for employment-oriented skills-based programs. It is used most often in the assessment of individuals with limited-to-moderate English proficiency. The TOEFL, on the other hand, is most commonly used in the assessment of individuals with moderate to advanced levels of ELP and is most often associated with meeting the language requirements for admission to universities and colleges or for satisfying the language requirements for membership in professional associations.

Despite the polarized uses of the tests, to opposite ends of the ELP continuum, both tests are capable of measuring a broader range of abilities. The TOEFL spans an ELP range of abilities from low-intermediate to native-like. The CLBA (Benchmarks 1-8) assesses a proficiency range from beginner to advanced. While the two tests take quite different approaches to the assessment process and the specific language constructs that they include, there is a significant overlap in the span of proficiencies that each test measures.

Many Canadian immigrants experience both the TOEFL and the CLBA as part of their language assessment profile, during their first few years in Canada. The likelihood of someone taking both tests, coupled with the potential overlap in the test ranges and the institutional popularity of the two tests for decision-making purposes provides a strong ration-

ale for research that investigates the relationship between the two assessment instruments.

The goal of our research project was to compare CLBA and TOEFL test performances for an academically and professionally-oriented clientele, in order to better understand how the two most popular measures of ELP relate to each other.

Participants

The research project sought the support of language programs, colleges, universities, professional associations and testing centres in finding participants who had recently completed the TOEFL and were willing to take the CLBA. From those who responded, 121 were identified as taking the TOEFL for reasons that were compatible with post-secondary or professional association goals. From this group, 90 participants were selected in order to minimize any negative interpretive effect that might arise from an extended time gap between the two tests. A median time of three months was established as a short enough interval to allow for a meaningful comparison of the results from the two tests.

Next, inter-correlations of the performances of participants on the various sections of the TOEFL were compared with similar inter-correlations produced by Educational Testing Service (ETS) for a general audience of TOEFL-takers. This was done in order to verify that the performance of our participant sample was in keeping with the performance patterns of a more general audience. The results showed a good fit between the two groups, and, therefore, allow for generalization of the findings.

Lastly, personal, occupational and educational information was collected from the participants as part of their profile. This information identified our participant sample as a highly educated one, equally divided between those seeking post-secondary admission and those already admitted to Canadian colleges and universities. It also provided evidence of the degree of lost human capital that exists within the participant group. More than half had established previous professions (medical, engineering, etc.), yet the most commonly reported occupational experi-

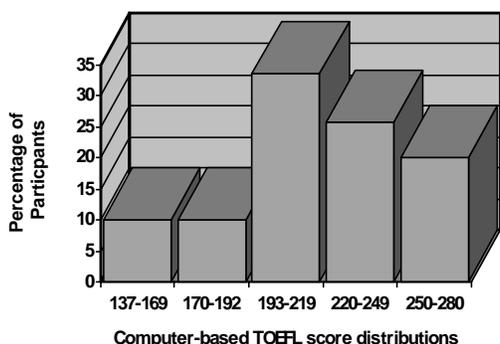
Many Canadian immigrants experience both the TOEFL and the CLBA as part of their language assessment profile, during their first few years in Canada.

The goal of our research project was to compare CLBA and TOEFL test performances for an academically and professionally-oriented clientele, in order to better understand how the two most popular measures of ELP relate to each other.

ences in Canada were in non-skilled jobs (dishwasher, gas station attendant, office cleaner, etc.).

Test results from the TOEFL indicate that the participants in the research were largely able to perform well on that test. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of the participants across the TOEFL ranges. The 193-219 range is usually associated with English for Academic Purposes programs and is at the cusp of university admissibility. The 220-249 range covers the breadth of admission requirements for universities in Canada. A cut score of about 220 is a common admission criterion for Canadian universities. The 250-280 range represents exceptional performance. Nearly 46% of the participants were university admissible. Another 34% were at the cusp.

Figure 1
Distribution of TOEFL Scores



■ Computer-based TOEFL Scores by Range

Correlations

As expected, the CLBA and the TOEFL were found to have a moderate correlation with each other.

	CLBA Listening/ Speaking	CLBA Reading	CLBA Writing
TOEFL Total Score	.4183	.5102	.6221

This correlation is in keeping with the idea that the two tests measure similar, though not identical language constructs, and may privilege them differently. It is also in keeping with the fact that the two tests have a degree of difference in what they measure. The CLBA contains an oral proficiency interview

(listening and speaking), whereas the TOEFL measures one-way listening ability, in a non-interview context. It is our belief that the TOEFL tends more towards a measurement of language knowledge and language ability (the capacity to use language knowledge); whereas the CLBA tends more towards the measurement of language ability and language proficiency (the capacity to successfully negotiate communication in specific contexts).

Even given these differences, the degree of correlation between the two tests suggests that performances can be compared across their overlapping ranges of ELP.

Length of Residence and its effect on performance

Length of Residence (LOR) has been widely recognized as a predictor of communicative ability in a second language. We investigated LOR as a means of determining whether its predictive power played any role in the assessment of ELP on either of the two tests. Our purpose for investigating LOR was to shed some light on a feature that distinguishes international students (i.e. foreign language speakers) from immigrant students (i.e. second language speakers). To determine the effect of LOR on the various measures of the TOEFL and the CLBA, simple regression analysis was performed on each of the sections of the two tests, including the TOEFL total score. From the eight different sections of the two tests, only the CLBA listening/speaking section was significantly predicted by LOR – Significance of $F = .02$.

What this finding suggests is that an individual's performance on the TOEFL is not affected by the kinds of communicative language gains that have been associated with LOR. Conversely, performance on the oral interview within the CLBA is directly affected by LOR. The importance of this finding is the degree to which it indicates the need for an oral proficiency interview in order to equitably assess the ELP of an immigrant population, since they are the group whose ELP is most likely to have been positively affected by LOR and the group who are most likely to be negatively affected by ELP assessments that do not reflect the effects of LOR on communicative ability.

Establishing statistical concordance between the two tests

In order to provide a degree of consistency with ETS practices for deriving concordance tables, a

This correlation is in keeping with the idea that the two tests measure similar, though not identical language constructs, and may privilege them differently.

Even given these differences, the degree of correlation between the two tests suggests that performances can be compared across their overlapping ranges of ELP.

scaled score equation procedure that is used by ETS was applied to the TOEFL total scores. This produced scaled equation scores for the three sections of the CLBA, based uniquely on the interpolation of real score comparisons, generated from the study. Table I (last page) presents the initial heuristic concordance that stems from our research. The table is divided into shaded ranges. Each range represents the existing standard comparison set by ETS for its computer-based and paper-based scores. Ranges are calculated to coincide with the Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) for TOEFL performance. ETS defines SEM as follows:

“The standard error of measurement (SEM) is an estimate of the probable extent of error inherent in a test score due to the imprecision of the measurement process”. (1997:30)

The scaled CLBA benchmarks, which are reported in the last three columns of Table I, are decimalized, to represent the continuum of scaled scores. The CLBA is not a decimalized scale of benchmarks. Therefore, a conservative approach of upward rounding all decimals is suggested in order to account for both the heuristic nature of the scale and the possible negative effects of future inter-rater reliability. Only scores between 137 and 280 were reported, since these represent the actual scores for the participant sample.

Conclusions

The findings in this report are of value to a variety of areas concerned with English Language Proficiency standards for academic and professional purposes. Foremost among these is the value to universities and colleges in updating admission requirements to reflect the language proficiency of academically and professionally-oriented immigrants, by including the CLBA in its admission standards. The heuristic concordance table provides the basis for an informed discussion of ELP standards. While the table represents a preliminary concordance, it presents a reliable comparison within the limitations of this study.

Contact information

For a full-length copy of the report in PDF format, please send an email to: [dwatt@ucalgary.ca](mailto:d watt@ucalgary.ca)

Please type “CLBA-TOEFL Comparison Study” in the subject box of your message.

Researcher Information

David L.E. Watt is an associate professor and co-ordinator of the MED. TESL program in the Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary. He is a nationally certified CLBA assessor and has published research in the areas of: ESL dropout, English Language Proficiency and educational adjustment, and educational policy in English as a Second Language.

Deidre M. Lake is the ESL/LINC program manager for the Calgary Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, a large, community-based ESL provider. She is a nationally certified CLBA assessor, who has conducted over 3,000 assessments using the CLBA. She has published classroom assessment tasks related to the CLBA and works as a freelance writer/researcher on assessment issues in language and literacy.

The findings in this report are of value to a variety of areas concerned with English Language Proficiency standards for academic and professional purposes.

While the table represents a preliminary concordance, it presents a reliable comparison within the limitations of this study.

**Table I:
Algorithmic Concordance Table – Total Scaled Scores Comparison¹**

TOEFL Computer-based Total	TOEFL Paper-based	CLBA Listening/Speaking	CLBA Reading	CLBA Writing
137	457	3.52	5.88	4.04
140	460	3.64	5.94	4.13
143	463	3.77	6.00	4.21
150	470	4.05	6.14	4.42
157	480	4.34	6.29	4.63
160	483	4.46	6.35	4.72
167	493	4.74	6.49	4.93
170	497	4.86	6.55	5.01
177	503	5.15	6.69	5.22
180	507	5.27	6.75	5.31
183	513	5.39	6.81	5.40
187	517	5.56	6.89	5.52
190	520	5.68	6.95	5.61
193	523	5.80	7.01	5.70
197	527	5.96	7.09	5.82
200	533	6.09	7.15	5.90
203	537	6.21	7.21	5.99
207	540	6.37	7.29	6.11
210	547	6.49	7.35	6.20
213	550	6.62	7.41	6.29
217	553	6.78	7.49	6.41
220	560	6.90	7.55	6.55
223	563	7.02	7.61	6.59
227	567	7.19	7.69	6.70
230	570	7.31	7.75	6.79
233	577	7.43	7.81	6.88
240	587	7.72	7.95	7.09
243	593	7.84	8.01	7.18
247	597	8.00	8.09	7.30
250	600	8.12	8.15	7.39
253	607	8.25	8.21	7.48
257	613	8.41	8.29	7.59
260	620	8.53	8.35	7.68
263	623	8.65	8.41	7.77
267	630	8.82	8.49	7.89
273	637	9.06	8.61	8.19
277	647	9.22	8.69	8.19
280	653	9.35	8.75	8.28

¹ The summary table was compiled using an algorithmic procedure from: *Summary and Derivation of Equation Methods used at ETS*, W.H. Angoff, 1982. In: **Test Equation**. Holland & Rubin (eds), Academic Press.

Vocabulary: an Interactive Systems Approach

In order to write well in English, students need to have a broad vocabulary and they need to be able to use precise words, i.e., words that accurately describe what they want to say. Learning vocabulary is very important and many students (and teachers) do not pay enough attention to it. I believe students need to learn vocabulary in a systematic and interactive way.

Vocabulary Myths

Students cannot learn vocabulary just by underlining words in a reading and looking up their meaning. They cannot learn vocabulary when the teacher lists words on the blackboard and students copy them into their notebooks. Students do not learn new words only by writing a sentence using the word.

Learning Vocabulary

Acquiring a new word means that you not only know its meaning, but that you can also choose the word when you speak and write and manipulate it to describe exactly what you want to say. In order to “acquire” a new word, you must know more than its meaning. You must know:

- how to pronounce the word and how to spell it
- what grammatical forms the word has (i.e., its noun, verb, adjective form etc.)
- what social associations the word has
- whether the word is formal or informal
- what collocations the word has
- how frequently the word is used in Canadian English
- the variety of contexts in which the word is used

Students must also interact with the word in different ways and often in order to feel comfortable using the word. When students learn a second language, they should learn vocabulary in a systematic way.

Interacting with a new word means recognizing it when you hear others say it, or when you read it; it means writing the word and recognizing how it looks; it means saying the word and hearing its sounds consciously. How many syllables are in the word? Does the word have silent letters? Does the word sound pleasing to your ear? Do you like saying the word? Interacting with a word means trying to use it

in different situations, sharing it with friends, asking about it and so on. When students simply look up the meaning of a word in the dictionary, they are not interacting with the word in a meaningful way.

Students should have certain steps that they follow to learn a new word. First, they can write the word, then look up its meaning, then guess other grammatical forms for it and check them in the dictionary. Then they need to begin using the words in different contexts. They need to connect the word with the world outside the classroom. It is motivating for students when they find a word they are learning in the newspaper or hear it on the radio.

Students need to interact with others using the word and they need to interact with the word itself and its forms in order to take ownership of it.

Background

About eight years ago I was teaching business oral communications to advanced ESL learners in the Faculty of Continuing Education at Seneca College. Students really wanted to improve their business vocabulary, both formal and informal. They also wanted to learn the idioms they heard often in the work place. Until then, I had taught vocabulary in a rather traditional way: listing words on the board, asking students to look up the meanings of words and having them use the words in sentences or short written dialogues. I also dealt with vocabulary in course books, as many texts do include some kinds of vocabulary activities. Because this class demanded more of me regarding vocabulary acquisition, I began to reflect on how I was approaching vocabulary and whether it was really working. It wasn't.

Why The Traditional Approach Didn't Work

First, students were not getting enough repetition in the vocabulary exercises. They didn't see or use the words often enough to really incorporate them into their personal word repertoire.

Second, I was not encouraging students to look beyond meaning. Consequently, they were not able to use the words in different, appropriate contexts; they could not judge whether a target word could be used in a particular situation. For example, they had learned that “remunerate” was a formal word mean-

Students should have certain steps that they follow to learn a new word. First, they can write the word, then look up its meaning, then guess other grammatical forms for it and check them in the dictionary.

Students need to interact with others using the word and they need to interact with the word itself and its forms in order to take ownership of it.

ing to pay someone for their work or services. When your superior asks you to work overtime (which they assumed was a formal boss/subordinate situation), he or she will not say the following: "If you work on Saturday, you will be remunerated at time and a half." The meaning is appropriate in this situation, but the word choice isn't.

Third, students were not active enough in the learning process. We spent more time on developing receptive language (reading the words, listening to the words) and not enough time producing the target words in a variety of forms and contexts.

Fourth, learning the vocabulary was not systematic. Students didn't have a consistent, step-by-step approach to acquiring the vocabulary. I felt this was a weakness.

Finally, many times the target vocabulary came from readings or from a variety of contexts; it was not themed. Not only do I think that vocabulary is more easily retained when students can associate it with a particular theme or context, it's also more useful when they participate in a communicative function and can directly draw from a set of vocabulary that is related to that function.

What Makes This Approach Successful?

Six key features make this approach to learning vocabulary successful.

- **Systematic**
Students use a consistent approach to learning vocabulary.
- **Repetitive**
This process approach encompasses a series of activities in which the target vocabulary is used in different ways, but repetitively.
- **Interactive**
The team orientation and the process approach ensure that learners are interacting with others and with the target vocabulary repeatedly.
- **Flexible**
The series of steps in the process allow students to choose some of the vocabulary they are learning as well as the types of activities they will create.
- **Motivating**

It is in the process of generating vocabulary activities that the "real" learning happens. It is simply not possible to create a vocabulary activity unless the

student understands and can use the target words appropriately.

Steps in the Process

The following description is suited to high intermediate to advanced-level students although I have successfully used the system (with some adaptations) at the high beginner level. Students work in teams of 3 or 4 over several days.

1. The teacher assigns teams eight words relating to the current theme.

The words can be generated by themed readings or brought forth by the teacher. The teacher lists the target words on the blackboard and indicates the word form. The teacher models pronunciation of the words, with special attention to word stress and problematic sounds (if there are any). Students repeat the words and mark the appropriate stress once they copy the words from the blackboard.

2. Teams work in class to discover the meanings word forms, pronunciation, collocations, frequency of use etc. using dictionaries or any other resources.

This process can take up to an hour. Students complete a series of charts: Vocabulary – Meanings; Vocabulary – Beyond Meaning (see Appendix I B - C) to help them focus on the task. If class time is not available, the teacher may assign these tasks as homework. This completes the work of the first class session. I have done this both as a team activity and as an individual activity. I prefer the individual approach because it takes less class time and allows students to work at their own pace. In some teams, students divided the task, with each team member taking responsibility for two or three of the eight target words.

3. Each team member looks for an additional theme-related word outside of class to bring to the next team session.

Students are encouraged to come up with one additional word from any source (newspaper, television, friends, etc.) that is related to the target theme. They must learn the word in the same way as the team learned the eight target words assigned by the teacher, so that the student becomes the team expert on that word.

4. Team members work in class to share information and new target vocabulary. Each team member chooses to create a different type of vocabulary activity.

It is in the process of generating vocabulary activities that the "real" learning happens. It is simply not possible to create a vocabulary activity unless the student understands and can use the target words appropriately.

They must learn the word in the same way as the team learned the eight target words assigned by the teacher, so that the student becomes the team expert on that word.

Again, to save class time and to allow for self-paced learning, I prefer to let students create their exercises individually and outside of the classroom.

If the students completed the tasks in step 2 individually at home or divided up the words to complete individually at home, they now share their findings, filling in any gaps and clearing up any misunderstandings. Teams also share their additional words, so that each team now has eleven or twelve target words, eight of which are common to all teams. Each team member now chooses from a list the specific type of vocabulary activity (crossword, fill-in-the-blank, meaning match, synonym, word form or collocation activity) that he/she will create individually at home. Each team submits a Work Sheet Summary (Appendix I-A) to the teacher at the end of this session, listing the teams target words and the names of team members along with the activity type each will create.

Note: students must discuss each type of vocabulary activity (as listed above) as a class and must complete each type of activity before attempting to create it. I provide students with a paper-based model activity for each type of vocabulary exercise, so that they know exactly what their activity should look like. In lower levels, I also model the process of creating an activity by creating a class vocabulary activity.

5. Each team member creates a vocabulary activity at home.

Again, to save class time and to allow for self-paced learning, I prefer to let students create their exercises individually and outside of the classroom.

6. In class, teams share their individually created activities and team edit the exercises.

Many teams will simply exchange activities for editing, which saves time. Other teams prefer to work on each activity as a team. Both approaches work well, but because there is a considerable time difference, it's best to have all teams follow the same approach. I've taken two different approaches with edits. At very advanced levels, I ask students to bring two typed copies of their activities to the class: one for the teacher and the other for team review. Because the edits are usually minor, I let student make revisions in pen on the typed page. With lower-level students, I ask them to bring their activity in legibly printed, not typed form. After the editing process, students type the edited exercises at home and bring them to the next class.

7. Teams exchange their edited activities with another team.

Teams exchange their "team package" of vo-

cabulary activities with another team who completes the activities. If there is any misunderstanding or confusion, students go directly to the team who created the activity for clarification. The classroom is very active at this point, with students walking back and forth between teams for guidance and clarification.

Caution: students will often receive another team's package and divide the activities so that one team member completes only one activity. If time is a concern, this approach is fine. It's preferable, however, for the whole team to complete another team's package one activity at a time.

8. Teams return the "team packages" to the originating team for correction.

Each team now looks at the activities it created, which have now been completed by another team, to ensure appropriate response. This doesn't usually take long because errors and confusing elements have already been discussed amongst the teams.

These eight steps represent the optimal conditions for learning the target vocabulary. "Process" is the operative word in this approach because students learn the vocabulary in the process of creating, revising, and completing the vocabulary exercises. The "product" is secondary. That's why I don't worry that much about structural errors in the product, especially at the lower levels. Students acquire the vocabulary even when the product is structurally imperfect.

Benefits

After participating in this process students acquire language for the following reasons:

- The target vocabulary is repeated in each step of the process
- Students interact repeatedly with their peers and the target words
- There's an element of self-paced learning when students complete some tasks individually
- Students have choice. They choose words they want to learn and they choose activities they want to create.
- The students are actively engaged in the learning process.
- Students are encouraged to self-correct and participate in peer editing.

Caution: students will often receive another team's package and divide the activities so that one team member completes only one activity. If time is a concern, this approach is fine. It's preferable, however, for the whole team to complete another team's package one activity at a time.

- Students are encouraged to collect words from “real -life” sources such as newspapers, broad-casts etc., as well as look for the words they have learned in class in “real life” contexts.

Cautionary Notes

- Teachers must provide a model activity for each type of exercise they expect students to create.
- Teachers must take the necessary time at the beginning of the process to explain and model the approach.
- Teachers will have to tolerate a slow start and errors in the first round of activities. Once the process is in place, however, students will not have problems.
- Students will attempt to use dictionary definitions. Insist that they use their own words to define the target vocabulary.
- Make sure that students understand the difference between a Fill-in-the-blank activity and a Word Form activity: The former will list the target vocabulary at the top of the exercise in the exact grammatical form as is required in the blank. The Word Form activity lists the target vocabulary at the top of the exercise in a grammatical form other than what is required in the blank. For example, the word listed at the top might be the noun “liability” but the sentence may require the adjective form “liable”.

Evaluation

I don’t recommend marking the student activities because due to the extensive team work, I’m not

convinced that a single activity demonstrates the creator’s ability to use the target words. This system is a learning process. I suggest that teachers use separate tests to evaluate a student’s ability to use the target vocabulary. I have also tried with little success assigning teams marks. Stronger students resented having the grades deflated by the work of weaker students and the marks of weaker students were unfairly inflated.

One Size Doesn’t Fit All

Teachers often ask me if this approach will work in any situation. I’m not sure that it will, but I believe it will work in most teaching environments even at lower levels, in multi-level classes and in continuous intake programs. However, just as I had to adapt the system to work at lower levels, teachers may have to adapt the system to their own teaching situation. This may mean doing pair work rather than team work, and creating only two or three types of vocabulary activities. I believe, though, that the system will work, even with significant alterations, as long as the key features mentioned in “What Makes This Approach Successful?” remain intact.

Various work sheets and sample vocabulary activities are included in the Appendix.

Marina Engelking teaches at Seneca College’s English Language Institute.

I suggest that teachers use separate tests to evaluate a student’s ability to use the target vocabulary.

I believe it will work in most teaching environments even at lower levels, in multi-level classes and in continuous intake programs.

Appendix 1-A

Vocabulary – Work Sheet Summary

Date: _____

Team members:

Our fourteen words this week are:

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 12. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 13. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 14. _____ |

Our team members will create the following activities:

Check one box for each team member.

Student's Name	Meaning Match	Fill in the Blank	Word Forms	Crossword	Synonyms

Each student must design a different activity.

Community Contact Assignments

Community Contact Assignments is an integrated-communication teaching approach to promote language learning beyond the classroom. Learning English is not only the skill to write or read, but also the ability to use these skills in the many typical situations that students face in this English-speaking country.

Community activities expand students' understanding about Canadian culture and ultimately teach them about 'life skills'. This method of teaching allows students to begin to feel 'at home'. They will develop strong communication skills that will help them become more active citizens in their community.

Approach

Community Contact Assignments is based on the premise that language is the key to communication. The goal of this style of learning is to help students develop communicative competence in English by being exposed to real-life situations, not just role-playing in class with their peers.

When students venture to their assignment, they will experience risk-taking situations but should not be discouraged because learning is a process of discovery. I have written a book full of resources for teachers of authentic materials of real-life demands and situations.

Each community contact assignment takes three weeks to complete. The teacher selects five community contact assignments, either relevant to the theme of the week or month or selects five from different themes. I prefer selecting five from different themes, as the students find it more stimulating and interesting.

The information in this book is to help students settle in Canadian society.

The themes, topics, and resource materials have been carefully researched to satisfy LINC curriculum guidelines and benchmarks.

Teachers may use this book to enhance the listening and speaking components of the curriculum in order to improve their students' linguistic competence.

COMPONENT 1: RESEARCH, WEEK 1

During the first week, the students get their assignment task sheet and start their research.

- 1) Teachers should choose relevant community contact topics according to theme(s). Depending on class size, five or six contact assignments, three students per contact, would be ideal.
- 2) Assignment task sheets are given to the students. Class size can be used to research providing the Internet and publications on themes are available. Students can go to a local library or phone other contacts to get additional information.

SAMPLE STUDENT TASK SHEET:

Name of Student(s)	Community Contact
Igor	Academic Credentials Assessment
Sandra Larissa	OSAP – student loans
Yiu Chan	Funeral Home
Alfred Jaimie	City Hall Counsel Meeting

COMPONENT 2: THE APPOINTMENT, WEEK 2

During the second week, the teacher presents the students with their contact schedule. On some occasions, students may make their own appointment depending on the type of contact (i.e., Domestic Disputes, Family Issues, Legal Counseling)

- Teachers should make appointments for students in advance to ensure success. Making appointments ahead of time alleviates confusion and stress for the students as well as for the contact. This professional approach is more productive for the students.
- Students can make their own appointment as a final evaluation presentation at the end of the semester.
- Students are given their appointment and should be prepared to ask questions during the interview. Allow approximately one hour for each appointment.

The goal of this style of learning is to help students develop communicative competence in English by being exposed to real-life situations, not just role-playing in class with their peers.

Each community contact assignment takes three weeks to complete. The teacher selects five community contact assignments, either relevant to the theme of the week or month or selects five from different themes. I prefer selecting five from different themes, as the students find it more stimulating and interesting.

SAMPLE APPOINTMENT SCHEDULE: (Multi Task)

Community Contact	Contact Information	Date of Appointment	Student(s) Name
Educational: Academic Credentials Assessment Employment: Skills for Change Training Centres COSTI Business Import / Export Small Business Finance /Banking Re: OSAP / Loans, Wills / Power of Attorney Parenting / Family Children / Adolescents Domestic Issues	York University (416) 923-1234 Contact Person: Ms. Smith	November 30, 2001 10:30 a.m.	Patricia

Evaluation is optional depending on the students and the teacher. I prefer evaluations because my students like being evaluated and it gives the assignment credibility.

COMPONENT 3: PRESENTATION, WEEK 3

The third week, students make a presentation to their peers on what they have learned. They should be encouraged to bring pamphlets, brochures, business cards, new vocabulary and expressions to the group on the day of the presentation, in order to expand the learning process.

Evaluation is optional depending on the students and the teacher. I prefer evaluations because my students like being evaluated and it gives the assignment credibility.

- Students get into groups and present their findings to their peers. Students must be able to speak about what was real and interesting about their assignment. They can explain new vocabulary, idioms, expressions, and, most importantly, Canadian culture.
- Students can write a ‘thank you’ letter to the contact person to express their appreciation. It also ensures future contacts and establishes a good rapport within the community.

Rosa Caruso teaches LINC level 5 for the Toronto District School Board.

Students can write a ‘thank you’ letter to the contact person to express their appreciation.

Problems and issues in working with paraprofessionals: Teachers' perspectives

Wendy Wang

I. Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increasing use of paraprofessionals in multicultural classrooms to assist teachers meeting the diverse needs of the students, particularly English language learners (ELLs). State education agencies reported that about 150,000 instructional paraprofessionals were working in public schools in 1985 and the number went up to 500,000 in 1995 (Pickett, 1996). According to French and Pickett (1997), the dramatic increase in the number of paraprofessionals is attributable to five factors: 1) the changing demographics in schools. Children whose home language is other than English constitute the fastest-growing segment of the school population in the United States. Olsen (1993) reported that between 1985 and 1991 the K-12 ELL population increased by 51% and the number of ELLs continues to rise, widening the language and cultural gap between the teachers and the students. 2) There have been increasing demands for support services for the expanding number of economically and other disadvantaged students who are at risk of failure. 3) The federal and state legislative mandates require local schools to provide services to all children and youth who can benefit from individualized education programs and personalized assistance. 4) The roles of teachers have been changing and expanding. In the current education reform, teachers are being urged to move from teacher-centered to learner-centered teaching and from transmission of knowledge to a constructive view of learning. As a result, the roles of teachers are being redefined from a classroom teacher to a classroom manager. 5) There has been an ongoing shortage of professional practitioners, particularly teachers from cultural and linguistic backgrounds similar to those of the students. Genzuk, Lavadenz, and Krashen (1994) observe that recruiting teachers who share the language and cultural heritage of the community has proven to be difficult.

Paraprofessionals are considered to be a valuable addition to the existing instructional programs, serving many ends in today's busy classrooms. However, the use of paraprofessionals has brought with it some

problems and posed challenges to many teachers. The purpose of the study was to create a space for teachers to share their experiences and to explore issues and concerns related to working with paraprofessionals in the classroom.

II. Method

The study was conducted with 10 classroom teachers, all female, seeking ESL endorsement in an MA-TESOL program in the United States. All reported to have worked or were still working with paraprofessionals in their classrooms at the time the study was conducted. Four participants reported to have worked with one paraprofessional and the others reported to have worked with from two to several. Data were collected through a written survey, in which the participants were asked to: 1) identify paraprofessional's roles and responsibilities with reference to their teaching context, and 2) describe their experiences working with paraprofessionals in classroom settings. A content analysis of the responses was then conducted to reflect the issues and concerns expressed by the participants, using categories that emerged from repeated readings of the data.

III. Findings

Table 2 summarizes the roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessionals perceived by the participants. Their responses were grouped into six major categories: 1) resource support, 2) knowledge/skills, 3) instructional support, 4) teacher-paraprofessional relationship, 5) personal qualities/attitudes, and 6) class management support.

Table 2: The teachers' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessionals.

Paraprofessionals are considered to be a valuable addition to the existing instructional programs, serving many ends in today's busy classrooms. However, the use of paraprofessionals has brought with it some problems and posed challenges to many teachers.

The study was conducted with 10 classroom teachers, all female, seeking ESL endorsement in an MA-TESOL program in the United States.

Resource support

- Provide a way for student to 'catch up' or make up work they may have missed because of the open attendance policy,
- Provide students with the opportunity to hear another native speaker's English (besides mine!). This can be done by using them as conversational partners for students, or using the volunteer in the classroom as a speaker, helper, etc.,
- Be a link to the language and culture by being as resource that the students can come to with their experiences, questions, etc.,
- Act as liaisons with students' families,
- Translate documents for teachers when needed at meetings,
- Supply an additional personal touch and show empathy and concern for students as they adjust to a new language and culture,
- Be able to help me understand the culture and what is going on in the community (holiday, celebrations, etc.) as well as a translator and interpreter.

Knowledge/skills

- Have an awareness of methods and theories of teaching ESL,
- Become familiar with students' work and abilities, so as to be better able to anticipate their needs,
- Be culturally sensitive,
- Be aware of child development,
- Be aware of appropriate management techniques,
- Value children's independence (a biggie for me).

Instructional support

- Provide instruction with under the teacher's supervision;
- Assist me in any activities that relate to student needs;
- Work with individual students on as-needed basis;
- Assist the teacher in meeting individual needs of the students by following lessons planned by the teacher;
- Assist the teacher with planning of daily routine and education.

Teacher-paraprofessional relationship

- Be aware that there are boundaries between the teacher and paraprofessionals and not to cross them.
- Be able to work with me as well as the students that I assign to her. There should be no 'clash' of interest,
- Follow teacher's lead.

Personal qualities/attitude

- Be honest and responsible,
- Be present in class and not late,
- Be creative and willing to accept the ideas of others.

Class management support

- Be able to keep membership record (daily as well as help do the end-of-the-year records for each student).

It is clear from the data that there is a wide range of roles and duties that paraprofessionals are expected to fulfill. Most participants viewed paraprofessionals as resource people. Some expected them to be aware of and/or have the knowledge/skills required for the teaching context. A few expected the paraprofessionals to provide instructional support, though the instruction had to be under the teacher's supervision. It was interesting to note that some participants brought up issues related to the teacher-paraprofessional relationship. The words 'boundary' and 'clash' used by the participants indicate potential tension between the teacher and the paraprofessional. In terms of personal qualities and attitudes, the participants considered honesty, responsibility, creativity, and good attendance to be essential. One participant expected the paraprofessional to provide class management support, such as record keeping. Considering that "secretarial assistance remains the most common teacher aide assignment at all levels" (Haselkorn & Fidler, 1996: 11), it was interesting to note that none of the participants viewed the paraprofessionals as 'secretaries for teachers'. Instead they expected the paraprofessionals to be part of the instructional team. This finding is consistent with Pickett's (1997) observation that there has been a shift in the paraprofessionals' role from performing primarily clerical duties to providing instructional support.

It is clear from the data that there is a wide range of roles and duties that paraprofessionals are expected to fulfill.

The words 'boundary' and 'clash' used by the participants indicate potential tension between the teacher and the paraprofessional.

The roles and duties that paraprofessionals are expected to fulfill may vary from program to program, but they are a definite asset to today's busy classrooms. One participant observed:

With the elementary students, the paraprofessionals play a more basic but vital role, helping out with 'the tedious work that teachers get bogged down with', such as taking attendance, making copies, keeping students in line in the hallway, maintaining students' folders, and making phone calls. At the secondary level, the role of the paraprofessionals becomes even more vital. The majority of students have some capability in English, but this year, 5 students entered at zero-level. The paraprofessionals are the primary teachers for those students, working with them at two separate tables while the ESL teacher works with the rest of the class. (RH, May 2000).

Another participant noted:

The paraprofessionals at our school are there to perform a number of different functions. They are placed in lower grades, especially with new teachers, to assist them. Assisting can mean myriad different things. Generally, these functions are restricted to tasks such as writing late passes, copying papers, taking children to lunch, bathroom, etc., monitoring the children's behavior and/or assisting children alone or in group. On occasion, they will actually conduct a mini-lesson with small groups in things such as letter, number recognition, audit their reading, etc. (FN, May, 2000)

In a busy classroom where an 'extra' hand is needed, several participants reported having benefited from having a paraprofessional in their class at one time or another.

My parapro is a former teacher from Poland. I do all the planning and grading, but we teach together. She works with the lower ability students, and I work with the higher ability students. She does an excellent job and we get along wonderfully. (JW, May 2000)

My experience in working with paraprofessionals has been mixed. One very positive experience I have had involved a paraprofessional who was a 1:1 aide to a Japanese ESL child with autism. Although the young TA had had no specific

training to work with special needs children, she was devoted, sensitive, creative and gifted in her work with him. He made great progress in his work with her. (CN, May 2000)

I had one paraprofessional who was with me for summer school, who was very helpful and who had been at the job longer than I had been teaching, but we worked together very well. She would take groups for some reinforcement work at times and she would also monitor groups with me when the children did partner or group work. It was good. (FN, May 2000)

While many factors may have contributed to the successful experience of these participants, two key 'attributes' were identified by a participant that would make someone an 'ideal' paraprofessional: 1) the ability to manage assigned tasks without any supervision, and 2) the awareness of what the participants called the 'boundary'.

There is a paraprofessional in my class. She is a trained teacher from Poland, who has six years of experience working with ESL students. She is an ideal paraprofessional for two reasons. One is that since she is a teacher who has experience with ESL students; I can consult with her about methods and planning. The other is that she knows that there are boundaries, that I am the teacher, and that she is there to help. She never oversteps this boundary. We have an excellent relationship, and I am very lucky to work with her. (JW, May 2000)

This participant was lucky to have such an experienced and competent teacher work in her class as a paraprofessional; however, it is simply unrealistic to assume that she is representative of all paraprofessionals working in public schools. In fact, like children coming in all sizes and languages, paraprofessionals come with different experiences and skills. Some may be well-prepared for the complexity of the classroom; others may bring only a "sincere desire to help in the education setting" (Heller, 1997:223). However, the use of paraprofessionals has not been all positive experience for the participants in the study. Analysis of their experiences working with the paraprofessionals in various teaching contexts revealed a number of issues that need to be addressed: 1) the 'boundary' issue; 2) the supervision issue; 3) the time issue; 4) the training issue; and 5) the random assignment issue.

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The 'Boundary' Issue

The first issue of concern expressed by several participants was what they called the 'boundary' problem. One participant noted:

My most painful problems have arisen from working with the two 'instructional assistants' I have had (have) and one 13-year volunteer (...). Two other volunteers have been wonderful. The assistants and I have clashed over "Who is the teacher" problem, mostly. The volunteer and I have the same problem. The volunteer told me once that she "gets her strength to live through the students." (No pressure there!). I plan to ask if she can only come on Tuesdays as a compromise. (She's been coming all day, every day). Her needs outweigh the classroom needs. (AB, May 2000)

The clash over 'who is the teacher' problem exemplifies what Pickett and Gerlach (1997) have referred to as 'blurred or unclear lines of authority in the classroom' (p.221). It was clear from the data that the relationship between the participant and the paraprofessional was a tense one. This may have stemmed from several factors. One of the factors, as one participant pointed out, is that there was a lack of clear-cut roles for the paraprofessionals. In an effort to establish their classroom authority, the paraprofessionals, due to the open-ended nature of their job description, may have lost sight of the 'invisible' boundary and diluted the authority of the classroom teacher. When cases of overstepping the 'boundaries' happen, everyone lost: the teacher felt frustrated, the paraprofessional felt unappreciated by the teacher, and the students got caught in between and suffered most. Through her painful experience, the participant realized that although she was held responsible and accountable by the school system for what occurred in the classroom, she did not have the authority to define the roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessional assigned to work with her.

The Supervision Issue

Related to the boundary problem is the concern in regards to who is in charge of supervising the paraprofessionals. While paraprofessionals are typically assumed to be working under the supervision of the classroom teacher, it appeared to be ironic to the participants in the study that they did not feel like a supervisor because they were never formally as-

signed to take on the supervisory role. As one participant noted:

The negative experiences I have had involved trying to work within a system in which neither roles nor responsibilities were defined. Finding myself in a position of responsibility without being given the requisite authority has been a frustrating and ineffective place to be. (CN, May 2000)

Neither did the participants feel like being treated as a supervisor. One participant noted that the paraprofessionals in her school were given a handbook when they were first hired. In the handbook, paraprofessionals are defined as: "work directly on tasks which are of a routine nature, or supplement and reinforce instruction under meaningful direction and supervision of a certified classroom teacher." However, as a teacher, the participant never even received a copy of the paraprofessional handbook as a reference and was never given guidelines on how to go about this supervision. What was further puzzling was that if teachers were supposed to supervise the paraprofessionals working with them, how come they were not invited to be part of the hiring and evaluation process? As one participant stated:

My concern would have to be the accountability of the paraprofessionals' time and efforts. ... teachers are in no way allowed to be a part of the evaluation process, wasting a precious opportunity to communicate expectations and constructive criticism to improve paraprofessionals' job performance. (MC, May 2000).

Without having the requisite authority, the participants reported that they failed to act like a supervisor. In most cases, they felt powerless.

The absolute truth of the matter is, however, that according to most of the teachers in the building, the paraprofessionals are "under-used". They say that in many cases (not all), their assistants really don't assist at all, but just sit in the classroom until their time is up. I'm sure there could be a number of reasons for this, perhaps one being that the directions from the teacher may have been unclear and perhaps the paraprofessional does not want to overstep her/his bounds. Nonetheless, in some cases there is also the opposite situation, where they are disruptive in the class by continually reprimanding children at the wrong times and raising their voices to children and in that case, making a rowdy class worse. (FN, May 2000)

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The Time Issue

A good example illustrating the participants' struggle in the position of assumed responsibility without being given the requisite authority is that there was no planning time set aside for them to meet with the paraprofessionals. In fact, finding time to meet with the paraprofessionals has been a thorny issue for the over-loaded teachers. In most schools and programs, the paraprofessionals' schedules are often determined by the building principal, who informs them of time and teachers they would be working without prior consultation with the teachers. As a result, the participants in the study often found themselves giving directions to the paraprofessionals on the spot. As one participant noted:

Parapros are not quite sure what is expected of them and feel confused and unappreciated by the teachers whose room they share. Adding to this problem is the fact that no time is set aside for teachers and parapros to communicate. ... (MC, May 2000)

Another participant commented:

... the classroom teacher doesn't even have time to explain the paraprofessional's tasks for the day, let alone show them how to do it!! (AT, May 2000)

According to the participants, finding time for a sit-down meeting to plan and discuss issues with their paraprofessional was almost impossible. Oftentimes, their communication was either non-existent or reduced to a few minutes before or after the class. Lack of planning time appears to be a typical occurrence among classroom teachers (French, 1997). In one study, French (1997) found that "25% of the teachers who supervised paraeducators admitted that they never held formalized, sit-down meetings; another 25% said that such meetings were rare" (p. 129). If, as French maintains, "Giving directions, providing on-the-job training, providing feedback on performance, solving problems, managing conflicts, communicating about goals, and evaluation are functions that are primarily accomplished when sitting face to face" (p. 129), it is hard to imagine how classroom teachers can possibly assume the supervisory role when they are neither given the requisite authority nor the time to do so.

The Training Issue

A fourth issue of concern is training of paraprofessionals. As the teachers' roles are expand-

ing, so are the roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessionals. This raises several questions: whose responsibility is it to provide training, both global and specific, to the paraprofessionals? How much familiarity are paraprofessionals required to have with the student population they are serving? How much do they need to know about educational theory and specific teaching strategies? How can we expect paraprofessionals to do the instructional tasks if they have never been trained how? As mentioned earlier, paraprofessionals are often assumed to be working under the supervision of a certified classroom teacher. When it comes to the training of paraprofessionals, teachers are once again expected to assume the responsibility. As one participant mentioned, providing on-the-job training to paraprofessionals, proved to be a daunting task.

I also had a girl from Russia helping last year in the afternoon. The big problem that I had with her was that she wanted the slow students to learn the content that her son (in 1st grade and very smart) was learning in school. It took me a while to get her to understand that adult 2nd language learners don't learn in the same way as young children do. It was a struggle, but she finally understood! ... (MLC, May 2000)

Providing on-the-job training takes time and energy that has rarely been recognized and appreciated by the administrators. One participant commented that after all these years of working with a number of paraprofessionals, no one ever came up to her and asked, "How are you doing with the paraprofessional?" (RH, May 2000)

The Random Assignment Issue

Another issue of concern expressed by the participants is the fact that there seems to be a random assignment of paraprofessionals to teachers. There has been no consideration of matching paraprofessionals' likes and dislikes, skills, talents, experiences and what duties they are expected to perform and who they would work well with. In most schools, paraprofessionals are placed in lower grades, especially with new teachers, to assist them. However, neither the teacher nor the paraprofessional has a say in the selection and assigning processing. Random pairing of teachers and paraprofessionals, like a blind date, often results in inappropriate matches that may impair their performance. One participant noted:

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It is a fact of life that we are all human and sometimes personalities clash so much that teamwork is the last thing being modeled for the children. . . . From what I've heard and/or seen, some paraprofessionals are placed in classrooms where it is quite evident that the teacher doesn't want a paraprofessional or a paraprofessional is placed in a classroom where it is not a desirable place for her to be. (FN, May 2000)

One participant commented that a better job could be done if administration had some room for discussion regarding placements and, at least, give the teacher information about the paraprofessionals in regard to what they had experience in. In the same way, paraprofessionals should be given information on what jobs they are expected to do and if they prefer to work with anyone. The essence of all this is that children would ultimately be better served by appropriate matches.

IV. Discussion and implications

The issues and concerns expressed by the participants in the study should be examined at two levels: the classroom level and the administrative level.

At the classroom level, tension between the teacher and the paraprofessional can be attributed to the nature of the preparation for school professionals and paraprofessionals. As Pickett (1997) observes, "most teacher education programs have not revised curriculum content to prepare teachers to plan for, delegate, or assign tasks, assess paraeducator skills and performance, and provide on-the-job training" (p. 13). In a survey conducted by French (1995) about teachers' preparation for the supervisory role they are to assume, the majority of the teachers (82%) reported that they had received no formal, university preparation for working with paraprofessionals. One teacher reported:

There really isn't any training out there. You know, when you go through teacher training courses in college, nobody even approaches the subject, and then you're put in a situation and you have a paraprofessional and you tend to learn it by doing, and things hopefully get better in a year or so. (cited from French & Pickett, 1997: 63)

Without adequate training, many teachers find themselves working with a paraprofessional before they have ever had a serious thought about what roles a paraprofessional may play in the classroom. The challenge of working with a paraprofessional is

that it changes the concept of classroom autonomy for the teacher. Once a teacher opens his/her door to another adult, a paraprofessional in this case, he/she is embracing teamwork that he/she may or may not be ready for. According to Heller (1997), "The concept of 'team' is important to an effective professional and paraprofessional relationship; yet, it is a difficult concept to achieve. The team concept requires sharing, cooperation, collaboration, mutual understanding, shared goals, and a respect for the role(s) of everyone on the team." (p.221). Obviously, successful teamwork doesn't happen simply when a paraprofessional is assigned to the teacher. Teamwork needs to be built and each team is only as good as the members who comprise it. Yet, the majority of the teachers may not have the knowledge and skills to cope with the extra amount of work needed to make their team work. Neither do the paraprofessionals. Many paraprofessionals walk into the classroom with little preparation in terms of learning about the roles of school professionals. While they bring a sincere desire to help, they often have limited training to perform the tasks they are assigned to. Findings from the study provides empirical information, suggesting that if the end goal is to provide quality instruction to meet the diverse needs of the ELL population, both pre- and in-service training should be made available to teachers. Prospective teachers should be required to do coursework in supervision, and mandatory in-service training should be provided to teachers working with paraprofessionals. Since paraprofessionals are part of the instructional team in a school, the training must be extended to them as well.

However, providing training to teachers and paraprofessionals is only part of the solution. It was obvious from the data that many of the dilemmas that teachers faced could be attributed to the lack of responsibility to ensure the effective use of the paraprofessionals at the administrative level. Findings from the study indicate that it is problematic to assume that teachers are prepared to take on the supervisory role without appropriate training. It is of even greater concern if teachers continue to be expected to assume the role of a supervisor without a clear mandate and the time needed to provide on-the-job training to the paraprofessionals and do the supervisory job. It is time for the administrators to address the issues expressed by the participants and recognize that the responsibility of effectively utilizing the paraprofessionals rests just as much with the teachers as with them. Both teachers and adminis-

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trators serve as critical catalysts in effecting change and improvement in the use of paraprofessionals to better serve the diverse needs of ELLs in today's classrooms.

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The CLBA and the Measurement and Development of Proficiency through Language Education

Theresa Hyland

The following is a brief comment on the “Response to ‘A Critical Review of the CLBA’” by Carolyn Cohen and Gail Stewart and “Comments on Hyland and Lee’s ‘A Critical Review of the Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment’” by Marg Fortin. These articles appeared in the *Contact*, Vol. 27(1) Spring, 2001.

First of all, I would like to thank both Marg Fortin and Gail Stewart and Carolyn Cohen for the meticulous reading of the Hyland and Lee Critical Review. I agree with Marg Fortin that the CLB and the CLBA are a good step forward in the creation of a professional set of standards for the assessment and teaching of ESL. However, I also believe that it is necessary to engage in a discussion about the theoretical underpinnings of the assessment. An examination of the terminology in my article and in the two commentaries about it reveals fundamental differences in philosophy of second language education. I would like to briefly explore these differences by contrasting several pairs of terms that appear both in my article and in the responses to it. They are: proficiency versus placement assessment, education versus training, and high-stakes versus low stakes assessments.

Proficiency assessment/placement assessment: Canale (1988) defines proficiency as analyzed and unanalyzed knowledge as well as a degree of control over knowledge and skills. Cummins (1984) distinguishes between the student’s ability to function in English through “surface fluency” and “more cognitively and academically related aspects of proficiency”¹. Proficiency assessment, by these definitions, must measure a student’s global ability to perform in English. Proficiency can be assessed through the successful completion of certain kinds of tasks, but the nature of the tasks is crucial. Tasks can require skills that are generic or transferable, or they can require discrete skills that are useful in only one situation. If tasks are to demonstrate proficiency in a language (or global ability), they must require transferable skills (i.e. skills that will be used in more than one language situation). For instance, writing a letter requires both the discrete skill of letter formatting and the transferable skills of writing coherent sentences, creating an argument, addressing a specific audience, and dividing an argument into paragraphs.

Placement assessment² is done so that students of similar skill-levels can be put together in a classroom. Placement assessment can be done using tasks that demonstrate discrete skills. In fact, it is easier to form classes of similar skill levels by using discrete skill tasks. Language acquisition is often measured by such discrete-skills tasks: students can or cannot use the present perfect, create simple or complex sentences, or fill in forms. Such discrete-item skills do not, however, measure proficiency, and that is where the CLBA has problems. It mixes discrete skill tasks (such as filling out forms) with generic skills tasks (such as writing letters) and refers to a student’s ability to perform both sets of tasks as proficiently. Epp and Stavychny in the Spring 2001 issue of the *TESL Canada Journal* make a neat distinction between proficiency assessment and placement assessment. “L2 students at any level would perform much better on the CLB Level 6 task than on the CLB Level 1 task. The TOEFL and the CanTEST, on the other hand, require all students to perform on the same task (writing an analytical essay) regardless of their level of language proficiency” (42). I take this statement to mean that the TOEFL and the CanTEST use tasks that assess a student’s proficiency and not the student’s ability to perform discrete skill tasks. Fortin maintains that “the question here is not whether the CLBA is a placement or a proficiency test, but whether the CLBA, which is a proficiency test, is as useful as it could be” (19). My argument remains that such a mix of tasks is not able to assess proficiency because not all the tasks on the assessment require transferable skills. Similarly, it is not a good assessment for placement because only some of the tasks measure discrete skills.

Education/training: Fortin objects when we (Hyland and Lee) state that language acquisition is defined as training in the CLB because she sees no reference to the word training in the CLB Working Document. My argument is that the words used in the CLB document are words that are best used to describe training: e.g. competencies, functions, outcomes, mastery, sets of rules and degree of performance. On the other hand, words that are suitable for the creation of language education benchmarks are words like critical analysis, evaluation, problem-

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However, test constructors cannot assume that all teachers will always teach what they believe to be good practice, and will remain uninfluenced by the format of the assessment that their students will be required to take.

If this confusion takes the form of feedback that students give their teachers, then teachers will be drawn towards teaching to the requirements of the assessment rather than to the intentions of the Benchmarks.

solving, exploration. I see none of these words occurring in either the introduction to the CLB Document, nor in the description of Benchmark competencies until Benchmarks 9-12. Since the CLBA for the present only assesses competencies of the first eight benchmarks, the conclusion that I have drawn is that the exclusion of these terms in the CLB Working Document, and the CLBA by implication, view language teaching as language training.

Fortin lists an admirable number of tasks that she does to ensure that her students are educated rather than trained. However, test constructors cannot assume that all teachers will always teach what they believe to be good practice, and will remain uninfluenced by the format of the assessment that their students will be required to take. For example, if the CLB makes a distinction between tasks for community, study and work, but the CLBA collapses such distinctions in some of the assessment tasks, there is the possibility that students will be confused by the task requirements in the assessment. If this confusion takes the form of feedback that students give their teachers, then teachers will be drawn towards teaching to the requirements of the assessment rather than to the intentions of the Benchmarks³.

High stakes/ low stakes: Stewart and Cohen quote Norton and Stewart's assertion that the CLBA is a "low-stakes work in progress" (qtd. in Stewart & Cohen, 2001, 24), and assert that it was never the test-developers intention that it be used for high-stakes purposes. A high-stakes assessment is one that has consequences. The CLBA Website states that the test should be used for "eligibility determination for language training programmes, needs assessment, referral to appropriate training" (<http://www.clba.com/uses%20.htm>). If the CLBA is being used by some administrators to place students in LINC classes, and if Benchmark 8 is considered the cut-off for students to enter academic programmes in some adult high-schools, these are uses which turn the CLBA into a high-stakes assessment. In contrast, a low-stakes assessment is one that does not affect student placement in classes, but is administered to give students an indication of their strengths and weaknesses in performance. Please let me use the Writing Proficiency Assessment that I have helped to develop at Huron University College as an example of a low-stakes assessment. All students must take the assessment on entering the College and again before they graduate. Student performance on the assessment generates a full page of written comments that

indicate the students' strengths and weaknesses in academic writing. Students may use the information to seek out writing instruction if they so choose, but the results of the assessment do not appear on the students' transcripts, nor are they used to force students into writing classes.

Let me close by saying that I am not an enemy of the CLB or the CLBA. Since I have been involved in five years of test construction, pilot-tests and administration of the Writing Proficiency Assessment at Huron University College, I appreciate the immense amount of care and effort that has gone into the development of the CLB and CLBA. Since we are all members of a profession that is struggling to be accepted as serious and intellectually rigorous, we must be our own best critics.

In addition to teaching Language and Culture for the Huron-Liaoning North American Studies Programme, Theresa Hyland has helped develop and administer the Huron University College Generic Skills Writing Proficiency Assessment since 1996.

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1. For definitions of language proficiency, please see Cummins (1984) "Wanted: A theoretical framework for relating language proficiency to academic achievement among bilingual students", p.21; Bachman and Clark (1987) "The measurement of foreign/second language proficiency." P.22; and Canale (1988) "The measurement of communicative competence" p. 68-9.
2. For a discussion of single-trait and multi-trait assessment, and its use for assessment of proficiency or achievement, please see Cumming (1997) "The testing of writing in a second language" p.54.
3. For a discussion of the consequential bases of construct validation, on the practice of classroom teachers, see Cumming (1996) Introduction: The concept of validation in Language Testing. Validation in Language Testing p. 12.

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This membership guide is distributed among government departments, community service agencies, language and teacher training institutions, and ESL professionals in order to promote the activities of TESL Ontario and its members. We've updated our brochure in order to reflect the range of settings and situations where ESL instruction takes place, be it elementary school, the workplace, or a private institution.

Along with the Mission Statement which affirms our role in English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development (ESL/ELD), the brochure includes an organizational chart to illustrate the structure of TESL Ontario. We have also outlined our working relationship with government and advisory groups (such as OTF, MTCU, OASIS) and described the scope and value of our annual conference / technology fair.

New to this brochure is a summary of the Certification process which explains the work of the Professional Standards Advisory Committee. Perhaps most importantly, the brochure includes a section on the significant work carried out by TESL members in affiliates across the province, where ESL advocacy and professional development are put into practice in myriad ways throughout the year.

In addition, the publication you are reading, *Contact*, is described in the brochure since it is included with a membership in TESL Ontario. You may notice a similarity between the brochure and the updated masthead of *Contact*. For these beautiful creations, we congratulate Denyse Marion of ART and FACTS Design. Having based her design on the TESL Ontario logo, Denyse has captured the dynamic quality of our organization with her use of colour and graphics.

We feel that the brochure is a reflection of the ability of ESL professionals to nurture and support our students, as well as the pride we take in belonging to our professional association. We hope you agree, and are willing to share your brochure with your friends and colleagues.

We've got a good thing going ... let's get the word out!

Special thanks to Renate Tilson, our Executive Director, for the countless hours she committed to this project. We sincerely appreciate the input and support Renate provided as the brochure developed.

Mutual Expectations: Instructional Supervision and Effective Teaching

“They who educate children well are more to be honoured than they who produce them.”

Aristotle

This paper will discuss the different models of existing supervisory systems and why teachers are increasingly resentful of them.

Rationale

Many teachers do not approve of the different types of supervisory systems existing today. This is attributed either to the fact that they have never had the experience of working in a system that values instructional supervisory practice, or to the fact that they had a negative and disappointing supervision experience. This paper will discuss the different models of existing supervisory systems and why teachers are increasingly resentful of them. It will, more importantly, analyse the characteristics of effective supervision and attempt to explore alternative strategies that are more teacher-centred and consequently more acceptable by teachers.

Objectives

- Participants will reflect on the purpose of supervision and evaluation.
- Participants will discuss the different existing supervisory models and their effects on teaching practices.
- Participants will examine an alternative supervisory model that will lead to more effective teaching.
- Participants will reflect on effective supervision and effective teaching.

Instructional Supervision Definition

What is instructional supervision?

It is a school function that leads to the improvement of instruction through direct assistance to teachers, curriculum development, in-service training, professional development and research.

Goals

What are the goals of instructional supervision?

- **To provide teachers with objective feedback on the current state of their instructional**

tion. It holds up a mirror so that teachers can see what they are actually doing while teaching. (What teachers are doing may be quite different from what they think they are doing.)

- **To diagnose instructional problems.** Using conference techniques and observational records, supervisors can help teachers pinpoint specific discrepancies between what they are doing and what they need to do.
- **To help teachers develop skills in using instructional strategies** that are effective in promoting learning, motivating students and managing the classroom.
- **To evaluate teachers for promotion, tenure or other decisions** through systematic classroom observation, the collection of data and conference discussions outside the classroom which will provide the supervisor with a basis for evaluating a teacher's competence.
- **To help teachers develop a positive attitude towards continuous professional development.**
- **To provide emotional support and reassurance by responding to a teacher's anxiety or insecurity (counselling).** Many teachers, especially new and inexperienced ones, have overt anxiety and insecurity about their ability to perform well in the classroom. Some teachers may experience temporary personal problems that may affect that classroom performance.
- **To give advice and support regarding instructional materials** teachers are using. Are the materials suitable? How should they be used? What alternative materials should be used? How much should be on each curriculum unit? What are the new curriculum policies and guidelines?

Introduction

My direct involvement with many teachers for the past few years as an ESL program consultant triggered the idea for a presentation on instructional

Instructional supervision is a school function that leads to the improvement of instruction through direct assistance to teachers, curriculum development, in-service training, professional development and research.

supervision. The dissatisfaction with traditional evaluation systems has grown steadily with time. Some teachers agree that a supervisory system should exist, but it needs to be restructured and modified, while others think that it is futile. They view it as an active threat to the teacher, undermining his/her confidence and endangering his/her professional standing. Many teachers see supervision as a part of a system that exists but that does not play an important role in their professional lives, almost like an organizational ritual that is no longer relevant. Many teachers also argue that they are not hostile to the idea of supervision but rather to the style of supervision that does not correspond to their concerns and aspirations.

Teachers often ask about the purpose of supervision and evaluation. All educators seem to agree that its general purpose is to safeguard and improve the quality of instruction received by students. It also serves to supply information that will lead to the modification of assignments, such as placements in other positions, promotions and terminations.

If this agreement exists, why does supervision and evaluation remain controversial and unacceptable by teachers? The problem arises not with what the concept is but how it is carried out within local program settings. Major difficulties were associated with developing an effective teacher supervisory system:

- Poor teacher/supervisor attitude toward supervision and evaluation.
- The difficulties in separating or not separating formative and summative evaluation.
- Lack of reliable data collection techniques.
- General lack of training for teachers and supervisors in the evaluation process.

The time has come to look more closely at the existing supervision and evaluation systems and question their efficiency. It is time to restructure and consider a system that is more practical, more teacher-centred, and, ultimately, more effective.

Different Existing Supervisory Models

I – Traditional Supervision/Evaluation Model:

The supervisor determines the number of visits for tenured or non-tenured teachers, and when visits will be conducted, and completes the required instrumentation. The supervisor conducts the final evaluative conference and completes the evaluation form;

teachers have the option to write comments about any part of the evaluation. The drawback of this kind of model is that it promotes “watch dog” attitudes and inspires distrust and unease. It also has low teacher involvement and minimal contact time between supervisor and teacher outside the classroom.

2 – Product Model:

Another model for evaluating teacher's performance is the use of student achievement to measure teacher's competence (ex. The use of tests at the end of every theme or unit the teacher finishes.) Unfortunately this model cannot be applied to all ESL classrooms due to many factors: difference of age, educational background, erratic attendance, continuous intake of students and many others.

3 – Naturalistic Model:

It stems from the belief that teaching is essentially an art. “Teachers, like painters and dancers make judgements based largely on qualities that unfold during the course of teaching. Teaching is influenced by contingencies that are unpredictable and that the ends achieved in teaching are often created in process.” Eisner, Elliot. *The Educational Imagination* (1979).

With this concept of teaching, institutions, supervisors and teachers must accept a broader view of educational objectives and outcomes than is common in more traditional ways of looking at teaching and supervising. A view that focuses on the unpredicted and the unanticipated which also has legitimate and desirable outcomes. Many systems, supervisors and even teachers do not accept this view on the grounds that good teaching follows a certain logic that states and pursues specific objectives. It requires a high level of expertise on the part of the supervisor, the ability to see what is important but subtle, the ability to interpret the meaning of the events occurring in the classroom and the ability to appreciate their educational import.

4 – The Clinical Supervision

In brief, clinical supervision is a model of supervision that contains three phases: planning conference, classroom observation and feedback conference. It is a supervision that is focused upon the improvement of instruction by means of systematic cycles of planning, observation and intensive intellectual analysis of actual teaching performances. It is similar to the alternative supervisory model suggested under “TEACHER-CENTRED SUPERVISORY MODEL” with some variations. In this type of supervision, the

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word “clinical” is not appropriate or acceptable by many teachers. It implies that the supervisor offers remedies to deficient or ineffective teaching practice. To evaluate, clinical supervision should be conducted by a person other than the supervisor because it calls for the separation of formative and summative evaluation.

The teacher-centred supervisory model is a process that consists of one or more cycles of supervision depending on the teacher's experience and instructional effectiveness.

Teacher-Centred Supervision A Process

Rationale

The ultimate test in determining the effectiveness of a supervisory and evaluation system is **the quality of what occurs at the bottom of the system: the relationship that exists between the supervisor and the teacher.** Experience shows that a supportive and positive relationship between a knowledgeable supervisor and a committed teacher is the most effective way to improve instruction. The relationship is reached by implementing an interactive rather than a directive supervisory approach, democratic rather than authoritarian, teacher-centred rather than supervisor-centred. Teachers are competent professionals who desire help if it is offered in a collegial rather than a direct way. Teaching is a complex process that requires careful analysis. Teacher-centred supervision recognizes the complexities involved and attempts to focus on a particular area in the teaching process relying heavily on the teacher's active involvement in analysis and problem-solving. The heart of teacher-centred supervision is an intensive, continuous, mature relationship between teacher and supervisor that has the improvement of professional practice as its goal.

The teacher-centred supervisory model is a process that consists of one or more cycles of supervision depending on the teacher's experience and instructional effectiveness. Analysis and goal setting, the pre-observation conference, the observation, and the post-observation conference.

I – Analysis and goal Setting (Diagnosing)

“If you're not sure where you're going, you're liable to end up someplace else.”

Robert Mager

The teacher analyses situation in the classroom in the first week of school, assesses needs and interests, diagnoses levels of students and sets goals and objectives at least for the first three or six months (long-term plan) to prepare for the pre-observation conference. Practice teachers, new and experienced teach-

ers, all need to work toward tangible, attainable, important goals.

The supervisor and teacher agree on a date to meet for the pre-observation conference outside the classroom setup.

2 – Pre-Observation Conference

“The most important link between a teacher and a supervisor is effective communication Teachers see the justification for supervision and evaluation programs, but they want to be a partner in the process.”

Robert L., Herchberger and James M. Young, Jr.,
Teacher Perceptions of Supervision and Evaluation

The pre-observation conference sets the stage for effective supervision:

- **It is best held on neutral territory not in the classroom as it threatens teacher's autonomy and privacy:** a cafeteria, a close coffee shop or any other relaxed place close to the classroom. At this stage, it is very important to build a friendly and collegial relationship between teacher and supervisory which is based on mutual respect, trust and understanding. Unless supervisors create this rapport with teachers the next steps of supervision are futile and ineffective.
- **It provides the teacher and supervisor with an opportunity to identify teacher's goals:** learner goals (ex. improve a certain skill for motivating learners), teacher goals (ex. work on techniques to increase the amount of interaction between students, or improve lesson planning), organizational and administrative goals (ex. participate in professional development activities, improve communication skills with staff members and administration.) program goals (ex. introduce new themes to the program.) It also provides the supervisor the chance to understand teacher's concerns and discuss solutions.
- **Both teacher and supervisor decide on the area of teaching to be observed** and think needs improvement (ex. teacher and student interaction.)
- **Both teacher and supervisor agree on a mutually convenient time for observation.** Teachers are resentful when supervisors go to their classrooms unannounced. They do not feel respected or trusted as professionals.

The pre-observation conference is best held on neutral territory not in the classroom as it threatens teacher's autonomy and privacy. At this stage, it is very important to build a friendly and collegial relationship between teacher and supervisory which is based on mutual respect, trust and understanding.

- **Both teacher and supervisor decide the kind of observational instrument to be used.** Observational data are needed to provide an objective feedback and record instructional behaviour that may have escaped the teacher. Teachers may choose **selective verbatim, audio or video** recording as different techniques for recording events in the classroom. Selective verbatim implies a word-for-word transcription of particular verbal statements, such as teacher's instructions of how to complete an assignment or carry out an activity which can have a great effect on students achievement. Another example of selective verbatim is to record the kinds of questions teachers pose while teaching. High cognitive questions stimulate students thinking and learning whereas factual questions, in contrast, require students to recall something they have studied before and need to apply. Recording teacher's feedback for students is also important to prove effective teaching practice. Positive feedback involves praising and acknowledging students' ideas by reusing, modifying, elaborating on, summarizing or applying them. In contrast, negative feedback, such as sarcastic criticism, short, and cryptic answers kills enthusiasm in the classroom.
- **Teacher and supervisor agree on the instructional context in which data will be recorded.** This includes the topic to be observed – objectives, language, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, idioms, resources to be used, etc.
- **Teacher and supervisor may need to agree what is effective teaching and effective supervision and discuss the rights and responsibilities of both.** Some new teachers might not know an organization's policies. Consequently, clarifying these issues at this stage help both teacher and supervisor reach an understanding about where they stand.

3 – The Observation

Teacher and supervisor have reached a co-operative decision on which data to collect for a special area in a teacher's classroom performance and what observation technique or recording system to be used (selective verbatim, audio or video technique, or a combination of any.) The focus is on the teacher in action and the unfolding of teaching practices. It is what the teacher says and does, how the teacher reacts, and what actually occurs during a specific

teaching episode that forms the basis for the data collected. Notes to be taken should be descriptive and objective rather than evaluative.

4 – The Post-Observation Conference

The supervisor organizes data that is unbiased, accurate and clear to both parties and relevant to the agreed-upon concerns in the pre-observation conference. He/she then prepares a strategy for providing constructive feedback regarding teacher's performance. The supervisor should open the conference by complementing the teacher on positive areas of teaching and by offering encouragement and support. **He/she invites the teacher to be a partner in the process of analysing (without the supervisor making any value judgments) and interpreting data by looking for probable causes, possible consequences and suggested alternatives.** Eliciting a teacher's reactions to the data requires skill and patience. There is always the temptation to jump to conclusions about what has been observed and recorded before the teacher has had the opportunity to reflect on it. If the data collected are accurate and objective, but the supervisor immediately draws opinionated inferences from the data, the teacher may feel compelled to respond defensively rather than interpret the data in a self-directed and productive way. It takes self-control and practice to give a subordinate data in a nonevaluative, nonthreatening manner. The teacher-centred supervision assumes that most teachers can analyse, interpret and decide in a self-directed and constructive manner when they are supplied with adequate information and allowed to act on it. It is the means by which to empower the teachers and allow them to recognize their abilities. (see Effective Supervision p. 10 & 11) The post-observation or feedback conference may start a new cycle of observation as it turns into a pre-observation conference where teacher and supervisor agree on new areas of teaching to be observed. It may also be the only observation cycle for the experienced and effective teachers that ends up with writing a positive evaluation report.

Characteristics of Effective Supervision

- Effective supervision is validation. It is an acknowledgement of the teacher's abilities and value for their work. It increases teacher's confidence and sense of security.
- Effective supervision is focused upon the improvement of instruction by means of systematic cycles of planning, observation and intensive in-

There is always the temptation to jump to conclusions about what has been observed and recorded before the teacher has had the opportunity to reflect on it.

It takes self-control and practice to give a subordinate data in a nonevaluative, nonthreatening manner.

Effective supervision's main focus is not changing a teacher's personality but emphasizing what and how teachers teach to improve instruction.

- Intellectual analysis of actual teaching performances in the interest of rational modification.
- Effective supervision is empowerment. It allows the teacher both freedom and responsibility to initiate issues, analyse and improve his/her teaching and develop a personal teaching style.
- Supervision can be perceived, analysed and improved in much the same manner that teaching can. The supervisor is responsible for analysing and evaluating his/her own supervision in a manner similar to a teacher's analysis and evaluation of his/her own instruction.
- Effective supervision should take responsibility for helping the teachers to develop: skills for analysing the instructional process based on systematic data, and skills for experimentation, adaptation and modification of the curriculum.
- Effective supervision's main focus is not changing a teacher's personality but emphasizing what and how teachers teach to improve instruction.
- Effective supervision is based on observational evidence, not on unsubstantiated value. Judgments and the feedback conferences concentrate on constructive analysis and the reinforcement of successful patterns rather than on condemnation of unsuccessful patterns.
- Effective supervision may include counselling. It responds to teachers' anxieties and insecurities (eg. new teachers) by providing emotional support and reassurance. Some teachers might be experiencing temporary crises in their personal lives or emotional problems that may interfere with classroom performance.
- Effective supervision offers advice about curriculum materials teachers are using, alternative material available and length of time to be spent on each curriculum topic.

Characteristics of Effective Teaching

Some educators claim that effective teaching cannot be defined because it is so complex and so creative that it defies analysis. A list of characteristics of effective teaching (mentioned below) has been generated from different studies and workshops. These characteristics are related to teachers' behaviour in the classroom, planning and organizing, motivating learners, relationships with students, utilizing resources, instructional techniques and teaching strategies, learners' performance. It also involves teach-

ers' behaviour outside the classroom i.e., professional growth and responsibility, and relationship with colleagues. These characteristics provide indicators for teacher observation and evaluation.

- Teacher is warm and understanding versus cold and aloof.
- Teacher has a positive relationship and good rapport with students and enjoys working with them.
- Teacher creates a favourable environment for learning.
- Teacher displays fairness among students.
- Teacher maintains discipline and control.
- Teacher recognizes and provides for individual differences.
- Teacher is creative, innovative, flexible and organized.
- Teacher gives students a good self-image and inspires self-esteem and confidence.
- Teacher engages in professional growth activities.
- Teacher knows subject matter very well and continues educating himself/herself.
- Teacher is stimulating and imaginative rather than dull and routine bound.
- Teacher has an effective teaching methodology; she is clear in presenting instructional content, uses a variety of instructional materials and procedures, strategies and techniques to promote learning.
- Teacher applies indirect teaching style: asks questions and acknowledges students' ideas, praises and encourages them.
- Effective teaching is also seen through students' performance and behaviour that indicate a positive attitude towards the teacher and the curriculum (eg. students demonstrate interest and active engagement in learning the curriculum while class is in session.)
- Teacher states his/her objectives clearly. It is easier to judge the effectiveness of teachers' classroom behaviour when their intent and instructional objectives are available and clear.
- Teacher's behaviour outside the classroom is an important criterion to be observed. How the teacher interacts and cooperates with colleagues indicates the extent to which the teacher's be-

Effective supervision offers advice about curriculum materials teachers are using, alternative material available and length of time to be spent on each curriculum topic.

haviour conforms to ethical norms. How he/she engages in professional growth activities also indicates the extent to which the teacher is interested in and loves the profession.

An Appropriate Attitude toward Building a Supervision/Evaluation Program

“A prerequisite for any good supervision/evaluation system must be a clear and comprehensive definition of the rights and responsibilities of each position. It is necessary that the expectations for all positions be spelled out in detail ... i.e., to have a bill of rights for both teacher and supervisor or organization.” Strike and Bull 1981

Rights of Educational Institutions

- Educational institutions have the right to exercise supervision and to make personnel decisions intended to improve the quality of the education they provide.
- Educational institutions have the right to collect information relevant to their supervisory and evaluative roles.
- Educational institutions have the right to act on such relevant information in the best interest of the students whom they seek to educate.
- Educational institutions have the right to expect cooperation of the teaching staff in implementing and executing a fair and effective system of evaluation.

Rights of Teachers

Humanitarian and civil rights:

Teachers have the right to humane evaluation procedures.

Teachers have the right to have their evaluation kept private and confidential.

Teachers have the right that their private lives be considered irrelevant to their evaluation.

Teachers have the right to an overall assessment of their performance that is frank, honest and consistent.

Professional rights:

Teachers have the right to reasonable job security.

Teachers have the right to a reasonable degree of professional discretion in the performance of their jobs.

Teachers have the right to reasonable participation in decisions related to professional and employment aspects of their jobs.

Evidential rights:

Teachers have the right to be evaluated on relevant criteria and decisions to be made on the basis of evidence.

Teachers have the right not to be evaluated on the basis of hearsay, rumour, or unchecked complaints.

Procedural rights:

Teachers have the right to be evaluated according to general, public and comprehensible standards.

Teachers have the right to reasonable notice, before they will be supervised or evaluated.

Teachers have the right to know the results of their evaluation.

Teachers have the right to comment or express a reaction to the results of their evaluation.

Teachers have the right to appear adverse decisions and to have their views considered by a competent and unbiased authority.

(Adapted from Successful Teacher Evaluation by Thomas L. McGreal.)

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Teachers have the right to be evaluated according to general, public and comprehensible standards.

Figure 1
The Process of Teacher-centred Supervision throughout the School Year

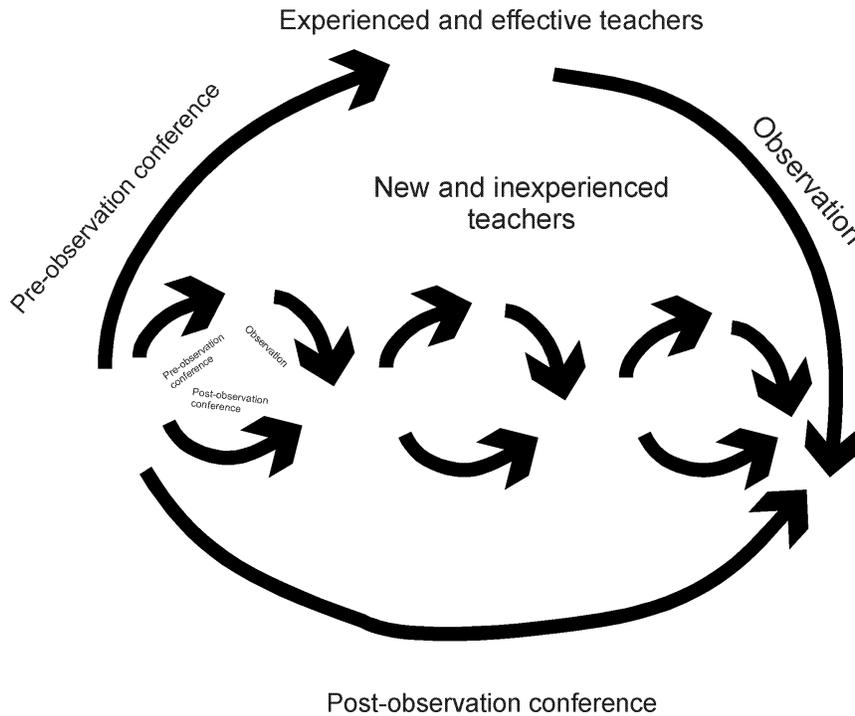
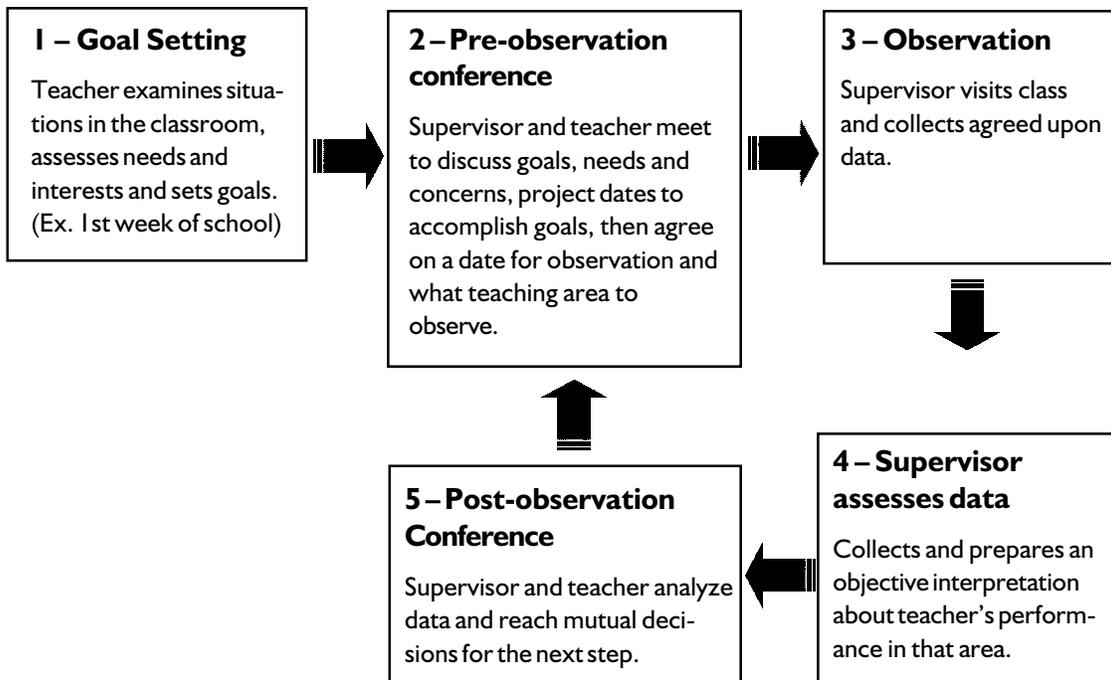


Figure 2
The Teacher-centred Supervision System



Sessions



Jadwiga Karbowniak addresses participants at her session.

Doug McDougall shows examples of using technology in distance education in Canada, Greece and Cuba.



Sharon Rajabi (Conference Chair) leads a session at the Computer Fair.

Dinner Entertainment



Five Korean Adult Learners' Propensity for Learner Autonomy Revealed in Their Beliefs about Teacher-Student Roles

Maria Kim Oh

"Learner autonomy" has been a popular focus for discussion in second/foreign language teaching worldwide and presently it is catching on in North America. Although definitions of learner autonomy have varied, the following two central features of learner autonomy have been agreed on by most theorists: (1) learners take responsibility for their own learning (Holec, 1981), and (2) taking responsibility involves learners in taking "partial or total ownership of undertaking the management tasks concerned with their own language learning without the direct intervention of their language teachers." (Dickinson, 1987, p. 15).

As these two key features of learner autonomy are centered on learners' responsibility, independence or freedom from external controls, there have been two different views on encouraging learner autonomy universally. On the one hand, some theorists argue that learner autonomy may not be suitable outside individualistic Western contexts, specifically in East Asian Confucian educational contexts¹. They point out that the central concept of learner autonomy appears to contradict the teacher-centered, authority-driven educational traditions in East Asia and question the appropriateness of the goal of autonomy for East Asian learners (Jones, 1995; Riley, 1988). On the other hand, several other researchers do not see cultural characteristics as being insurmountable (e.g. Esch, 1996; Little, 1996; Nunan, 1996) and some others claim that the idea of learner autonomy has roots in East Asian traditional learning practice and cultural traits (e.g. Pierson, 1996). The appropriateness of learner autonomy as an educational goal for East Asian learners is still one of major issues in learner autonomy. This study deals with this issue of the learner autonomy applicability for East Asian learners while describing what five Korean adult ESL learners believe about teacher-student roles and how these beliefs correspond with their autonomy when learner autonomy approaches are not adopted in their ESL class.

Korean beliefs about educational roles help explain the early stages of learner autonomy for Korean

learners. This study states to what extent learner autonomy can be promoted initially, and how to ease the transition towards more learner-autonomy-oriented approaches. This is of interest to language teachers and researchers, as well as Korean learners who want to promote learner autonomy for Korean learners.

Based on interviews with five Korean adult learners who studied ESL at a university-based language program in Western New York, this paper reveals that all five learners had extremely diverse beliefs about teacher-learner roles. For example, Bobby², a very passive learner believed that teachers "should know how to force and make their learners to learn...because human beings are all born lazy," whereas Rose, a highly autonomous learner believed that "learners are fully responsible for their learning and they need to make chances to learn all by themselves." She practised this belief when she "chose" her own ESL class, and passed a test to get a New York State Nursing certificate in the first week of her stay in the US. This study also reveals the diverse beliefs were transformed to a more-student-led mode while they had opportunities to reflect on their beliefs about teacher-learner roles. In addition, the subject believed that students should respect their teachers despite the fact that they all showed different degrees of autonomy.

These three findings of the five learners' beliefs – the diversity, transformation and respectfulness – give a basic ground to answer an overarching question of this study, "Could learner autonomy approaches be practically applicable to Korean learners?"

Even though their beliefs about teacher-student roles were varied, their initial beliefs were transformed into more self-directed ways at later interviews while they had the chance to reflect on their educational role beliefs, although their degrees of belief transformation remained distinct. As a result, the researcher argues that if learner autonomy ap-

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The study findings bring some implications to ways of preventing or coping with possible conflicts while Korean students are introduced to learner autonomy approaches.

proaches were systematically implemented as teaching/learning modes at their language-learning center, the subjects would realize the importance of learner roles, and they would be more successful second language users.

The study findings bring some implications to ways of preventing or coping with possible conflicts while Korean students are introduced to learner autonomy approaches. The first implication from this study is that stereotypical prejudgment about autonomy levels of all Korean students would be problematic so on-going communication is between teachers and students is crucial to implement learner autonomy approaches. As we can see in the cases of Bobby and Rose, students' autonomy levels are extremely different individually despite the fact that they were from common Korean educational and cultural backgrounds.

Based on the diversity of five Korean learners' basic autonomy degrees, the second implication is that individually different approaches should be considered depending on students' initial autonomy levels, at least, at the beginning stage. If second/foreign language educators and researchers simply label less-autonomous learners, like Bobby, as learners who cannot adapt to learner autonomy, they are ignoring one very important primary duty of language educators: fostering potential of individual students to be successful second language users. The researcher believes that the important issue for educators should not be prejudging whether learner autonomy approaches are appropriate for certain learners; the more important issue should be to what extent autonomy can be best introduced to Korean students.

The third implication is that Korean students' respect for teachers should be considered when learner autonomy approaches are put into practice, since this respect might be misinterpreted by non-Korean teachers as full dependency. One possible way for teachers to take the Korean learners' respect into consideration when they adopt learner autonomy approaches might be through an open discussion about this respect. The discussion topic might be "Korean students should take care not to step on teachers' shadows. Do you agree or disagree? Why do you agree or disagree?" This kind of explicit talk about teacher and learner role beliefs or expectations might lead teachers and Korean learners to reflect Korean learners' tendency to be deferential to teachers.

These three findings of this study show the importance of providing ongoing opportunities for learners and teachers to discuss their respective roles while they are engaged in language learning and teaching.

In summary, quite contrary to those who proposed that efficiency of learner autonomy approaches for Asian learners should be doubted based on their understanding of characteristics of Asian learners, this study reveals (1) that five adult Korean learners had tremendously diverse teacher-learner-role expectations, (2) that their respect for teachers did not limit their effort to practise out of class what they learn from teachers, and (3) that they modified their beliefs from a teacher-led role to a student-led one. These three findings of this study show the importance of providing ongoing opportunities for learners and teachers to discuss their respective roles while they are engaged in language learning and teaching. Given the crucial role of learner-teacher relationship in attempts to foster learner autonomy, such dialogue definitely would be necessary for effective language learning/teaching.

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¹ Although there are a lot of differences not only among the various core Western cultures but also among diverse East Asian cultures, it is generally agreed that East-Asian learners share some common cultural and educational backgrounds that are different from Western backgrounds. According to Littlewood (1999, p. 91), the geographical and cultural region of East Asia is normally defined as extending from China and Myanmar to Japan.

² All names are pseudonyms.

Teaching Opportunities in China

Conestoga College is looking to send four qualified ESL teachers to teach in Harbin, China for two semesters starting in September 2001.

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**For more information, please contact
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(519) 748-5220, ext. 675**

Teaching Word Stress – a Must at All Levels

Teaching Word Stress Glossary¹

Content words are words that have semantic value. Close your eyes and say horse. Immediately, you see a horse. Say jump or sweet or gently. You will visualize something. Students can usually translate content words into their own language without too much trouble.

Comparative Value

English syllables can come in one of three lengths. The easiest way (that I have found so far) to represent this is with Xs. Three for major, two for minor and one for unstress. It makes the concept more visual than the traditional stress marks and is easier to manage than dots.

Content Words

Content words are words that have semantic value. Close your eyes and say horse. Immediately, you see a horse. Say jump or sweet or gently. You will visualize something. Students can usually translate content words into their own language without too much trouble. They are universal to a large degree. They are the only words that occurred in telegrams (but many of our students are so young they have never even heard of a telegrams). They are nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs and ALL negatives.

Function Words

Functions words are just what the name implies. They are words that serve a grammatical function in an utterance. They are the hardest for students to learn because they are the hardest to hear and because they are not universal at all. Function words include articles, prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions and auxiliary verbs.

Major Stress

Major Stress involves making the syllable three times as long and three times as loud as a schwa or an unstressed syllable. It has a comparative value of XXX.

Minor Stress

Minor Stress involves making the syllable two times as long and two times as loud as a schwa or an unstressed syllable. It has a comparative value of XX.

Pitch Change

A pitch change is a change in the tone/music/melody from high to low or from low to high. A clear shift can be heard. We exaggerate the pitch change when we call someone over a long dis-

tance. Pretend that you are a mom calling her kid in for dinner. Listen to the pitch change.

The Schwa

The Schwa [ə] is the most commonly occurring vowel sound in English. All vowel sounds in completely unstressed syllables are reduced to schwa. The pitch does not change at all.

Unstress

Unstress involves making the syllable quieter and shorter. All vowels in unstressed syllables are reduced to schwa. It has a comparative value of X.

Word Stress and Comprehensibility in English

- Stressing the correct syllable of a word is critical in English. The actual word being said, the part of speech, the vowel quality and the amount of time it takes to say a word can all be determined by stress placement.
- Native speakers intuitively recognize the importance of stress and will have trouble processing words that are stressed incorrectly.
- Word stress also affects the overall rhythm of an utterance and it is the lack of or overuse of stress that can contribute to non-native speakers sounding blurred or choppy.

¹ These definitions are my own (I have to take full responsibility for any inaccuracies) and have been developed from many sources: Lectures during my TESL Certificate at U of T, my own intuition, other teachers' comments etc. but the book that I used when I first taught pronunciation and which I still think is the best resource is *Accurate English: A Complete Course in Pronunciation* by Rebecca M. Dauer, Prentice Hall.

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The Schwa [ə] is the most commonly occurring vowel sound in English. All vowel sounds in completely unstressed syllables are reduced to schwa.

Activity to Spell the Unstressed Vowel Schwa

- A. Pronunciation: The schwa is produced in the middle of the mouth. It is shorter and quieter than all other vowels.
- B. Usage: All unstressed syllables are reduced to schwa. It is the most commonly occurring vowel sound in English! It accounts for 10% of all vowels pronounced.
- C. Spelling: Because any vowel can become schwa if the syllable in which it occurs is unstressed, the spelling varies drastically.

All of the following words are pronounced with a schwa in the space that I have left blank. Fill in the blank with the appropriate letter(s).

1. __ffend
2. __stablishm__nt
3. acc__d__nt
4. anch__r
5. atl__s
6. awes__me
7. C__nadi__n
8. c__noe
9. c__ntain
10. coll__ge
11. crook__d
12. curt__ns
13. d__vide
14. dist__nt
15. ev__d__nce
16. ex__rcise
17. exc__ll__nt
18. fab__l__s
19. fantast__c
20. fav__r__te
21. gard__n
22. hol__day
23. immigr__nt
24. incred__bl__
25. lett__ce
26. m__chine
27. magnif__c__nt
28. mel__dy
29. mesm__riz__ng
30. micr__wave
31. min__te
32. mirr__r
33. myst__ry
34. pal__ce
35. perf__ct
36. ph__togr__phy
37. phot__graph
38. prom__se
39. r__ve__l
40. s__ggest
41. sens__tive
42. stup__d
43. sup__rb
44. t__night
45. tens__n
46. text__re
47. tul__p
48. vac__nt
49. vacat__n
50. vol__nteer
51. whe__l
52. whisp__r
53. wond__rf__l

The schwa is produced in the middle of the mouth. It is shorter and quieter than all other vowels.

Because any vowel can become schwa if the syllable in which it occurs is unstressed, the spelling varies drastically.

Materials for Review

***English in Today's World: A Writing Guide*, John M. Swales and Christine B. Feak, University of Michigan, 2000.**

This text is an advanced sequel to Academic Writing for Graduate Students.

***Learning Computers, Speaking English: Cooperative Activities for Learning English and Basic Word Processing*, Steve Quann and Diana Satin, The University of Michigan Press, 2000, \$16.95.**

This text for high-beginner and intermediate ESL learners provides cooperative computer-based activities that combine language learning with training in basic computer skills and word processing.

Each unit concentrates on a basic concept of word processing while also focusing on a grammar topic. Lessons begin with learning to use the mouse and advance to understanding the features of a basic word processing system; they are based on Microsoft WordPad, available in Windows 95 or higher. Instructors using other PC or Macintosh applications can adapt the lessons. Activities include writing business and cover letters.

***In Our Classrooms: An Educator's Guide to Helping English Language Learners with Curriculum*, Mary Meyers, Mainstreams Publications, Toronto, 2001, \$29.95.**

This text for all educators and teachers-in-training who want to turn ESL research into practical classroom activities. It features a step-by-step checklist for introducing second-language theory into practical classroom activities and contains reproducible BlackLine Masters.

Chapters cover assessing newcomers, adapting teacher talk and presenting new curriculum. There is even a recommendations for 'best practices' in Ministry of Education policy and guides for education and training.

A REFUGEE CAMP IN THE CITY

Doctors without Borders is inviting grades 6-12 classes to schedule FREE group visits to an outdoor, interactive exhibit

in Nathan Phillips Square, Toronto,
Oct. 11-15, 2001

It aims at educating the public, and students in particular, about the plight of the world's 39 million refugees and displaced people. The exhibit highlights the survival and medical priorities that arise in a refugee crisis.

To arrange a visit, call Pam at 416 – 964-0619, ext. 242, or email bookings@msf.ca. www.msf.ca/refugee is the website.

Book Review

Swales, John M. and Christine B. Feak. *A Writing Guide English in Today's Research World*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000. 293 pages.

As the world becomes increasingly complex due to the various forces impacting on it, so too does the world of ESL become more specialized. ESL researchers now find that they are called upon to diversify within their field. Following their previous work, *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* (1994), Swales & Feak have produced *English in Today's World* also for the graduate student.

Keeping in mind the specialized nature of this ESL group, it follows that the teaching matter itself is very narrow in scope. Covering 8 units, the authors competently present the language requirements of graduate students. Subject areas include literature reviews, conferences, dissertations and the academic communication needed to support research and research careers. In addition, there is a language focus section at the end of each unit. These sections deal with more advanced grammar such as dangling modifiers, expressions of gratitude, and even the topical good and bad news E-mail messages. The format of each unit is the same. There is a short introduction followed first by the highlights of the unit (probably intended for quick reference) then by tasks that involve the student. A language focus is next and at the end there are very detailed notes that even include teaching tips.

More specifically, Unit 1 deals with the basic concepts used in research and asks students to consider such issues as effective writing strategies and cross-cultural differences in research language. Units 2 and 3 cover conferences and make students aware of how to present abstracts, how to set up their posters and even the etiquette required while presenting their work. A most useful section (Units 4 and 5) deals with literature reviews. I, too, even as a native speaker would have welcomed such useful information as a graduate student! The last three units cover more "advanced" work, i.e. the dissertation, and the writing required when asking for research grants and eventually academic/research careers.

On the whole, the book does a thorough job of explaining the nature of writing within the research field. Each of the 8 units, although presented in the same format, are noteworthy because an effort is made to involve the student directly. For example, Unit 1 (p. 15) asks the student to think about academic writing in his own language and compare it with American academic English. Then, as a task, the student is asked to photocopy a paper from his field and underline the informal elements of language. Rather than just explain matters, Swales and Feak make the student an active participant. In unit 3, students must decide on the proper response to comments made at a poster presentation. In the final unit, a sample C.V. is provided and the student must recommend changes to it.

Another positive feature is the detailed notes at the end of each unit, with their teaching hints.

It is refreshing to see that there are 8 language focus sections dealing with areas of grammar and usage that trouble even such advanced students. While graduate students are at a high level academically, we cannot assume that their language skills are also. Native speakers also could profit from using such a text.

However, one may argue that the format of the text is rather "dry." Each unit is presented in the exact same manner. Yes, the text is for a specific audience but couldn't some variety in format have been used to break the monotony? The authors suggest that the book can be used for self-study, yet, the material is challenging enough for the native speaker, let alone for the ESL speaker studying on his own. A teacher is needed to clarify details.

In sum, this is a valuable reference text intended for a specific category of ESL student, the graduate student. As such, the authors have done an admirable job.

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