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Editor's Note 4

**IMMIGRATION
AND SETTLEMENT**

**My Library, Bread
and Water** 1
By Ziba Ghatavi

Culture and Language 6
By Yasmin Khan

IN THE CLASSROOM

Critical Pedagogy in the 8
**ESL Classroom:
A Starting Point**
By Christine Smart-
Wiseman

Introducing Pre-Business 13
**Students to the Nature of
Teamwork**
By Tania Pattison

**TEACHING WITH
TECHNOLOGY**

Quick, Free Development 18
**Tools for
TESL Instructors**
By John Allan and
Stephen Roney

Edmodo: Q&A about an 23
**Excellent Tool for the
Teacher's Toolbox**
By Gus Bougadis and
Tiffany Cammidge

REVIEWS

EVENT: Shelly Terrell's 28
**Challenge for
TESL Toronto**
By Greg Osadec

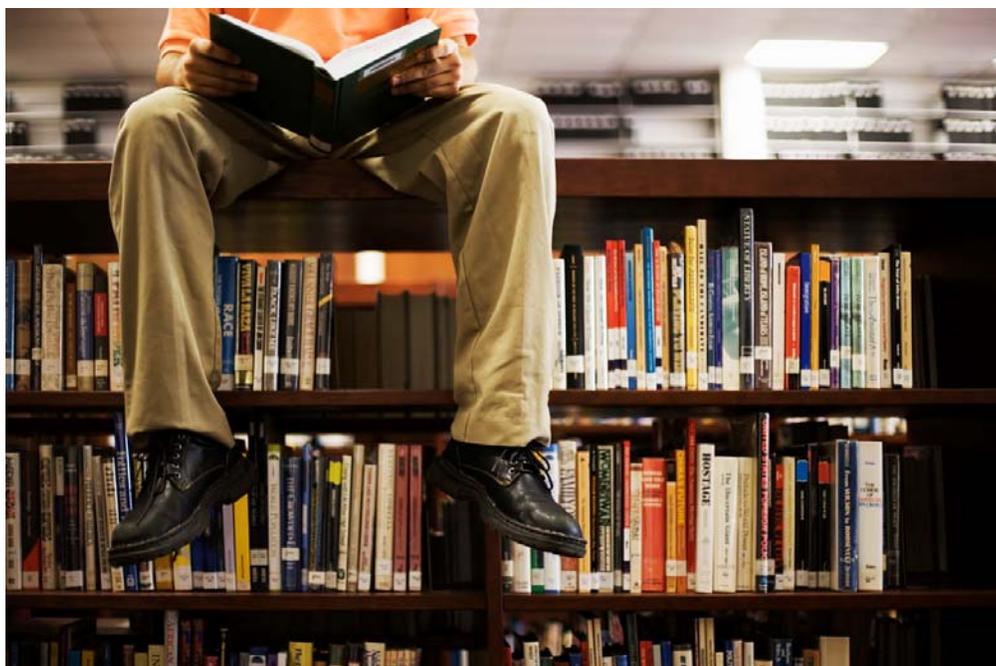
BOOK: You're Hired... Now 31
**What? An Immigrant's
Guide to Success in the
Canadian Workplace**
Review by
Amanda Nowensky

Contact

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IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

My Library, Bread and Water



By Ziba Ghatavi

My public library is as essential to my life as my bread and water.

As an immigrant, I found myself living in a language that was not mine. With no concept of the mishaps and challenges, barriers and rough times ahead, I first found my way from a dark gloomy basement to the community centre ten years ago. I clearly remember that it was one of the coldest winters in years. In temperatures of

-40, icy winds cut my cheeks like a razor. All covered with an old scarf, apart from my eyes, I entered the library, feeling anxious and in despair...a stranger in the town. The way I had dressed seemed weird compared to everybody else. I felt strange too because I had never experienced such cold, even in the harshest, iciest days at home.

Knowing some English I tried to decipher the signs around me. I felt more comfortable when the

(Continued on page 3)

Contact

Contact us

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

Contributors should include their full name, a brief biographical statement and, if they wish, a photograph. Submissions should be emailed to editor@teslontario.org. Deadlines are Apr. 30, Aug. 31, and Dec. 31.

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(Continued from page 1)

librarian smiled. The first thing I noticed was the shelves of free papers and magazines which later I found helpful when looking for a survival job. Soon, I realized that everyone—strangers, refugees, dark skinned or fair—was welcome; it didn't matter who you were, or where you came from.

Feeling more confident because I sensed there was nobody watching me, I noticed a basket full of canned food, juice and water bottles. The sign said 'Food Bank.' Later, once dying of hunger and thirst after spending hours in the library till dark, I found the courage to pick out a bottle of water and a cracker.

Eventually, the library became my second home because I had nowhere to go and no friend to turn to. The books, movies and CDs lent to me for free were my only company and reprieve during my gloomiest winter days.

Six months later, I was studying for admission to the Ontario College of Teachers.

I selected the book, *The Handmaid's Tale*, for my final paper: a novel, but an authentic picture of my homeland. I deeply identified with the women struggling in the authoritarian, dictatorially governed Gilead.

Long before, I had heard about Canada being the land of opportunities, peace and equality, especially for women. For thousands of immigrants who have no idea of the difficulties ahead, the local library is an indispensable resource on the journey to becoming productive and to prospering in the adopted land. As a veteran teacher both in Iran and Canada, I feel that libraries are as essential as water and bread to us.

My library gave me hope, the opportunity to grow, the patience and resilience to wait long enough for the sun to shine again.

My library filled my lonely, miserable nights with thousands of stars. My library was a new world in me, one not born till I arrived here. A world discovered in me as an immigrant, a world that remains open to me now, as a Canadian citizen.

My library is part of me today, my identity, pride and self esteem. A world within me, that nobody can take away from me. Let it not be taken away from those still on their way. ❖



An immigrant from Iran, Ziba Ghatavi has worked as a teacher and translator/interpreter in a variety of contexts. She is now with the York Catholic DSB, where she teaches LINC classes and helps newcomers with settlement issues. Reading and writing have been an indispensable part of her life since childhood.

Editor's note

Welcome to the final 2011 issue of *Contact*. This issue contains a number of fascinating papers, on topics as diverse as critical theory, business English, and free technology.

The first paper in this issue is **Ziba Ghatavi's** powerful description of the role played by her local library in helping her to adapt to life as a new Canadian. Ziba's piece sends a strong message to those who advocate the cutting of library funding in Canadian cities. **Yasmin Khan** then addresses the need to combine culture training with language training, with the goal of bringing about a more tolerant and accepting society.

The next two papers address classroom techniques and practices. **Christine Smart-Wiseman** shows how the theory of critical pedagogy plays a role in the ESL classroom and encourages instructors to become more aware of their classroom goals and practices. Next, my own paper on teamwork activities for pre-Business students describes methods of encouraging students to reflect on their own roles and approaches when presented with team tasks.

Technology in ELT continues to attract a great deal of attention, and this issue contains two articles on different applications of technology in ELT. First, regular contributors **John Allen and Stephen Roney** present a number of online tools and resources that are useful to teachers and materials developers; best of all, they are all free. Then, **Tiffany Cammidge and Gus Bougadis** present an overview of the website *Edmodo*, a form of technology which allows teachers and students to interact in a user-friendly and pedagogically advantageous online environment.



Contact editor Tania Pattison

Shelly Terrell is a name well known to teachers involved in various online communities. In the next paper, **Greg Osadec** reports on a recent event held by local affiliate TESL Toronto, in which Shelly introduced her *30 Goals Challenge for Educators*.

Finally, Amanda Nowensky reviews a book that will be of interest to readers teaching newcomers who are preparing to enter the Canadian workforce, Lynda Goldman's *You're Hired ... Now What?*

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

Write for *Contact*!

We are eager to receive articles of interest to TESL Ontario members. Whether you are an experienced writer or someone who has never published before, please consider writing for *Contact*. Some possible themes are:

- **Teaching methods, techniques, and activities.** Do you have a classroom activity that works, and that you would like to share? Have you experimented with a new approach to teaching? Would you like to share your insights into teaching with technology, experiential learning, evaluation, or any other approach to ESL instruction? We'd love to hear from you.
- **Issues related to settlement and immigration.** Do your own experiences provide you with insights that you would like to share with *Contact* readers? Do you have advice for teachers engaged in teaching newcomers, or strong feelings about issues related to immigration and settlement? Please consider sharing these.
- **Research.** While *Contact* is not a peer-reviewed journal, you are certainly invited to submit the results of your research for publication in *Contact*.
- **Creative writing.** Do you have a creative flair? Send in your poems and short stories related to the ESL teaching profession!
- **Book reviews.** Anyone interested in reviewing books related to ESL in-

struction is invited to get in touch. You may choose to review a book that has caught your attention or we can also offer suggestions.

- **Letters to the editor.** Would you like to comment on anything you have read in *Contact*? Drop the editor a line!
- **Other topics of interest to the TESL Ontario community.** *Contact* is your magazine; if you have a topic close to your heart, and that you think would be interesting and relevant to the TESL Ontario community, please share your thoughts.

As many readers will already know, this is my last issue as editor of *Contact*. Having edited the magazine for a year, I am now handing the reins over to Brett Reynolds. I wish Brett all the best in this new venture, and like all *Contact* readers, I look forward to many excellent issues in the coming years. ❖

-Tania



Our new editor:

For almost 20 years, Brett Reynolds has been a language teacher and editor of professional (and not so professional) papers. A dedicated (obsessed?) contributor to open-source knowledge sharing forums, he somehow gets by without a cell phone. After a decade in Tokyo, he's now professor of EAP at Humber College.

IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

Culture and Language

By Yasmin Khan



I bring with me the experience of three continents (Asia, Africa and North America). I am lucky enough to have been exposed to, and to have a command of several languages: English, Hindi, Urdu, Arabic (the ability to read and write), and Hausa (general conversational ability). I started learning languages in an atmosphere where my parents, grandparents and teachers put in their full love, motivation and encouragement to help me to acquire these languages.

Cultural adaptation has played a very important role in my life. I was born and

brought up in India, and I moved to Canada; both are countries where multiculturalism is a normal part of everyday life; these cultures are full of customs and traditions, and they have a long historical background. Exposure to these environments influenced me greatly, although at times I took that exposure for granted. I formed an island of my own, and I learned and taught myself.

From my experience, I do not see any clear division between language and culture. There are many stages in the ac-

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

quisition of culture, and these stages depend on the individual's needs and on what the individual wants to learn from the new culture. These stages are not easily identifiable because of our diversified nature and different levels of adaptation.

The classroom provides direct experience of interaction with representatives of other cultures and helps the learner to understand the literature, traditional values, history, facts, geography, trade practices, laws, and so on, of other parts of the world. At the same time, the learner is exposed to and develops a tolerance towards the social identities of others. In teaching cultural awareness, we are providing education to bring about a better society. The focus should be on the mingling of differences by modifying and accommodating learner desires and identities.

For teachers, acquiring cultural knowledge helps us to understand the changing mood and needs of the society we work within; this learning is vital in our professional growth. By placing an emphasis on the need to respect identity and differences, language classes can help to make an individual an 'ambassador of tolerance.'

Culture expands our boundaries and extends our responsibilities toward others in the form of unity, social engagement, and individual efforts towards the betterment of society.

In second- or foreign-language programs, the teacher needs a curriculum based on guided choices. Teaching culture requires a lot of exposure, a vast knowledge, unbiased research, and a simple approach. A teacher has to maintain an equilibrium of critical attitudes towards the learner. The interaction between approach and classroom practice—where a teacher's heart and soul speak together to inspire the learner—is crucial. This learning then makes it easier to respond to new innovative possibilities, resulting in the continuation of the cycle. An honest composite approach is the key point to consider in culture teaching.

**“A teacher
has to maintain
an equilibrium of
critical attitudes
towards the
learner.”**

To integrate cultural teaching into ESL or EFL, one has to have a deep insight into the matter, a willingness to accept others' points of view, a teaching/learning goal for each class, and a desire to help define their the making of a creative effort.

My motive is always “not in time, place or circumstances but in the human being lies success” (unknown). ❖

IN THE CLASSROOM

Critical Pedagogy in the ESL Classroom: A Starting Point

By Christine Smart-Wiseman

A Teacher's Experience

When I first became an ESL teacher, I entered my classroom armed with notions of communicative language learning and an educated understanding of the effectiveness of certain teaching methodologies. I knew from Lightbrown and Spada's *How Languages Are Learned* (2006) that the days of teaching grammar alone had no place in task-based learning. The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), which form the basis for our teaching, determine learners' levels according to what they can do, not what grammar tense they know. I was pumped. I was ready to engage in those theories of language learning. I set up my classroom to facilitate a communicative learning environment and focused on developing effective learning practices based on Howard Gardner's learning styles. I ensured that my class had visual, auditory, reading, and kinaesthetic aids so that my students would learn to the best of their ability. It was inspiring and I felt privileged to be bringing current pedagogies to this field.

As I continued my important role of 'ESL teacher,' I also pursued my studies at the graduate level. It was then that I was introduced to critical pedagogy. I found its traces in 'participatory education' when I read the wonderful work of Virginia Sauvé. It was at

that point that I started to question my own seemingly outdated teaching practices. I began to ask myself why I was doing certain things in the classroom and to ponder the implications of those actions. I was awakened by what I was reading. I discovered that some materials were not new, like Paulo Freire's work (which was written even before my time!).

Critical pedagogy as an educational practice seems to have been ignored in our field, yet is a valuable resource for professional development. It has begun to appear in teacher training courses as evident in the third edition of *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (Brown, 2007; see also the work of Cummins, Mercado), which allots a few pages to critical pedagogy in one of its later chapters. This is the current book used in York University's methodology course for TESL Ontario certification.

My article strives to (re)introduce critical pedagogy to adult ESL education and to argue for its place in this field of instruction. My hope is that readers will expand their knowledge of this discourse and consider employing it in their classrooms.

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

What is Critical Pedagogy?

Critical pedagogy concerns itself with social justice and empowerment. Many current theories suggest that education is not as straightforward as simply teaching a subject, but rather how one teaches, or what is taught explicitly and implicitly upholds an imbalance of power and as a result fosters inequality.

Within this notion of critical pedagogy, educators seek to understand how various elements contribute to social inequalities. In the area of adult ESL, critically exploring the existing methods, materials, and educational structures provide a foundation to understand what circumstances (conditions and contexts) generate and perpetuate inequality. To be critical is to continuously ask the question "Why?" and to reflect on the implications of particular practices.

Critical pedagogy takes on an activist role and advocates for educators to help learners become their own agents for social equality. Benesch (1999) reminds us, however, to consider how critical teaching should be done. She makes a distinction between *monologic* critical thinking and *dialogic* critical thinking. What this means is rather than imposing your own critical beliefs, you invite discussion to advocate for social justice. Benesch provides the example of a gay college student who was tortured and murdered because of his sexual orientation. Rather than simply asserting that this horrific hate crime is wrong, she elicits classroom discussion and intervenes to provoke critical

thought. She asks her students to consider if some of their homophobic fears are real threats or simply taken-for-granted notions without any basis in reality. By provoking her students to engage in critical discussion, Benesch has been able to foster a dialogic space to explore social injustices. As illustrated by the above example, critical engagement is not only a wonderful tool to bring into the classroom; it is also a good skill to develop for one's own personal growth.

“Critical pedagogy takes on an activist role and advocates for educators to help learners become their own agents for social equality.”

There are also many other factors that contribute to oppressive or emancipatory pedagogical conditions, such as a school's curriculum, governmental educational policies, and the mainstream media; however, the scope of this article focuses mainly on teacher involvement. In the realm of learning a second language, I believe that teachers play a valuable role in perpetuating oppressive conditions, or conversely, in bringing about change to foster an empowering environment. I also believe that taking a critical approach to teaching is the

foundation of ensuring students' success in a new country.

Most scholars today credit the starting point of critical pedagogy to Paulo Freire. Freire (1970) has been described as a man who, in hunger and poverty as a child in Brazil, was inspired to write his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In a nutshell, Freire's work focused mainly on denouncing the structures of oppression and noted that educational institutions played a key role in maintaining oppressive conditions. His famous banking con-

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

cept of education demonstrates what some refer to as “transmission-style teaching” whereby “knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (Freire, 1970, p.72). In other words, teachers are the all-knowing essence of information and administer crucial information to their willing and grateful subjects. Knowledge is not collaboratively created in this model but rather commanded one-directionally by an authority figure. In contrast, Freire and many other critical thinkers hope educators can become “problem posers” in their practices and explore how and what they teach because by doing so, they can come to understand how their practices perpetuate oppression. This is what I invite you to think about and explore in this article.

Norton and Toomey (2004) bring another important aspect to critical pedagogy. They assert that teaching and learning are about constructing knowledge, rather than about having the educator impose it. As a result, they advocate for knowledge to be constructed with positive possibilities for the future for learners rather than educating for life roles that situate learners in oppressive or unfair conditions. Imagining a future of successful opportunities for learners is another key element in critical pedagogy. This reminds me of a famous quotation which I embrace personally: “If you THINK you can, or if you THINK you can’t, you’re right!” Thus, we must offer learners opportunities to believe in their full potential.

“...practitioners lack the formal training, curricula, and institutional support to implement critical pedagogical practices in the classroom.”

Although adult ESL in Canada began a few decades ago, as a profession it is still relatively new. Previously, it was not necessary for ESL teachers to have any formal training or certification to work in government-funded programs like Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). With the establishment of TESL Ontario, however, most current ESL teachers (such as those in LINC

programs) are required to take specialized courses and become certified teachers. Up until now, teacher training courses have focused on effective language acquisition and communicative approaches and have lacked a critical perspective. In the last few years, however, the field of ESL has incorporated critical pedagogy into teaching practices. However, I do not believe that this theory of practice is carried out in most ESL classrooms today. Although it is not a new phenomenon, practitioners lack the formal training, curricula, and institutional support to implement critical pedagogical practices in the classroom.

In a current publication entitled *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education* (2009), Hawkins and Norton have recently expanded Freire’s work and offer readers food for thought on the expansion of critical pedagogy to adult L2 teaching. Their article in this guide provides critical language teacher education a starting point to consider how to apply critical pedagogy in the ESL classroom; they also offer a critique of this movement from a practical standpoint. Their viewpoint appreciates that critical language teaching will shape “a social

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

world in which all people, regardless of language, ethnicity, color, or class, have equal voices, access, and possibilities" (p.37). It is my belief that although we are beginning to introduce critical pedagogy into teacher education programs, many educators are unsure of how to 'be critical' or value the significance of this movement. I hope this article provides a starting point to some, and a continuance to others who value equality and social justice in their teaching practices.

How to 'Be Critical'

It is not easy to apply the theory of critical pedagogy to practice. Notions of equality and social justice seem ideologically 'pretty' but in reality are challenging to develop. Many barriers arise when doing so. The goals of critical pedagogy are polluted by school policies, teaching materials, and debates about what it means to be a good teacher. Many educators have never thought critically about how and what they teach their students, or about the implications of their teaching in a broader social context. Moreover, there are those of us who may want to change, but who don't have the tools, resources, support, or courage to change (yes, it takes courage to change!). Some of us like our comfort zones and know "what works," so we keep doing it. It's a skill we have perfected, and we don't have the desire to change it.

I believe that attempting to understand the implications of classroom interactions is the first stepping stone to creating a critical classroom. In the sidebar "Five Critical Steps," I provide a starting point for educators to apply critical pedagogy in ESL classrooms. It is by no means a complete list of

(Continued on page 12)

Five Critical Steps:

1. Classroom Space

Do I provide a space in my classroom in a manner such that we all are equal participants? Do my students have the opportunity to situate themselves in a way that gives them a sense of parity?

2. Teaching Materials

Are my students represented in classroom texts? Do the materials I use in my class include different genders, races, ages, ethnicities, etc.? If not, why not? Do I provide time and space to discuss materials that do not offer diverse representations? How can I present materials in the classroom to encompass all representations of people?

3. Teaching Practices

Do I engage in interaction with my students in a manner that demonstrates respect, equality, and fairness (i.e. turn taking, participation, group work, etc.)? Have I critically thought about the implications of my beliefs about teaching? In other words, what common-sense notions do I have about teaching that cause a subtle imbalance in power relations in the classroom?

4. Institutions

How do educational institutions restrict equality? How do the policies of schools enable and/or disable certain people? What can I do to manage those inequalities?

5. Beliefs

Have I taken the time to critically reflect on my own beliefs in order to see if they perpetuate inequality? Furthermore, when I am faced with learners whose beliefs disseminate hatred, unfairness, and racism, how will I approach them in class in order to foster a dialogic discussion? What can I do to effectively bring about social justice for all?

(Continued from page 11)

things to consider, but rather, it scratches the surface of an important aspect of teaching.

Challenges to Critical Pedagogy

In forums that I have participated in, most colleagues cite the despair of being the “only one” to stand up to change. It’s a struggle that not everyone wants to partake in. I think, however, that educators need to step out of their comfort zones in order to advocate for changes which start in the classroom, but which will hopefully penetrate into the wider society. I also think that teacher training programs need to put critical pedagogy in the theoretical forefront of their curriculum. Acquiring language is undertaken in social, political, and historical contexts that consequently establish inequality. When we teach, we have the capacity to facilitate empowerment. Unfortunately, current social constructions of language and classroom practices often preclude this.

My personal vision of a critical educational environment is not written in stone because I am still trying to debunk my own common-sense ways of teaching. There are things that I have taken for granted as “being a teacher” which, as I now reflect, I have come to realize may be perpetuating oppressive conditions. On a positive note, however, simply thinking about and exploring the ways in which your classroom may offer a space where newcomers to Canada have the opportunity to critically engage in their new language and new country is a good foundation. ❖

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Christine Smart-Wiseman is currently pursuing her PhD at York University in Toronto and teaches in a LINC program. She advocates for facilitating empowerment and social justice in ESL classrooms.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Introducing Pre-Business Students to the Nature of Teamwork

By Tania Pattison



One of my goals as a teacher of advanced-level EAP is to encourage my students to think about their own approach to learning, both individually and as members of a group—or more specifically, as members of a team that has been given a set task to carry out. Teamwork plays an important role in several of the degree programs my students are hoping to enter, in particular, the Business Administration program. The activity presented here allows my students to reflect on their own performance within a team, and to learn a little Business theory in the process.

Step 1: Thinking about Teamwork

The first step is to get students thinking about how teams work, and about how individuals feel about working in teams. I start by giving each student a piece of paper with three incomplete sentences written on it. Students complete the following sentences using their own ideas:

- I like / do not like working in teams because...
- I think that when teams work together well, it is because...
- I think that when teams do not work together well, it is because...

Students hand in their papers (written anonymously), and we discuss their ideas. Generally, the comments that arise are quite predictable. Students who like working in teams cite the opportunity to share ideas, collaborate, and carry out the task more efficiently. On the other hand, those who dislike teamwork write about how hard it can be to get everyone to work together. Students consider that when teams work well together, it is because everyone has the same goals; everyone takes responsibility; the team members communicate well; and there is an effective system of organization in place. When teams do not work well

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

together, this is attributed to the fact that there are too many different ideas; members are lazy; there is a lack of communication and/or of participation; members don't want to share their own ideas with others; or too much time is wasted arguing.

Step 2: Carrying out a Team Task

Next, I tell my students that they are going to take part in a team task related to Business Administration. I divide the class into teams of seven or eight, with the teams selected randomly. The task is assigned; students are given 90 minutes and are told to report back to the classroom with a completed poster presentation based on the task. I give the teams complete freedom to work where they wish (if they want to retreat to the cafeteria, that's fine); to divide team roles in any way that suits them; and to use whatever resources they choose.

I provide poster card, markers, white paper, and glue. I also encourage students to bring laptops or mobile devices with them in case they wish to do some basic research. Beyond that, I take a very hands-off approach to the task. Students report back 90 minutes later with a completed poster presentation.

I have used these three tasks successfully with my students:

- Create a marketing strategy.
- Plan a motivational activity.
- Develop a business plan.

Invariably, students put a lot of work into these tasks, and the result is almost always a very impressive and detailed poster outlining their ideas. I have also found these tasks to be a useful way of teaching business-related vocabulary in a meaningful context, and of introducing some of the realities of the Canadian business world. Of course, these tasks are adaptable to specific contexts, and there are countless other possibilities for activities that engage students and encourage them to work together to carry

(Continued on page 16)

Task A: Create a Marketing Strategy

This task is based on an activity on the website www.businessballs.com

First, I announce that the students will be creating a marketing plan for a company called Unique Foods, Inc., and I ask them what they understand by 'marketing.' We collect ideas and write them on the board; these pre-Business students are often quite well versed in what marketing entails.

In the next class, students are told that they must develop a marketing strategy for a new pre-packaged dish that has been developed by this food company. The dish in question can be anything that sounds odd or unappetizing, and you could even bring in a dish that you have prepared yourself (I once treated my class to curried Brussels sprouts); just be careful of dietary restrictions, and don't make it *too* tasty!

Working in groups, students must put themselves in the role of marketing executives. They need to consider the target market, how the dish will be packaged, how it will be advertised, etc. In other words, they must decide how to promote this dish to consumers who might otherwise have no desire to purchase it.

Task B: Plan a Motivating Activity

One popular option within the Business Administration program at this university is a specialization in Human Resource Management; my next activity deals with employee satisfaction. First, we brainstorm two questions: “What makes employees happy?” and “What factors can contribute to a decline in employee morale?” Students share their ideas.

The group task involves planning an activity for workers at an imaginary local company—in this case, a toy manufacturer—that has been experiencing hard times. Profits are down, salaries are frozen, job security cannot be taken for granted, and employees are worried. Students are asked to imagine themselves as the HR department for this company, and to plan a morale-building activity for its 200 employees. They have a limited budget, so venturing out of town is not an option. In most cases, the activity planned will be a company barbecue, picnic, or sports event. The choice of location, timing, food, games, etc. are entirely up to the students.

Task C: Develop a Business Plan

Government funding allows students to receive grants to start and operate a summer business. There is a detailed application form to complete. This activity encourages students to think about what goes into setting up a small business. A young entrepreneur may have a great idea—but then what happens?

Students are told that a friend of theirs hopes to establish a summer business providing mobile spa services for dogs in their own homes; this includes shampooing, trimming fur, nail care, and so on. She has asked for help in preparing her application for funding. Considerations include the name of the business, services to be offered, prices, how she will promote her services to pet owners, and exactly how she will use her \$3,000 start-up grant. The goal here is to convince the government that this project is well thought out, and that it deserves to be funded.

(Continued from page 14)

out a business-related task.

Step 3: Learning the Theory

The third step (in a subsequent class) is to tell my students that the completion of an impressive poster was not, in fact, the main objective of this activity. I am not actually too concerned about how they plan to market curried Brussels sprouts, or about what games they choose to play at their staff barbecue.

Instead, I want my students to think about how they work in teams. One of the key theorists in the field of team roles is Meredith Belbin, and it is Belbin's ideas I now introduce to the class. We look at the handout in Table 1, and we discuss what each of these roles means.

Step 4: Reflecting on the Task

The final step is to ask students to reflect on how their group functioned as a team, and on what role they played in their team. Students are given a written assignment in which they are asked to reflect on their own performance within the team. Specifically, students are asked to include in their writing the responses to five questions:

1. Why is it important to understand how teams work together?
2. Do you think your team worked together well? Why, or why not? Did your team have a leader? How were decisions made? Did any problems arise?
3. Which of Belbin's roles did you see within your team? (Do not give names; write 'Student A', 'Student B', etc.) Was there any role in your team that does not fit into Belbin's categories?
4. What role did you play in your team?
5. Were you satisfied with your own role within the team? If so, why? If not, would you do anything differently if you could do this activity again?

Conclusion

Students are, I have found, quite honest about how their team task was carried out. I am often not at all surprised to learn that the more outgoing students have been appointed—or have appointed themselves—as team leaders. Those whose contribution has not been spectacular usually describe themselves as 'team workers'—somewhat sheepishly if they have used the time for a nap or an extended coffee break. I often read about students who wish they had taken a more active role in the task, and I hope the experience has given them the confidence to be more assertive next time. And I am always delighted to read about students who have a unique talent—often a talent for art and design—which has been well utilised in the creation of their poster.

Teamwork may not be everyone's favourite kind of activity, but it is a necessary aspect of undergraduate study, especially in the Business Administration program that many of my students aspire to enter. The activities outlined above enable students to reflect on their own feelings about teamwork, to consider their own performance within teams, and to develop confidence in taking specific leadership roles when faced with team challenges. ❖



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Table 1: Belbin's team roles

	Plant	Plants are creative and have good imaginations. If you need an interesting solution to a problem, you should ask a plant. If there is no plant in a team, it may be hard to start to think about a problem. However, if a team has too many plants, there may be too many ideas (good and bad) and not enough action. One weakness of plants is that they may be forgetful.
	Monitor-Evaluator	Monitor-evaluators are logical and objective. They look at everyone's opinion and evaluate the team's options in a clear and impartial way. One weakness of monitor-evaluators is that they may lack drive; they do not always inspire other group members.
	Coordinator	Coordinators are mature, confident, and good leaders. They clarify goals, promote decision-making, and delegate tasks to others. One weakness of coordinators is that they might delegate work to others that they could (should) do themselves.
	Resource Investigator	Resource investigators are extrovert, enthusiastic, and communicative. They explore opportunities and develop contacts with the world outside the team. One weakness of resource investigators is that they quickly lose enthusiasm for a project once the initial excitement has passed.
	Implementer	Implementers are reliable, conservative, and efficient. They turn ideas into practical actions. They may not always respond to new ideas; they often do not want to give up their plans to try something new.
	Completer Finisher	Completer finishers do painstaking and conscientious work; they are the "detail people" in the team. They do their main work at the end of the task, when they check for errors and make sure the project reaches the highest standard ("polish and perfect"). One weakness is that they might be perfectionists, and they might worry too much about having everything exactly right.
	Teamworker	Teamworkers are co-operative, mild, and diplomatic. They listen to others and help the team to work together. They are concerned with the morale and well-being of team members, and they are good at preventing friction. One weakness of teamworkers is that they may find it hard to make decisions in difficult times.
	Shaper	Shapers provide the drive to ensure the team keeps moving and does not lose focus. Shapers work well under pressure and are able to overcome obstacles with courage. If there is no shaper in the team, there is a danger that little progress will be made. Shapers can get upset easily; if there are too many shapers in the team, there is a risk of aggression and offending other people's feelings.
	Specialist	Specialists are individuals with specialised knowledge of a key area. Not all group projects require specialists; however, some do. Specialists are dedicated and provide skills that are lacking in others; on the other hand, their contribution may be quite narrow.

TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY

Quick, Free Development Tools for TESL Instructors

By John Allan and Stephen Roney

Increasingly, educational stakeholders expect integration of technology into all aspects of the learning experience. This is quite challenging for many instructors, as it takes time, energy, a paradigm shift, and, not least, funding to drag the typical classroom into the information age. Or does it? Things can be looked at another way—improving technology is also offering many new tools to the teacher, simplifying necessary tasks. And the growth of the social web is making many resources cheaper all the time—indeed, often free. There is, for example, welcome evidence that the Canadian Teaching English as a Second Language community is stickhandling the cyberpuck with some speed towards the goal of technology integration with the **Tutela** learning object repository, **learnit2teach's**, LINC courseware and **Settlement.org's** recently inaugurated wiki.

How can technology help? One obvious and significant way is in the preparation of

learning materials. The educator can now create, with increasing ease, custom textbooks, professional activity sheets, videos, images, audio, interactive activities, even real-world experiences (virtual field trips), tailor made for student needs. Perhaps all that is yet lacking is the ability to make manipulatives—but even that is coming soon, with the development of 3D printing technology.

Instructors also have the option of embedding their various learning activities on a multimedia platform, perhaps a classroom blog, website, interactive poster, or even a little virtual world; or the computer can do instant duty as a video projector or broadcast booth.

The offerings that provide such creative production features—video, document, audio, and image enhancement and editing—are multiplying so quickly it seems a parabola approaching infinity. One industry standard,

(Continued on page 19)

(Continued from page 18)

Adobe eLearning Suite, offers nine components for producing high-end learning objects. Happily, Adobe, generously offers teachers and students up to 80 per cent reductions on their products. Unhappily, teachers have to convince their administrators to purchase the software. In the present financial climate, an Adobe production suite would be a very rare item to find in a LINC centre.

Yet there is an alternative. The advent of the Web 2.0 revolution has provided us with a bounty of free resources. At our site, **SocialESL.com**, we have for several years inventoried the steps to create learning materials for our own ESL/EFL courses, conventional, blended, and online. Once we felt we had a critical mass of resources, and after advising our own institutions, we began offering courses for TESOL professionals through the TESOL Electronic Village Online, focusing on materials production. This has generated an additional trove of resources.

All are available free to all comers at **SocialESL.com**. In particular, we draw your attention to the Quick Dev Tools block, featured on our front page. We hope it is useful for instructors who require learning-object creation tools but do not have a budget for multimedia-development tools. Elements housed in the block are detailed below as they appear in the block itself. At the site, we have included an online demonstration of the tools. Access this by selecting “Learn more about these tools demonstration” at the bottom of the Quick Dev tools block at SocialESL.

 **Edit Audio**

Audio Expert is an online resource that allows a developer to upload an audio file to the Audio Expert server. Once there, the developer can manipulate the file—merging or cutting, converting to different formats, adding metadata—then export it in eleven different file formats. It also has a very functional Flash based audio recorder. Audio Expert can replace a workstation-based program such as Audacity—itsself, also free.

 **Icon Finder**

At **Icon Finder**, a materials developer can find icons for use in projects. Licensing varies of course, but there are enough free icons to get through the simple worksheets or presentations that teachers encounter on a frequent basis. These work particularly well with PowerPoint and on blog pages; some are large enough to use as full-sized images. A search for a classroom object (such as a desk) results in whole sets of similarly-styled and -sized icons, lending a more professional, themed look to the final learning object.

There are four filtering options for each search: icons to display, size of icons, licensing, background colour, and opacity.

(Continued on page 20)

(Continued from page 19)

Text Generator

Lorem Ipsum is a text generator for typesetting. Some call it dummy text. This may not seem very important for ESL teachers; however some of us may be charged with larger projects such as websites or textbooks. The text generated by this site can assist with early decisions on a project, such as layout schemes. In programs such as Pages, Microsoft Publisher or Microsoft Word, this text can be created and placed in the mock up document prior to the actual writing of a media project. Since it is a print industry standard, it is a great resource and good practice for materials designers to use. This is also a great instrument for educational consultants who are pitching projects but not providing the content.

Thesaurus

Thesaurus.com (try saying that quickly while drinking a glass of gin) has many bells, carillons, chimes, and ringers, not to mention whistles, but use it here for mixing up your vocabulary to make your projects more interesting. It will probably provide more options than the native thesaurus on your word processor.

Image Editor

There are many times when a teacher needs a tool to optimize images to fit into a worksheet, digital resource, poster or video. In order to cover all of the possibilities, one would have to earn a diploma in graphic design. However, **Picnik** offers the essential tools required. Commonly there are five useful alterations needed to beat any image into shape before inserting it into learning media. These are resizing, cropping, brightness/contrast control, rotation and the wild card, special effects. Picnik supplies all with a straightforward, easy menu organization.

Image Resizer

If you are at a strange workstation—or even at your own—and need to resize an image quickly, try **Web Resizer**. It also allows you to rotate at the speed of light; possibly faster, according to recent European experiments. Other basic functions include adding a customized border to your images.

Fonts

At times, materials developers require special fonts or letter shape sets to create an impression, mood, or to simulate some event or concept. The web resource **Dafont** offers this option: Dafont is a repository of fonts. Descriptive font categories range from “Alien” to “Valentine,” with intriguing stops in between like “Horror,” “Destroy,” and “Runes, Elvish.” Most personal computers have an office suite that includes a good variety of fonts, but over time one gets a little jaded with the selection. Something so far sight unseen can sometimes inspire, and the font sets at Dafont can so supply. Installing these fonts on a PC or Mac is simple: just follow the instructions at this site.

Vector

Vector Magic converts bitmapped (pixellated) images to vector format. That is, it takes file types like JPEGs, GIFs and PNGs and changes them to scalable EPS, SVG, and PDF. The great advantage is that they can then be resized without distortion or loss of resolution. This is great for logos, illustrations, cartoons or very simple images. Applications to education development might include being able to segment a large image to used as a jigsaw-like puzzle; to standardise presentation by repeating a logo-like image in various sizes; or it might simply add style to learning materials.

(Continued on page 21)

(Continued from page 20)

Screen Capture

Use **Screencast-o-matic** to capture a sequence of actions from the computer screen. The resulting video clips are great for instructional support projects. Instructors may also use these video screen captures for students who require review or repetition. In a multiple intake situation, screen captures can be used to help new arrivals catch up on instruction.

Web Address Shortener

Use **Bitly** to shorten your web addresses (URLs) so that they can be more easily posted on social media such as Twitter or FaceBook, in email, or copied by students from the board. When sending tweets, or SMS messages to student cell phones, this is an invaluable tool. Your class blog or website can also display weblinks to other resources more efficiently after the URLs have been chopped down.

HTML Snippets

Blindtextgenerator provides drag and drop bits of common HTML code. Use Blindtextgenerator's HTML snippets to quickly create desired features in blogs or class websites, without needing to do the coding yourself. It is also very helpful when using Moodle or other learning management systems.

Colour Selection

Color Picker assists in quickly locating colour codes in either HEX, RGB or HSB colour models. Lots more selection than your local paint store; these colour models can help you add colour to your blog, web site or even images. Uniform colour presentation adds a professional look and feel to your materials. Besides—colour is the new black.

Word Connections

At **Lexipedia**, word connections and categorization come to life in smooth flowing animated charts. These can be useful in creating language activities. In the primitive past, many of us labored over concordanced output; but word relations are far easier to read at this resource. It might even be used as an activity with students who are discovering new vocabulary.

Audio Clips

Flash Kit has been around for over a decade. It has been an essential tool kit for multimedia producers, providing audio, animations, images, scripts and tutorials. There are over 7000 Sound FXs to help produce more realistic learning objects. Background audio effects make a difference in the quality of the learning experience, setting the tone, giving emotional colour, building enthusiasm, or simulating the real world and real-life situations. The interface, preview and functionality of Flash Kit are delightfully user friendly and fast.

Wireframes

Wireframes are images and place holders that appear, generally, with an outline and no background filling; kind of like the steel rods that form the framework for a pour of concrete. **Gomockingbird's** wireframes are effective for planning a visual or a multimedia presentation, for the purpose of meetings or enhanced collaboration. Students may be encouraged to use it to plan a project.

Video Edit

You might feel video editing is a bit of a stretch with your busy teaching schedule. On the other hand, if you try it, you just might

(Continued on page 22)

(Continued from page 21)

find it addictive. With iPads, smartphones, and other portable media devices becoming common you can get a lot of learning impact out of a simple video-editing tool. **Pixorial** is free, and web based, so that no installation is required. It is also social network friendly, so it can interact with your class Facebook page or blog.

If you choose to visit us at SocialESL, I suspect you will find that some of these resources will be updated and that a few more may be added by the time this issue of *Contact* hits the stands. The Internet is changing so quickly it is difficult to stay current and still find time to breathe. We humbly hope that at least one or two of these resources can assist you with your next lesson preparation. ❖



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Resources

- Audio Expert, www.audioexpert.com
- Adobe eLearning Suite, www.adobe.com/products/elearningsuite.html
- Bitly, www.bitly.com
- Blindtextgenerator, www.blindtextgenerator.com/snippets
- Color Picker, www.colorpicker.com
- DaFont, www.dafont.com
- Flash Kit, www.flashkit.com/soundfx
- Gomockingbird, www.gomockingbird.com
- LearnIT2Teach, www.LearnIt2teach.ca
- Lexipedia, www.lexipedia.com
- Lorem Ipsum, www.lipsum.com
- Picnik, www.picnik.com
- Pixorial, www.pixorial.com/#!/home
- Screencast-o-matic, www.screencast-o-matic.com
- SettlementAtWork wiki, wiki.settlementatwork.org/wiki/Main_Page
- Socialesl, socialesl.com
- Thesaurus, www.thesaurus.com
- Tutela, tutela.ca
- Web Resizer, www.webresizer.com/resizer

TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY

Edmodo: Q&A about an Excellent Tool for the Teacher's Toolbox

By Gus Bougadis and Tiffany Cammidge



“The directed use of tools that facilitate independent and collaborative learning, reflection, and networking, empowers the Generation Y learner to operate within their preferred environment.”

—(Halse & Mallinson, 2009)

Edmodo is a socially interactive website designed for teachers and students to connect with each other in a virtual environment. Designed to match the internationally popular and familiar layout of Facebook (see Figure 1), Edmodo allows for “mini-blogging” on the free, personal account pages of its members, accompanied by a self-chosen profile picture, by its members. For students, it creates an environment where they can interact with their peers or their teacher outside class time; download activities assigned by the teacher; upload completed assignments; and stay informed and up-to-date with homework and deadlines.

For teachers, it provides a platform whereby that can track the correspondence between students with classmates; send and receive individual correspondence with students; upload assignments and extension activities; assign homework; and keep an organized record of students' grades. Teachers can also connect to the profiles of fellow col-

leagues with an online account and can post messages to each other. The system also supports parent-teacher communication, while providing parents the opportunity to view the topics and work that their child is covering in class.

The site offers a myriad of features that promote easy and instant communication between teacher and student. It can be used as record-keeping software for teachers to receive and grade student work, and to keep virtual tabs on the completion of assignments. For example, the Calendar feature presents a visual reference of due dates, deadlines, and other pertinent events that the teacher may need to communicate to students; it is easily accessible from each member's home page with just one click.

Additional features include the allocation of grades, as well as a library to store additional reference materials. Further adding to the ease of the teacher, messages such as

(Continued on page 24)

(Continued from page 23)



notes, alerts, assignments, polls, files, links, and resource library items can all be sent to any single member, to multiple members, or to the entire student body.

How Does it Work?

The teacher initiates contact with his/her students by first creating an individual user account (by choosing a username and password, and registering an email address) as well as instructing each student to do the same. Group accounts can be made by teachers and secured with passwords to ensure the privacy and connectivity of a specific class of students. The teacher constructs a virtual environment when he/she creates a class group on the site and invites each student to join using the password “key”. The teacher can also organize the class into different groups, depending on the objectives of the class. As facilitator, the teacher can join any group he/she has created and has the authority to edit and respond to the student’s posts in the groups.

What is the Research Rationale for Considering Edmodo as a Tool to Support Learning?

There is little doubt among educators today that the digital literacy of today’s technologically bound student generation is growing at an exponential rate. Thompson (2009) comments on this actuality, stating that students are more literate through their constant

use of technology, for “young people today write far more than any generation before them. That’s because so much socializing takes place online, and it almost always involves text.” Through everyday interaction opportunities online, today’s learners are constructing and interpreting vast amounts of text using the myriad of social-networking tools at their fingertips. Edmodo effectively incorporates literacy practices already heavily employed by today’s learners through the realization of ‘microblogging’, or mini-blog posts.

Blogging, and more recently microblogging, are backed by increasingly supportive methodological research that maintains the collaborative construction of text in a virtual environment that is beneficial for educational purposes. As Halse and Mallinson (2009) assert, “blogs can be used educationally by course facilitators to encourage extended dialogue, ... as learner-centered e-learning tools which can be used to document progress, share information, or reflect on learning.” Grosseck and Holotescu (2010) maintain “the uses of microblogs for accompanying or improving traditional courses offer students both the opportunity to discuss their ideas and reflections and to exercise various types of online discourses.” Along with hosting learning and practice communities, microblogs such as Edmodo also promote the exploration of collaborative writing, enhance-

(Continued on page 25)

(Continued from page 24)

ment of project management, and the opportunity to evaluate and offer opinions (Grosbeck & Holotescu, 2010).

How Might this Technology Be Used in Conjunction with the TPACK Approach?

Technological knowledge (TK)

Educators are initially attracted to the relative ease of incorporating *Edmodo* into the classroom, as it is a free software and requires very little personal investment. The interactive interface is laid out in a way that teachers and students alike can easily navigate between pages. Similarly, students require very little guidance toward discovering the capabilities of the software and are encouraged by the familiarity of the appearance, as it is similar to Facebook. Allowing for instantaneous communication between the teachers and students (or students with students), simple management of student's works and marks, and straightforward task assignment to an individual student or a group make *Edmodo* an unimintimidating tool for students and educators with the most basic understanding of technology.

Content knowledge (CK)

Content can be easily be uploaded and shared on *Edmodo*, according to the pace and directives of the teacher. Alternatively, course content and topics can be further enhanced and reflected upon through the use of group polls. Assessment can be secured in the event that the teacher uploads quizzes and exams, with the students able to submit them for evaluation back to the teacher immediately following completion. The teacher can likewise comment on the achievements and errors of his/her students, offering praise and corrections as necessary without delayed follow-up. In this way, content imparted to the students can be discovered, practiced, and assessed in real time, allowing for modification of lesson delivery should additional exposure to the

content be required by the students, or additional resources can be sent to learners according to their specific needs.

Pedagogical knowledge (PK)

Edmodo can be used to suit a variety of pedagogical styles. Cooperative learning activities are among the main objectives of the software, as the interactive nature of correspondence and data sharing make it ideal for collaborative activities. Similarly, *Edmodo* can be used to impart task-based, student-centered worksheets, either to the entire class or to differentiated groups within a class. Additionally, the software can be used to elicit feedback from the students in a manner that ensures contribution from each class member and allows for even the quietest student to have a voice.

The potential for building autonomous learning skills in the students grows through the use of *Edmodo* as the students are responsible for maintaining their profiles and passwords, checking assignments and posts from the teacher, utilizing time-management strategies to adhere to deadlines, and seeking guidance from fellow classmates or the teacher when an objective is not understood. With the systematic incorporation of *Edmodo* in or out of the classroom, the teacher is able to offer a blended pedagogical approach to technology and education that incorporates personal contact and instruction from the teacher, as well as guided or independent discovery on the Web. Further opportunity to reflect and comment on topics covered in class is available to the students as the mini-blog posts can be used to encourage conversations and discussions between classmates.

How Might this Technology Help to Approach Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language Differently?

When used for English language teaching, *Edmodo* has the potential to develop the students' reading and writing skills. Because the teacher can ensure constant use of

(Continued on page 26)

(Continued from page 25)

the target language by easily monitoring communication between group members, the students are encouraged to formulate language that will generate the intended meaning from their message. Common or consistent errors in the mini-blog posts can be noted by the teacher and taken up as needed. Alternatively, the teacher can quickly browse through posts made by a particular student and offer feedback to that individual without drawing the attention of critical peers, thereby creating a safe and private environment for improvement.

The additional option of posting links and library resources to the students also has the potential to direct the students' attention to valuable websites or supplementary material that can aid in the understanding of a topic. As the teacher is in control of determining what activities should be collaborated on or self-paced, the distribution of pertinent links can aid in directing the students toward useful research and authentic resources found online that they may be otherwise unable to locate on their own. The inclusion of additional library resources can also be collected to offer challenging extension activities for the quicker students who may finish the assignments ahead of the others, and as such diminish disruptions caused by such speedy learners.

What are the Pedagogical Reasons for Considering this Technology?

There are many pedagogical reasons to consider *Edmodo* as a valuable addition to the classroom, though addressing the challenges of motivation and classroom management are key. Students emerging out of today's technological matrix are motivated to learn when the tool is familiar and interesting. *Edmodo* bridges the familiarity of online-community software with the limitless incorporation of activities, data, resources, and games in an online environment. The mini-blog format combined with the colourful and user-friendly interface offers the students the opportunity to write for a myriad of purposes and

audiences, according to the teacher's objectives. As motivation increases, classroom management issues decrease.

In traditional classroom settings in which all the students are given the same amount of material and expected to master the required objectives at the same time, classroom management issues abound as some students may struggle to slow down or speed up to keep pace. The *Edmodo* platform allows the students as much or as little opportunity to practice activities as they require, the opportunity to submit completed assignments directly to the teacher without drawing attention, and the freedom to develop at their own pace.

What Contextual Factors Should Be Taken into Account when Considering this Technology for the Classroom?

As with the incorporation of any new technology to the classroom, it is necessary to evaluate the potential for abuse of the technology compared to the advantages it offers. The negative considerations are dependent on the context; issues related to Internet connectivity and censorship must certainly be considered. Additional concerns include the opportunity for students to copy and paste answers from each other instead of working through activities, as well as the fact that the resemblance to Facebook may entice some students to use the site to 'chat'. Understandably, the teacher needs to maintain a 'presence' when using *Edmodo*, and preempt these problems when first introducing the tool.

However, the positive factors are seemingly endless if used constructively and creatively. Among the most notable advantages are: user-friendly interface; free of charge; ease of transferability of material and links between teacher and students; differentiation of material delivery by classes or groups; full parental access; full access out of school; no need for physical proximity for collaborative activities; opportunity for interaction between all the members of the class; ability to keep a database of students' works

(Continued on page 27)

(Continued from page 26)

and grades; opportunity for students to work at their own pace; and the ability to instantly and easily access the teacher or students.

Given the numerous varieties of software available today, Edmodo provides the user with a familiar and friendly environment that allows for easy communication and an interconnecting nexus between teachers, students, and parents. In addition, Edmodo promotes digital literacy, autonomous learning and interactive student-centered collaboration opportunities, while providing a platform where educators can monitor and interact with individuals and groups. It can also be used as a valuable resource centre for students that can be later used for review at any time. Additionally, Edmodo can help teachers to differentiate learning by assigning different tasks to various groups. This helps to eliminate the labelling that often accompanies differentiation in the traditional classroom.

Although some precautions and monitoring must be taken by the teacher to avoid potential abuse, this free software provides an excellent opportunity for educators to create learning opportunities in an environment that most of today's students are accustomed to and confident in. As most of our students today have grown up surrounded by technology and spend a large amount of their time online, educators can no longer ignore the power of such technology to motivate and enhance learning.

How Can Readers Find More Information about Edmodo?

The home page, www.edmodo.com, is extremely user-friendly, offering a brief demonstrative video on the basic utilities of the software. Given the amount of time that this program has been in use, there are also a variety of YouTube videos available to offer support to the novice Edmodo user. Alternatively, Google search indicators such as "Edmodo review" will certainly yield a myriad of professional and amateur reviews of the practical application, benefits, and disadvantages of the software in an array of learning contexts. ❖

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EVENT REVIEW

Shelly Terrell's Challenge for TESL Toronto

By Greg Osadec



Shelly Sanchez Terrell (inset) at the 2011 Fall Conference challenged TESL educators to set and achieve 30 goals in 30 days . (Photo: Aga Palalas)

Accomplishing 30 professional development goals might seem daunting to many ESL teachers, but Shelly Terrell, keynote speaker at TESL Toronto's September 23rd event, took it a step further when she first developed the *30 Goals Challenge for Educators*: she decided to complete 30 goals in 30 days.

"I'm a very goal-oriented person and I try to find the best way [to] successfully complete goals," said Terrell. She had set yearly goals for herself in the past, but when she set her sights on 30 of them she decided some research and strategic planning were in order. Others might have found the results

disheartening: most people feel burned out and give up on their goals by February or March. Shelly wasn't deterred and, when she started in January 2010, she had a plan—accomplish one goal each day for 30 days, and invite other people in her online social network to join in and offer each other support. Come February, any burnout she felt would be well earned.

She made it through, but when she repeated the experience with her online community over that summer and again the following January, they changed their ap-

(Continued on page 29)



Terrell's 30/30 goal challenge combines teacher training and support.

(Photo: Aga Palalas)

(Continued from page 28)

proach. "We found in a lot of the bloggers ... that that was just too much ... So we decided it would be 30 goals for the year because that's a bit more practical."

Terrell describes the *30 Goals Challenge*—which includes such objectives as 'Seek Feedback,' 'Give Students Rein,' and 'Conquer a Fear—as a combination of teacher training and teacher support. Social media such as Twitter, Skype and blogs play a large role in the *Challenge*, allowing educators from a variety of locations with varying backgrounds—including teachers, principals and directors—to connect.

"It's not just learning from one person who has just a certain amount of experience in one area, and it might not pertain to the teacher," said Terrell. "It has really practical things like classroom management, how to set up a classroom, how to get students more engaged "...Even instructors with little or no experience can benefit from getting in-

involved". "It's almost like a mentoring system, but ... all the mentorship and responsibility doesn't just fall on one person and there are many experts to learn from."

Terrell became familiar with the educational value of social media while completing her Masters of Education in Curriculum Instruction for English as a Second Language, ultimately writing her thesis on how such technology can be used with language learners. It was after starting a new job at a school in Germany in 2007, however, that she discovered the support that social networks can offer educators themselves.

"I had taught English Language Learners for many years, but teaching in another country was so different from teaching English Language Learners in my native country," said Terrell, who had previously taught in her hometown of San Antonio, Texas. One particularly rough day left her worn-out and in tears. "At the time it was kind of crazy and I remember thinking, 'I have nobody to really go to for support ...'" She decided to seek help online, and eventually connected with educators through social networks and asked them questions. To her relief, she soon had a support network of people around the world available 24/7. Terrell believes that such instantaneous access is perhaps the biggest benefit for educators seeking professional development and support. "You are able to immediately, with social media and the Internet, get the help and support that you need much more quickly and you get to also meet a lot of people around the world ... and kind of feel that you have a shared experience," said Terrell.

The network of support offered through the *30 Goals Challenge* has grown rapidly since Terrell established it in 2010. It already has a following of roughly 7500 people and counting, and has earned Terrell invitations to give lectures and seminars in Southeast Asia for UNESCO Bangkok and the British Council, as well as at various conferences throughout the UK, Greece, Turkey, France,

(Continued on page 30)

(Continued from page 29)

Germany, Japan, the U.S. and Canada. These experiences were part of what caught the attention of TESL Toronto Executive Board members Tyson Seburn and Ellen Servinis, Communications Co-Chairs, as they searched for a guest speaker for a smaller event in lieu of the fall conference the Board has organized in the past.

“We [the Executive Board] felt the need to expand the opportunities for professional development throughout the year to enable more of our membership the opportunity to participate,” said Seburn. A collective decision was made to continue the spring conference and host a variety of smaller, more diverse events throughout the fall and winter. Servinis and Seburn volunteered to organize the first event. Together, they brainstormed a list of potential speakers and Terrell’s name came up.

“What I like about the Challenge is that it’s a grab-bag of goals rather than specific activities,” said Servinis. “It encourages you to experiment and try new things, but it also pushes you to create the experience in your own way.” Seburn echoed her sentiment. “We ultimately agreed that Shelly’s goals could be easily adapted to suit the diverse contexts of our [TESL Toronto’s] membership,” he said. “Because Shelly has a dominant profile among educators online, especially in Europe and the U.S., many board members were interested in becoming more familiar with her work.”

Seburn, however, was already quite familiar with it. He has been in contact with Terrell since 2009, when they met through Twitter. “As I became more heavily involved in online professional development, our paths crossed more and more often there [on Twitter] and on our respective blogs,” said Seburn, who presented sessions at two events Terrell had helped organize this past spring and summer, the Virtual Roundtable Conference and the Reform Symposium. “[The TESL Toronto] event was the first time

we had met in person, though because we have had so much interaction online and through Skype, it felt like the 100th,” he said.

Seburn also began to participate in the *30 Goals Challenge* earlier this year. “It’s a very reflective process, which is something many teachers, like myself, often overlook when faced with the time constraints of lesson planning and classroom teaching,” he said. “Adapting the goals helps you not only become aware of areas for improvement, but also encourages you to challenge how you’ve always done things.”

In that respect it provides a good opportunity for educators who have been resistant to developing an online presence. “One of the goals [in the *Challenge*] is to conquer a fear, or step out of a comfort zone,” said Terrell. “We’re in the business of showing kids or learners that learning is lifelong ... [and] it’s something that we have to model ... If we want our students themselves to make that step ... to take risks, then it’s something that we have to exemplify as well.”

The TESL Toronto event itself provides proof that such risks can pay off. “I was really happy with how the event turned out,” said Servinis. “I was nervous about organizing it because it was so different from what we usually do at TESL Toronto, but one of Shelly’s goals is ‘Support a Movement,’ and I think that hers is a worthwhile one to support.” ❖



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BOOK REVIEW

You're Hired... Now What? An Immigrant's Guide to Success in the Canadian Workplace

Review by Amanda Nowensky

You're Hired...Now What? An Immigrant's Guide to Success in the Canadian Workplace. By Lynda Goldman. Oxford University Press (2010).



You're Hired...Now What? An Immigrant's Guide to Success in the Canadian Workplace is a practical resource for new Canadians who plan to work in Canada.

Lynda Goldman, the author of *You're Hired...Now What?*, is not only an author but also an ESL instructor and a corporate trainer. Goldman's work experience has given her inside information, not only on the difficulties that immigrants face in a new country, but also on what Canadian employers expect in today's business market. She has also written: *Arrival Survival Canada: A Handbook for New Immigrants* and *How to Find a Job in Canada: Common Problems and Effective Solutions*. *You're Hired... Now What?* is the third book in this series and was published in 2010, making it very current with today's Canadian workforce. It is a lengthy text at just over 400 pages (including an index and glossary), but it is worth reading at \$29.95.

You're Hired...Now What? is not a textbook that a teacher would implement in a classroom; instead, it is more a reference guide for new Canadian employees—

something they can use as a resource as they immerse themselves into the Canadian workplace. It is also a valuable resource for employers that have new Canadian employees. It gives employers an idea of all the topics and issues that their new employees have to think about and deal with on a daily basis, and it also gives them ideas on how they can help and guide their new employees to being successful in the workplace. Beyond this text, Goldman also offers a related blog that further illuminates some of the text topics; readers can ask questions or post comments on the web site (<http://yourehirednowwhat.wordpress.com/>).

The goal of *You're Hired...Now What?* is to give an in-depth explanation of various aspects of the Canadian workforce and its many elements, so that readers (new Canadians) can have more successful experiences in their new jobs. The book offers a lot of advice and suggestions on a wide variety of topics that the reader might encounter in the workplace. Some topics

(Continued on page 32)



Lynda Goldman is an author, consultant, seminar leader and business writer. She taught ESL at Concordia University and College Marie-Victorin for 15 years. During that time she co-authored 27 best-selling ESL books (as Lynda Berish & Sandra Thibaudeau), including *Canadian Concepts*, *English Fast Forward*, *Grammar Connections* and *Amazing Stories*.

After shifting to corporate training, she provided workshops in business etiquette, first impressions, professional image, and networking. Recent books she wrote include: *How to Make a Million Dollar First Impression*, and *Prescription for Success* for the pharmaceutical industry.

She currently specializes in writing and training on cross-cultural communication and selling in a multicultural environment.

About The Author, from <http://yourehirednowwhat.wordpress.com/>

(Continued from page 31)

covered in the books are: Canadian work values; maintaining a professional image; business writing; communication at work; problem solving; and dating at work. The text is organized in such a way that readers do not have to read from beginning to end, but instead, they can just read the chapter that pertains to them and the particular topic they want to learn more about.

In each chapter, there are special features such as pictures that reinforce what is being read, as well as 'Business Buzzwords' and the 'Action Plan' section. The 'Action Plans' are a particularly helpful feature of this text. They allow readers to think about and actively write down someone common practices and solutions from their workplace that correspond with each chapter. For example, in Chapter 5 ('Actions Speak Louder than Words'), Goldman asks readers to "write down three ways you can change your body language to fit in to the Canadian workplace

more successfully" (p. 105) ; this is very practical advice, and something that can be used later as a reference.

You're Hired... Now What? is a valuable resource for immigrants hired in Canada. It is difficult for new Canadians to become aware of customs in the workplace, and this text outlines so many important details for these employees to know, so they are able to adapt to their new Canadian culture. Why wouldn't they want their own personal guide into the Canadian workforce? It will make their transition more comfortable and, perhaps, make their transition easier. Goldman takes the reader from the days leading up to their first day, in Section One of the text, to communicating and relationships in Sections Two and Three, and leaves readers with a section on how to achieve the most success at their jobs in Section Four.

Within these sections, the text includes information that all Canadians starting in the workforce would benefit from. For ex-

(Continued on page 33)

(Continued from page 32)

ample, in Chapter 8, on business writing, Goldman outlines how to write an office memo, and through the use of questions, she has the reader thinking about who will read this memo, or why the reader would want to read this memo. These are questions that all employees should be thinking about before they send an office memo. This trend continues when, in Chapter 17, she gives the reader a checklist for running a successful meeting. Users of this text can easily use this information when organizing a meeting in order to make it meaningful. This skills is ideal for the Canadian employee, immigrant or not.

One effective feature of this text is the use of real quotations from immigrants and members of the Canadian workforce; these give advice and opinions from the field. Another helpful feature is the 'Canadian Business Concept.' This appears in all chapters and gives tips and interesting facts about the Canadian business world. For example, page 171 points out that it is not longer necessary to include 'st,' 'nd' or 'rd' after numbers; instead, it is now acceptable to just write the month and the number (e.g. January 1).

Each chapter in *You're Hired...Now What?* is set up in the same way. The first page outlines what will be covered in the chapter, followed by heading for various topics to be discussed. The 'Business Buzzwords' and 'Action Plan' sections come at the end of each chapter. This repetition is an asset for ESL learners as they can be aware of what to expect and where to find the information they are looking for.

Despite its many advantages, *You're Hired...Now What?* is not without its weaknesses. For instance, the 'Business Buzzwords' (or idioms) appear at the end of every chapter, and some words that are 'Canadianisms' in the workplace are provided; however, these are not defined within each chapter. The reader has to go to the glossary at the back of the book to find the

definitions for these words. If the ESL learner is not familiar with using a glossary, these definitions may not be easily located.

Secondly, in the chapter on business etiquette (Chapter 11) Goldman goes into detail regarding company dinners. She goes even so far to explain which utensils are used for what meals and how to locate someone's place setting at a dinner table. I suppose this could be useful advice for some, but I found it a little degrading. Goldman assumes these readers have never been exposed to this type of dining. There are even pictures on how to hold a fork. I felt that perhaps this was slightly unwarranted. Apart from those minor weaknesses, this text is well written.

As an ESL teacher, I would recommend this text to my students. *You're Hired...Now What?* is a strong resource for immigrants in the Canadian workforce. *You're Hired...Now What?* has not been written for the purpose of classroom learning; however, ESL classroom teachers could use Goldman's examples and suggestions as support to their existing classroom material. ❖



Amanda Nowensky has been teaching at Seneca College for the past four years. She is a mentor with Seneca's student success program and has recently created a new course focusing on Essential Skills and working in Canada. She is a graduate of York University and Griffith University, Australia, and is working towards her TESL Certification.