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Calendar

April 21	TESL Hamilton Spring Conference. http://www.teslhw.org/news-and-events.html
April 21	TESL Windson Spring PD workshop. http://www.teslwindsor.com/news/spring-2018-pd-workshop
April 20–21	TESL Saskatchewan. Saskatoon, SK. http://www.teslsask.com/news-and-events/conferences/
April 26–27	TDSB Celebrating Linguistic Diversity Conference. https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/cerll/EVENTS/Conferences/index.html
May 3–5	BCTEAL. Vancouver, BC. http://www.bcteal.org/conferences/2018-annual-conference
May 5	TESL Ottawa. http://www.teslottawa.com/upcoming-events.html
May 5	TESL London. http://www.tesllondon.org/?i=13738&mid=1000&i=335957org/?i=13738&mid=1000&i=335957
May 12	TESL Nova Scotia. https://teslns.com/conference/2018-spring-conference/
May 26	TOSCON18. Toronto, ON. https://toscon18.wordpress.com/
May 30–June 1	Canadian Linguistic Association (ACL/CLA). Toronto, ON. http://cla-acl.ca/appel-2018-call/
May 30–June 1	College Association for Language and Literacy (CALL). Barrie, ON. https://www.callontario.org/upcoming-conference
June 6–9	TESL Canada Conference. Toronto, ON. http://www.teslcanadaconference.ca/
August 23–25	Multidisciplinary Approaches in Language Policy & Planning Conference. Toronto, ON. https://wordpress.oise.utoronto.ca/lpp2017/

EDITOR'S NOTE

The articles in this issue grew from presentations at recent conferences in Ontario, mostly from last fall's TESL Ontario [conference](#), which was held November 2 & 3 at the Toronto Marriott.

Lisa Herrera starts us off with a detailed look at how to write effective CLB-aligned comprehension assessment items for listening and reading within a PBLA framework. She identifies many common traps and provides useful strategies for avoiding them. Using many examples, she points out the uses and misuses of a wide range of item types.

Maria-Lourdes Lira-Gonzales next discusses the current state of the art on corrective feedback on writing and how decisions should be informed by the category of error, learner-specific variables, and other considerations.

Tyson Seburn's contribution relates to how inclusive our lessons and materials are for LGBTQ+ students. He concludes that LGBTQ+ characters, storylines, and imagery should be included alongside the other elements of our classes, but that no special attention should be drawn to them. "LGBTQ+ language is simply included as any other useful language."

One feature of the conference is the poster presentation. I wanted to try including one poster in the magazine, and Donna Pearce very helpfully contributed hers, a fascinating but brief look at an ESL course for Spanish speaking agricultural workers in the Niagara region.

Jane Carwana interviewed Sheila Nicholas about her career and receiving the Distinguished Contribution award. And Amira Elkhateeb interviewed Diane Ramanathan, winner of the Sparks of Excellence award.

If you are presenting this fall, please, get in touch with me about publishing a paper based on your presentation.

Along with these articles, I strongly recommend reading [conference report](#) and the [panel discussions](#) to understand where English teaching in Ontario is headed.

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CONTACT

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WHY I AM HYPE ABOUT TRANSLINGUALISM

By Stephanie Samboo, Sheridan College

Within three years of immigrating to Canada, I was fortunate to be hired in a GTA community college teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP). I enjoyed the camaraderie of my colleagues and students as I progressed in my new job, but I also began to experience uncomfortable incidents which propelled me on the journey towards Translingualism.

Having been born and bred in Singapore, the formal English variety I learned in school was Singapore English, which was essentially based on British English, and the informal variety I spoke at home was Singlish, a melange of English, Mandarin, Hokkien, Malay and Tamil. Therefore, I tend to pronounce words differently from Canadian English and rely heavily on the British lexicon. I was surprised one day when a teacher colleague in the staff room commented that my pronunciation of /deɪtə/ (day-tuh) was incorrect and told me that the correct pronunciation was /dætə/ (dah-tuh). This colleague also recommended I use the word *movie* instead of *film* when discussing the Oscar ceremony. I was embarrassed but stayed silent as I was still new to Canada. This incident made me realize that particular varieties of English are privileged over others in Canada and that I needed to make modifications to my English if I wanted to belong in my adopted country. So, I proceeded to “learn” Canadian English and conscientiously used *trunk* instead of *boot* to refer to the storage space in my car, and began to tap the *t* in the word *party* instead of saying /'par.ti/. I became paranoid and self-conscious about my pronunciation of words, and made a conscious effort to use the Canadian lexicon. Needless to say, I did not feel a sense of belonging in my workplace and in my adopted country.

I continued in this manner working hard to “Canadianize” my English so I could fit in until I was confronted by a student in my EAP Academic Writing class years later while I was teaching at another GTA college. The student was Arab in origin and was upset at the comments I wrote on her essay. I was shocked by her reaction as I thought I was being helpful with my very detailed comments on her paper providing advice on how her writing could better align with Canadian expectations of an academic essay. She told me that she spoke four languages fluently besides English and couldn't understand why her essay was not acceptable. She also mentioned that my comments on her paper made her feel humiliated and stupid.

Suddenly, I had an epiphany! That day in the staff room many years ago came flooding back to me and I knew how she was feeling. I met the student after class and we spent an hour going over her paper. I listened to her rationale on her choice of words, sentence structure

and organization of content. We made a conscious effort to allow her to keep some non-Canadian structures in the essay ensuring that the essay would still be comprehensible to the reader. After that meeting, the student revised her essay and I was pleasantly surprised by the very creative and cogent essay she produced. I did not know then, but I had adopted a Translingual disposition with this student.

From that day onwards, I knew I had to change the way in which I taught writing. I knew that by expecting my students to conform to a “Standard English” variety, I was marginalizing and silencing their multilingual voices. As Mari Matsuda states, “People in power are perceived as speaking normal, unaccented English. Any speech that is different from that constructed norm is called an accent” (as quoted in Lippi-Green, 2012). We tend to silence those accents especially since our current educational system is based on a monolingual system, not a multilingual system.

In 1985, Braj Kachru, a sociolinguist, conceived the three concentric circles of English to represent “the type of spread, the patterns of acquisition and the functional domains in which English is used across cultures and languages” (Kachru, 1985, p.12).

- **The inner circle or *norm-enforcing*** circle represents the traditional bases of English such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Anglophone Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and the United States.
- **The outer circle or *norm-developing*** circle represents countries where English is not the native tongue but for historical reasons (such as colonization) has become the lingua franca: Jamaica, Singapore, Malaysia, Nigeria, Kenya, the Philippines, India, Tanzania, Bangladesh and non-Anglophone Canada and South Africa.
- **The expanding circle or *norm-dependent*** circle represents countries where English plays no historical or governmental role, but is nevertheless widely used as a foreign language: China, Russia, Japan, Korea, Egypt, most of Europe and Indonesia.

(Kachru, 1985)¹

According to David Graddol, an applied linguist, “native speakers “lost their majority in the 1970s” (as cited in Canagarajah, 2006, p.588). Another linguist, David Crystal, predicts conservatively that by 2050, the number of English as an additional or second language speakers will be approximately 30 million more than the “native” speakers (Crystal, 1997). Therefore, I rationalize that we should be exploring ways to value and legitimize our multilingual students’ experiences in the classroom by accepting the different Englishes they bring with them to the classroom.

As a result of these personal experiences, I decided to engage in research which eventually

¹ While Kachru’s model has been valuable in describing how English has spread throughout the world, it has been criticized for defining the circles by geography not proficiency. There are people in the Inner circle who are not native speakers of English, i.e. Gaelic and Welsh speakers in the UK. Furthermore, Canagarajah (2006) notes that the circles are leaking; the boundaries neither contain nor prevent penetration by other Englishes. Hence, we see an increase in the number of ESL teachers that are not from the Inner Circle, literature in English from authors like Chinua Achebe and Anita Desai, and the production of texts on Indian English.

led me to enrol in a PhD program at the University of Waterloo. My research agenda, which is to develop an anti-racist writing pedagogy in the classroom, has guided me towards the discovery of Translingualism in the form of Translingual Theory, Practice, and Pedagogy.

Translingual Theory

Translingual Theory argues for:

- 1) honoring the power of all language users to shape language to specific ends;
- 2) recognizing the linguistic heterogeneity of all users of language both in the United States and globally;
- 3) directly confronting English monolingualist expectations by researching and teaching how writers can work with and against, not simply within, those expectations.

(Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011, p. 305).

Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur claim that Translingual Theory “sees difference in language not as a barrier to overcome or as a problem to manage, but as a resource for producing meaning in writing, speaking, reading, and listening” (p.303). Therefore, the Translingual Approach to language learning promotes equity among language users as no one language variety is privileged over another, but all varieties are equally valued. Moreover, Suresh Canagarajah states that

the term translingual enables a consideration of communicative competence as not restricted to predefined meanings of individual languages, but the ability to merge different language resources in situated interactions for new meaning construction...the term helps us go beyond the dichotomy mono/multi or uni/pluri. These binaries give the impression that cross language relations and practices matter only to a specific group of people, i.e. those considered multilingual. But translingualism is fundamental to acts of communication and relevant for all of us. Native speakers of English and monolinguals as well.

(Canagarajah, 2013, p.1–2)

As such, the Translingual Approach is beyond the additive notion of multilingualism because it allows individuals to marshal resources across their rich linguistic repertoires to make meaning, not only for language users but also creators. Importance is not placed solely on text production, but on text processing too.

Translingual Practice

Many of us are engaged in Translingual Practice whether consciously or unconsciously in the form of codemeshing. According to Vershawn Young, codemeshing is “multidialectalism

and plurilingualism in one speech act, in one paper... Codemeshing blends dialects, international languages, local idioms, chat-room lingo, and the rhetorical styles of various ethnic and cultural groups in both formal and informal speech acts” (Young, 2010, p. 67). Young claims that codemeshing empowers our students who come from a plethora of ethnicities and cultures and recognizes their voices. Codemeshing advocates changing the current paradigm of using one standard, monolingual system of language. He demonstrates that even high-profile public figures codemesh: Republican Senator, Chuck Grassley; and Harvard President, Lawrence Summers. Codemeshing is a natural and daily phenomenon of language use and is not confined only to non-native speakers of English because even native speakers codemesh by mixing different language varieties and codes in one speech act. Codemeshing has been a phenomenon in music for centuries. The fusion of ragtime and blues gave birth to jazz music; and blues, rhythm and blues, and country gave rise to rock and roll music. The genesis of new music is possible if we embrace change, are open to differences and are willing to create new sounds. Similarly, if we believe that the nature of language is neither static nor discrete, but dynamic and negotiated, then every interaction creates new meaning through negotiation between the interlocutors.

Translingual Pedagogy

If Translingual Practice is a common occurrence, how do we transform this practice into Translingual Pedagogy in the classroom? First and foremost, teachers should embrace a Translingual Disposition which Jerry Lee and Christopher Jenks propose as

having a general openness toward language and language differences... [This] allows individuals to move beyond preconceived, limited notions of standardness and correctness, and it therefore facilitates interactions involving different Englishes... [Given] the historical marginalization of ‘nonstandard’ varieties and dialects of English in various social and institutional contexts, translingual dispositions are essential for all users of English in a globalized society, regardless of whether they are ‘native’ or ‘nonnative’ speakers of English. (Lee & Jenks, 2016, p. 319).

If we embrace language differences, it is incumbent on us as teachers to re-evaluate the many dichotomies that exist in language acquisition such as grammar versus pragmatics, determinism versus agency, individual versus community, purity versus hybridity, fixity versus fluidity, cognition versus context, and monolingual versus multilingual (Canagarajah, 2007, pp. 923–924).

In a nutshell, Canagarajah believes that language acquisition should be an adaptive, practice-based and an emergent model, not a theoretical model based on the acquisition of static prefabricated structures. Language acquisition does not only occur individually and cognitively, but within a community where language users can negotiate meanings and co-construct new meanings with other interlocutors within a context. As more and more World

Englishes come into existence, language acquisition should be studied in heterogeneous, multilingual settings from an insider perspective (Canagarajah, 2007).

One concrete way of practising Translingual Pedagogy in the classroom is in error-correction. As teachers, do we read what is on the page or what ought to be on the page? We often look at a piece of writing through the lens of someone who is the expert on grammar rules and conventions. We tend to judge the piece of writing by our own standards, perceptions and ideologies of what is correct. If we adopt a Translingual Approach towards language learning/teaching, which celebrates linguistic differences and values performative competence, we should be prepared to be open to negotiation with the student on words and ideas on the page. Below are two examples of student writing from Aimee Krall-Lanoue (2013).

Example 1 (verb tense): “I knew I felt bad but I want him to feel worse.”

Example 2 (vocabulary): “The overview of my weak Monday was one of my tired days.”

In Example 1, our first instinct is to cross out “want” and replace with “wanted. However, perhaps the student continues to want him to feel bad about it- the feelings she has are not finished. Similarly, in Example 2, our inclination would be to cross out “weak” and replace with “week” and perhaps insert a colon before “Monday” which would indicate that “Monday was one of my tired days” provides an overview of his week. But the student could have meant that Monday was a particularly “puny” day (Krall-Lanoue, 2013, p. 230). The suggestion is not that there may not be any eventual corrections to be made in both these instances, but “the translingual approach is about negotiating language difference and creating shared resources, not editing student writing” (p. 231). If we engaged in discussion with our students prior to marking these as errors, we would have transformed correction into negotiation. According to Krall-Lanoue, “*Error* is not miscommunication; it is not breaking a rule. Instead *error* is those items one or both members of the interaction refuse to negotiate- that is when one or more speakers, writers, readers refuse to engage, participate. This is the only true way an *error* can occur” (2013, p. 233). What we consider as a grammatical or lexical error could be the choice that students make in adapting the underlying linguistic structure of their mother-tongue in writing their second language.

Benefits of a Translingual Approach in the Classroom

Adopting a Translingual Approach in our classrooms has a positive impact on student engagement and confidence levels. Y’Shanda Young-Rivera conducted a research study in a Grade 4/5 class and a Grade 8 class allowing students to engage in codemeshing and found that the students felt

free to write and express themselves, using words of their own choosing... had no

inhibitions and weren't fearful that what they wrote would be wrong....and they felt empowered, so much so that I even think some of them were deliberately using their dialect speech patterns, just because they could. (Young, Barrett, Young-Rivera & Lovejoy, 2014, p.111)

I can personally attest to these observations and findings because in the winter 2017 semester I was enrolled in a graduate course at the University of Waterloo in which the Professor adopted a Translingual Approach in his class design and facilitation. I was allowed to codemesh my assignments and give presentations using Singlish, Malay and Academic English. As a result, I felt so empowered that I invested a lot of time and effort in my work. I focused on what I had to say, not how I had to say it which reduced the stress of writing a paper. I felt validated and valued, which rendered me capable of achieving my highest grade in a course ever in my graduate school career. I will never forget what I learned in that course or how the Professor made me feel: respected.

Someone once said that “sometimes it takes a wrong turn to get you to the right path.” If I had known then what I know now about Translingualism and its tenets on accepting and celebrating language differences, I would have had the courage and the words to stand up to my colleague in the staff room that day. I would not have made my Arab student feel marginalized through my lack of sensitivity to her “errors” but I would have initiated a conversation to understand the rationale behind her choices before assessing her paper. However, I now know better, which is why I advocate for Translingualism and why I am so hype about it.

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WRITING EFFECTIVE CLB-ALIGNED COMPREHENSION ITEMS¹

By Lisa Herrera, Consultant

“Understand that there is always one clearly best answer. My goal is not to trick students or require them to make difficult judgments about two options that are nearly equally correct. My goal is to design questions that students who understand will answer correctly and students who do not understand will answer incorrectly.”

John A. Johnson (in Clay, 2001)

In a report completed for the Canadian government, Makosky (2008) indicated that, at the time of writing, exit test results from LINC programs across the country were “deemed to be subjective/situational and not comparable to any common standard,” with the result that “exit rating and feedback to newcomers may be inconsistent and the results not as portable as newcomers, instructors and program managers would like” (p. 2). Because of the lack of transparent, reliable outcomes, LINC’s funder, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (now Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada), determined that a consistent standard of exit assessment needed to be developed for the national language program. Thus in 2014, after years of development and piloting, Portfolio-Based Language Assessment, or PBLA, was introduced to LINC. Since that time, Regional Coaches have certified four cohorts of Lead Instructors to train and guide over 2,000 classroom instructors in PBLA implementation.

There is a lot to learn with PBLA, especially for teachers with no formal instruction in assessment. While PBLA training is comprehensive so that teachers understand the methodology and practices to apply in the classroom, there are some specific skills for designing assessments that PBLA implementation workshops cannot address in depth. One of them is how to write effective CLB-aligned comprehension question or other assessment items to assess listening and reading.

It’s not hard to go wrong in writing items to check for understanding of text. Through various roles guiding and supporting teachers in LINC, patterns with writing ineffective comprehension items have emerged. These are common mistakes:

1 This article is based on a workshop at the 2017 TESL Canada Conference.

1. Items do not check for CLB criteria.

All or most items check for details only.

There are assumptions of understanding (e.g. if students can find a detail, they must understand layout).

Criteria that are harder to write items for, such as understanding of implied meaning, are often not checked for in assessment, even when key to a task or level.

2. Items do not focus on comprehension of text.

Items ask for background knowledge of the topic, not what is in the text.

Items don't demonstrate what students know (e.g. true/false questions where the answer is false and a correct answer is not required to be given).

Items focus on understanding of grammatical elements such as vocabulary, at the expense of important textual and pragmatic elements.

Items give points for productive skills (skills in writing a response) which are irrelevant to checking for comprehension.

3. Items do not check for appropriate levels of comprehension (levels identified in Holmes, Habke & Schmuck, 2017).

4. The wording of the items is confusing or exceeds the learners' CLB level.

Note that if the wording of the question is too complex, a teacher won't know if students couldn't answer a question because they didn't understand the text they were listening to or reading, or because they didn't understand the comprehension question.

To avoid these problems and write more effective comprehension items that clearly check for CLB criteria, teachers need to keep in mind what is to be accomplished with classroom-based assessment. As illustrated by the opening quote, PBLA assessment is NOT trying to

- Challenge or test students' limits,
- Trick students or trip them up,
- Divide students into those passing and failing, or
- Measure abilities against others in the class.

Such outcomes may be part of testing in academic courses or professional/trades training, but they are not the goal of Portfolio-Based Language Assessment. PBLA is simply trying to gauge if learners can accomplish necessary tasks in the real world, at the proficiency indicated in the CLB document for the level. No more, but also no less. Teachers need to check for the key indicators associated with the task at the level, in order to reliably say that learners meet the CLB standard. To achieve this, comprehension items should clearly reflect the indicators and be simple and direct. Higher CLB levels do not need more complicated items or task types. Higher CLB levels are measured by the wider and deeper

expectations in the Indicators of Ability, and demonstration of understanding of longer and more complex text, not the difficulty of the items. For example, if the criterion is to “Identify purpose,” the question should be “What is the purpose of the reading/listening text (i.e. the brochure/advertising commercial)?” Remember learners at all levels should have been skill-building on identifying and understanding the components of the task well before encountering criteria in an assessment, so such a question should not be new.

Choosing Question or Task Types to Check for Comprehension

It helps to be aware of different types of question or task types so that an appropriate type can be chosen for each objective and cognitive level being assessed (Jacobs, 2004; Writing Effective Questions, n.d.) with the Indicators of Ability.

Type 1: Demonstrate/show me/respond appropriately

For example:

- Respond appropriately in conversation to show recognition of greetings, introductions, requests, etc.
- Draw a line on a map to demonstrate following instructions
- Point to a product in a flyer to show understanding of details

This type of task, which mostly demonstrates literal comprehension, is good for indicators requiring physical or verbal responses. Remember just responding appropriately in a conversation is not necessarily enough to ensure learners are meeting all the relevant CLB criteria for the task and level. For example, just responding to a co-worker’s message to say that the learner will switch a shift does not indicate what specifically has been understood about any implied meanings or factual details in the message. Additional comprehension items or tasks are generally needed.

Type 2: Matching or sequencing

For assessment, matching must reflect only what is in the text. Matching topic words to pictures or definitions becomes a vocabulary test, which is not part of assessing ability to complete a real world task. Even good matching items take learners’ focus away from comprehending the text to instead sorting the correct answers provided. For that reason, matching is best used for skill-building rather than assessment.

For sequencing items such as ordering the steps of instructions (Interpretive comprehension), be careful to count one whole sequence as one question only, to reflect that identifying or interpreting sequence markers is only one Indicator of Ability. Giving points for individual steps puts emphasis on the score rather than on the criteria where it should be. If learners get an early step out of order, the score could be very low, but one mistake does not necessarily mean the learners cannot sequence.

Type 3: True/False

True/false questions are very difficult to write in a way that both gives clear information about what a learner knows and are not too easy or too difficult to answer. For example, if “false” is the correct answer, the teacher won’t know if students know the information, only that they know what is *not* the information. As well, teachers often use negatives to make statements false, such as “The Airporter doesn’t always go to the Convention Centre.” (Question based on *CLB Support Kit Reading Document G*). This can be confusing wording as students then need to unravel the negatives: is the negative statement the positive/true answer, or is the negative statement the negative/false answer? That said, written well, true/false questions can be a good check for details or simple concepts.

Tips for writing true/false questions (Clay, 2001; Jacobs, 2004; Writing Effective Questions n.d.).

- Write a series of true statements, then change slightly more than half to false as students usually answer “true” if guessing (Jacobs, 2004, p. 13).
- Use common mistakes, such as confusing main idea with purpose, or identifying a literal instead of an implied meaning, as statements where the answer is false.
- Only have one idea in each statement.
- Don’t use qualifiers that create ambiguity such as *all*, *none*, *never*, *sometimes*, *generally* or *often*.
- The statement should be absolutely true or absolutely false, not arguable.
- If the answer is false, have learners correct it to be sure of what they know.
- Have students circle T or F instead of writing so there is no question about handwriting.

Type 4: Fill-in-the-blank/completion/fill in a chart

Completion items or filling in a chart are great for checking facts or details, when learners need to listen and recall or scan and copy (Literal comprehension). A bank of answers/options to select from should be avoided because it can reduce the task to a matching exercise rather than keeping the focus on the reading or listening text.

Type 5: Short response

Short-response items are good for checking understanding of single ideas and clear right or wrong responses demonstrating interpretive comprehension. Usually a short response is a word, phrase, or one or two sentences only. Short-response items can be used for interpretive comprehension items such as identifying purpose, main idea, etc. in higher CLB levels where learners can express themselves easily in a few words or a single sentence. Remember, short-response items should have clearly right or wrong responses. If a factual response is required, don’t use opinion stems such as *Do you think* because an opinion cannot be wrong!

Type 6: Long response (“essay question”)

Long-response items are very good for checking upper levels of comprehension (Applied) when learners need to reference the text in their response with explanations, examples, an opinion, or an analysis.

For both short and long response, as well as completion items, be sure to not mark production skills: grammar, mechanics, etc. Remember we are only checking comprehension with a listening or reading assessment, not how well learners express ideas or spell. Writing elements should only be given points or commented upon in writing assessments.

Type 7: Multiple choice

Multiple choice questions are good for concepts when learners will likely have trouble articulating a reply but know the answer and can recognize it if they see it. Multiple choice is great for all the Interpretive comprehension criteria such as identify purpose, layout, main idea, register, or implied meanings, especially at lower levels.

Tips for Writing Multiple Choice Questions (Clay, 2001; How to Write Good Test Questions 2015; Jacobs, 2004; Piontek, 2008; Writing Effective Questions. n.d.).

- Provide one correct option and two or three good distractors. Don't include throw-away choices as this focuses learners on test-taking strategies instead of demonstrating comprehension.
- Use common mistakes that students make, such as identifying key information instead of the main idea, as distractors.
- Avoid “all of the above” and “none of the above” as they often do not demonstrate what students know. When included, they are usually the correct choice which learners can guess! (Jacobs, 2004)
- Avoid negatives in the stem! If you MUST use a negative, capitalize or underline it.
- Avoid qualifiers that can make questions ambiguous like *usually, always, often, etc.*
- Write all the options to be the same length, and use similar phrasal structure in the options to minimize guessing.
- State items so there can be only one interpretation of meaning. The correct option should not depend on how one interprets the question and should not be arguable.

Applying to Assessment

Most LINC teachers have limited time to find appropriate listening and reading texts for their class level and to create assessment tasks. Gaining more familiarity with the types of comprehension items and tasks, how they can be best utilized to reveal ability for different indicators, and tips to make each type most efficient when applied should make the process of creating receptive assessments flow more smoothly. Most importantly, learners should

have less trouble demonstrating their ability to meet the CLB standard for the task and level.

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Appendix

Here are some examples of questions checking for ability on indicators for CLB 2,4, 6 and 7 learners using material from the *CLB Support Kit*.

Level 1-Literal comprehension

CLB Support Kit Listening Exemplar Video Q: CLB 2-Interacting With Others

CLB 2 greeting (listening) – Identify expressions

Q: Valerie shows she is happy. She says _____.- **fill-in-the-blank**

CLB 2 greeting (listening) – Identify common courtesy phrases

Q: Valerie invites Ramona inside. She says _____.-
fill-in-the-blank

(Note the CLB 2 questions could be posed orally, to remove the interference of reading and writing for listening comprehension questions.)

CLB Support Kit Listening Exemplar K: CLB 6- Interacting With Others

CLB 6 message (listening) – Identify details

Q: Where is Riyadh going on the weekend? – **short response**

Q: What evening is best to get together? – **short response**

L2-Interpretive comprehension

CLB Support Kit Reading Document G, page 143: CLB 4-Getting Things Done

CLB 4 schedule (reading) - Identify layout

Q: What part of the schedule shows you shuttle stops? – **short response**

Q: Describe how you find the time to catch the shuttle. Write 3 or 4 steps. –
short response

CLB 4 schedule (reading) - Identify purpose

Q: What is the purpose of this schedule? – **multiple choice**

- A. To give information about domestic and international terminals
- B. To provide names of hotels downtown where you can stay
- C. To give information about times and places to catch a shuttle

D. To show the airport shuttle service is very busy

CLB Support Kit Listening Exemplar K: CLB 6- Interacting With Others

CLB 6 message (listening) – Identify formal and casual style and register

Q: What style is the message? – **multiple choice**

- A. Static - Speech
- B. Formal - Businesslike
- C. Casual - Friendly
- D. Intimate – Close

CLB 6 message (listening) – Identify situation and relationship between speakers

Q: What is the relationship between Jabar and Riyad? – **multiple choice**

- A. Family
- B. Friends
- C. Co-workers
- D. Acquaintances

CLB Support Kit Reading Text H, page 164: CLB 7-Getting Things Done

CLB 7 memo (reading) - Identify implied meaning

Q: The letter says: “Hertzogg Building management has made it clear that there will be no exceptions to these regulations under any circumstances.” What is implied? – **multiple choice**

- A. There will be no reasons accepted for violating a regulation.
- B. Management told staff about the regulations before.
- C. There will be a consequence if a staff member violates a regulation.
- D. Management allowed some exceptions to the regulations before.

CLB 7 memo (reading) - Find and integrate information

Q: Which building are staff required to sign in and sign out of? – **short response**

Q: When can staff use priority pass keys and authorized security codes to enter Hertzogg Building? – **short response**

Level 3-Applied comprehension

(Italics in the indicator indicate additions to extend from L2-Interpretive to L3-Applied)

CLB Support Kit Reading Document G, page 143: CLB 4-Getting Things Done

CLB 4 schedule (reading) – Identify information *to make a choice*

Your flight is leaving at 7 pm from Terminal 2. You need to be at the airport at least 1 hour before the flight. You are staying at Garden Inn. What time will you catch the shuttle? –

short response

CLB Support Kit Listening Exemplar K: CLB 6- Interacting With Others

CLB 6 message (listening) – Identify feelings *and apply to own situation*

How does Riyadh feel about missing the hockey game. How do you know? If you got this message from Riyadh, how would you reply? – **long response**

CLB Support Kit Reading Text H, page 164: CLB 7-Getting Things Done

CLB 7 memo (reading) – Identify mood and attitude *and give opinion*

Q: What is the mood and attitude of this letter? How do you know? Do you think it is an appropriate tone for a letter from a Manager to employees? Why do you think that? – **long response**

TO CORRECT OR NOT CORRECT? THAT IS NOT THE QUESTION¹

By Maria-Lourdes Lira-Gonzales, University of Quebec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue

For decades, writing and writing instruction have often been viewed from a *learning-to-write* perspective; within this perspective, writing should be taught when students' second language (L2) development is sufficiently settled. Recent research, however, shows that writing has a major role in promoting L2 development; from this *writing-to-learn* perspective, writing is seen as a tool for language learning (Manchón, 2011) that allows L2 learners to integrate new knowledge, test hypotheses, and automatize knowledge (Williams, 2012). Also, within this perspective corrective feedback (CF) provided by teachers facilitates language learning (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012).

Corrective feedback is defined as any indication to the learners that their use of the target language is incorrect (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). In writing, CF is concerned with incorrect grammatical or lexical use of the target language, and, it is distinct from feedback on content, which refers to any comment, suggestion, question, or request for clarification pertaining to either the ideas, organization, style, or rhetorical structure of the text.

There are two major types of written corrective feedback: direct CF and indirect CF. Direct CF implies the teacher's provision of the correct form or structure and may take various forms, including crossing out a superfluous word or phrase, writing the correct form above or in the margin of the error, etc. Indirect CF, on the other hand, refers to the teacher's indication that an error has been made without providing the correct form.

Additionally, Ferris Ellis (2006 p.98) proposed the following strategies for providing CF:

Metalinguistic CF: The teacher provides some kind of metalinguistic clue as to the nature of the error. This can be done either by using an error code (teacher writes codes in the margin. e.g. *ww* : wrong word), or, by providing a brief grammatical description (teacher numbers errors in text and writes a grammatical description for each numbered error at the bottom of the text).

- The focus of the feedback: This concerns whether the teacher attempts to correct all (or most) of the students' errors or selects one or two specific types of errors to correct.

¹ This article is based on a joint symposium given by the Canadian Association of Language Assessment at TESL Canada 2017 entitled "Language Assessment".

- **Electronic feedback:** The teacher indicates an error and provides a hyperlink to a concordance file that provides examples of correct usage.
- **Reformulation:** This consists of a native speaker's reworking of the students' text to make the language seem as native-like as possible while keeping the content of the original intact.

To correct or not correct?

Written corrective feedback has been theoretically and empirically controversial. In several reports Truscott (2007 among others), claimed that error correction in English as a second language writing programs should be abandoned because it is ineffective and harmful. Truscott's provocative view about corrective feedback led to many experimental and quasi-experimental studies that have been designed to assess the effectiveness of written CF and to compare the effects of two specific CF categories, namely direct CF and indirect CF. For example, a meta-analysis of 22 experimental or quasi-experimental studies concerning the efficacy of written CF (Kang & Han, 2015) showed that there is not a clear-cut difference between the efficacy of indirect and direct feedback.

In terms of descriptive studies, the findings of research carried out in a remote region in Quebec (Lira-Gonzales, to appear) shows that both indirect correction strategies (identifying the errors by underlining, highlighting or using different colours) and direct correction strategies (rewriting the form accurately) were the preferred CF strategies of the primary-level L2 teachers participating in this study. Whereas, the L2 teachers in another study (Guénnette & Lyster, 2013) showed a preference for direct corrections to ensure that their students benefit from the CF provided because "it provides a model of what is accurate in the L2" (p. 147).

To date there have been no available empirical studies directly investigating the relationship between the proficiency level and the effects of different types of feedback (Kang & Han, 2015), nor consensus regarding which type of CF is more effective. Actually, both indirect and direct CF present potential drawbacks that need to be considered. For example, most indirect CF strategies, such as the mentioned above (identifying the errors by underlining, highlighting or using different colours), tell some learners nothing about the nature and cause of the errors or what is needed for an accurate modification. In addition, direct CF strategies, such as rewriting the form accurately, do not help learners to understand the underlying linguistic system (Bitchener & Ferris, 2010).

Certain researchers have stated that indirect CF is more likely to have long-term positive effects on students' accuracy since it requires learners to self-discover the correct forms (Li, 2010). Others, have maintained that there are several cases in which teachers should provide more direct feedback on errors. Ferris (2002), for example, has affirmed that learners benefit more from direct correction when they are at the beginning level of proficiency, when they do not have enough linguistic knowledge to self-correct.

Since language teachers spend much of their time providing corrective feedback on students' writing in hope of helping them improve grammatical accuracy (Brown, 2012) *To correct or not correct? Is not the question.* The question is how to provide corrective feedback effectively.

In that sense, it is important to understand corrective feedback as a multi-dimensional practice, and therefore teachers need to consider a variety of factors when providing written feedback (Kormos, 2012; Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum, & Wolfersberger, 2010) such as the following:

- Category of error: Syntax, spelling or vocabulary.
- Learner-specific variables: Motivation, aptitude, skill level, learning disabilities, age, perceptions, past experiences, beliefs, attitudes, learning styles, time available for responding to feedback, and formal knowledge of grammar.
- Contextual variables
- Situational variables: Factors in the instructional context (curriculum guidelines and objectives, class sizes, teacher workload, and frequency of class meetings).
- Teacher variables: Personality, motivations, beliefs, priorities, teaching philosophies, training, competencies, teaching experience, and relationship with students.
- Methodological variables: Techniques and resources that teachers use to develop sensitivity to learner variables (diagnostic writing assignments to assess needs, student surveys, and drawing on the experience of colleagues).

These same variables are believed to influence students' ability to revise their own texts, that is, to understand the corrective feedback provided by the teacher, consider it, and integrate this feedback in the text revision process (Ammar, Daigle, & Lefrançois, 2016).

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LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVITY IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: ATTITUDES AND CONSIDERATIONS

By Tyson Seburn, University of Toronto

Acknowledgement that a struggle exists for members of any particular minority group is the easy part. How often do we see a shared news report about an injustice and think to ourselves, “That’s awful. Something should be done,” so we like the post on Facebook or maybe even share it with our friends and followers? I imagine that all of us may fall into this “slacktivism” category here and there. Going beyond this initial step can be difficult. It makes many uncomfortable. After all, action can disrupt of our way of doing things even if we know this way may not contribute to needed change for the better.

As language teachers, a tenuous line for us to navigate is drawn between learners from varying backgrounds/belief systems and the divergent attitudes they can encounter in their learning contexts. In teacher training programs, at least in my experience, trainees are often advised to remain neutral, to allow discussion to emerge and be negotiated between the learners however it may; our role only facilitates appropriate language use. We aim for safe spaces where learners can err, voices can be heard, and teachers encourage dialogue through English without judgment. Despite these intentions, we may produce the opposite effect, particularly when we make assumptions about the makeup of our class and our role within it. One such instance worth examining is the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community, particularly within a Canadian ESL classroom context. Is it our responsibility to consider including LGBTQ+ in our materials? If so, how do we approach LGBTQ+ topics and narratives in an inclusive manner? In a practical sense?

To answer these questions, it makes sense to first examine our acknowledgment of the struggle that exists for LGBTQ+ in English language teaching (ELT) and learning. First, is there a struggle and what is it? Second, why does it exist and what are the contributing attitudes that have created it? In Canada and several other countries throughout the world, LGBTQ+ rights and freedoms have progressed both socially and legally in the last several years (look at the increasing number of countries who have legalised same-sex marriage lately). I’d argue, however, that this is not reflected well in the classroom materials we are so familiar with and never has been.

Quite some time ago, Scott Thornbury explained that in ELT coursebook materials, being gay is invisible, that gay characters “are nowhere to be found. They are still firmly in the coursebook closet. Coursebook people are never gay ... coursebook people live with their families, on their own or with their opposite-sex partners. Coursebook family trees and

family photos are rigorously heterosexual” (1999, p. 15). He goes on to note that even well-known gay celebrities aren’t acknowledged as so, but stripped of their personal lives in favour of accomplishments only. It’s interesting to recognise here, however, that the same is not always true of heterosexual counterparts, as mentions of their husbands, wives, or children do tend to be interwoven into the information listed on the page.

One might think that in the last two decades, inclusion of LGBTQ+ narratives in published ELT materials may have improved. While I make no claim to have done a thorough review of every published material available, through a combination of conference talks I’ve attended and articles I’ve read (see References and selected literature), as well as through my own informal research and experience over the last 20 years in this profession, it has become obvious that representations of LGBTQ+ tend to fall into one of three categories, even today (Seburn, 2012):

- a. *There are no explicitly LGBTQ+ images or narratives included throughout the materials.*

Publishers, at least those not considered “niche”, tend to follow a general guideline of avoiding topics or issues that could in any way alienate any market from sales (see PARSNIPS and other topics often avoided, in Gray, 2002, p. 159). While this may also explain why there are very few Canadian-specific coursebooks (why cater to such a small market?), it spreads over to a broader section of people, such as the LGBTQ+ community. These are not comparable populations to exclude. I suggest that there is a significant difference between ignoring Canadian street names or spelling choices compared to not representing an already marginalised group.

- b. *Images of LGBTQ+ are as close to the heteronormative expectation as possible.*

When an image that could arguably be of a same-sex couple does appear alongside a text or activity, there is no explicit mention of LGBTQ+ language and thus the image itself remains in that unclear relationship category. Are the two men sitting on a park bench partners? Are the two women shopping together partners? Nothing about accompanying texts or activities suggests one way or the other, but given the heteronormative history of ELT materials, one largely assumes that they are merely friends or roommates. Even if there is some identifying behaviour (A hug? Holding hands? A kiss?), the people are as clean-cut and straight-looking as they could be.

- c. *The images and stories of LGBTQ+ are marginalised into one self-contained unit, often focused on LGBTQ as a topic.*

Rarely in coursebooks as a genre, but more often in discussion-starter teacher resources or instructor-sourced supplemental materials, LGBTQ+ inclusion is condensed to a particular lesson or “hot issue” to be debated in some form. While the aforementioned (a) invisibility or (b) sanitising most obviously contribute to the lack of inclusivity, this (c) marginalising may almost be the most problematic for our LGBTQ+ learners (Seburn, 2017).

Some might wonder if LGBTQ+ inclusion (or lack thereof) is a reflection of attitudes towards it by people within our profession: schools and organisations, publishers, teachers,

materials writers, or learners themselves. A few examples from these various stakeholders below may represent commonly-expressed, yet thought-provoking views. Judge for yourself. *NB: Where requested or to focus on content over identity, I've anonymized or paraphrased some comments.*

Organisation attitudes

“Many LGBTQ+ newcomers come from countries where they have faced overt discrimination, violence and persecution as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Research shows the importance of practicing cultural competence to effectively serve LGBTQ+ newcomers. This can be facilitated with awareness of ...values held about sexuality and gender roles in the newcomers' homelands ... and our own values and assumptions on LGBTQ+ issues, and of how these might affect our service impact.”

SettlementATWORK.org is a companion site to Settlement.org, which is funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada.

Publisher attitudes

“All learning involves first identifying (proto-) typical examples of a behaviour, and only later accommodating more marginal phenomena. Hence the need to start with exemplars of the ‘norm’: e.g. white, middle-class, heterosexual family structures, before engaging with the ‘exceptions’.”

Anonymous Publisher, IATEFL 2012

“I feel that too much blame is left at the publishers' doors in this sort of debate, but the sad truth is that teachers and institutions are also complicit. Often authors and publishers *do* push the envelope, and are rewarded by poor sales.”

Marcos Benevides, EFL teacher / author, a comment appearing on Thornbury, 2013

Teacher attitudes

“I guess you have to weigh the costs and benefits of including LGBTQ images and references. Inclusion might go a long way toward ‘un-strange-ning’...the issues, but at the same time, inclusion will undoubtedly open the issues, bringing out all of that negative propaganda that I simply don't want to deal with in my language class.”

Anonymous Canadian ESL teacher, a comment appearing on Seburn, 2012

“This is not about having a socio-political agenda in the classroom but how essential it is to define for students the social boundaries of acceptability in Canada, put simply, what is up

for debate in Canada and what is not. ... Many lessons are learned by students, not in the actual content, but in how the lesson is framed.”

Shaw, 2013, in TESL Ontario Contact

“Most teachers have either forgot about [LGBTQ] altogether because it stopped being the ‘it’ issue in education, or they’ve assigned specific lessons to it, making it a discussion topic. That’s not changing any norms then, is it? I think it needs to be more than that, and teachers need to make it part of ...life.”

Delia C., a comment appearing on Seburn, 2012

“Teachers’ responses implied that they would feel more comfortable and inclined to address gay and lesbian issues if they were incorporated within the official curriculum. Thus, ESL and EFL educators clearly still hold anxieties toward addressing matters relating to sexual identity.”

Laurion, 2017, reporting on a study conducted by Evripidou and Çavuşoğlu, 2015

“When you’re an English teacher [at a private academy overseas]...you’re supposed to be teaching conversational English and the culture you’re from. I can’t completely do this because I work in a repressed culture. It makes standing up for what you think is right difficult. At this point I value job security over defending gay rights... .”

Brian, an ESL teacher in Laurion, 2017

“In a previous edition [of one particular coursebook used in Japan] it included a passage in which a young man talked about his gay parents... . It wasn’t heavy-handed at all, and in fact invited fair debate from all sides. Sadly, the next edition saw these two units replaced by others due to teachers complaining.”

Marcos Benevides, EFL teacher / author, a comment appearing on Thornbury, 2013

Materials writers’ attitudes

“The other problem I found when writing more critical material ... that such material can become ... ‘too earnest’. Put in the hands of an inexperienced teacher this becomes even more a case of otherizing (e.g. ‘now class, today we are going to learn about POOR people’). Not to say it isn’t important, but I think it’s very difficult to do it well.”

Lindsay Clandfield, Coursebook author, a comment appearing on Thornbury, 2013

“I don’t think about [LGBTQ+] as an issue to consciously highlight in class because that would be singling gay people out as an issue to be discussed. If it comes up, then fine, I treat it the same as any other topic.”

Julie Moore, UK freelance writer, a comment appearing on Seburn, 2012

“It IS the teacher’s job to mould and interrogate the content so that it reflects something of the lives in the classroom – or maybe it would be better to have no coursebook at all!!!”

Jeremy Harmer, Coursebook author, a comment appearing on Thornbury, 2013

LGBTQ+ student attitudes

“Every day we have to make a sentence and in this sentence, everyone uses boyfriend if you are women and girlfriend if you are a boy, and I think if you say something like, ‘I broke up with my girlfriend’, I think maybe the other students or maybe the teacher are going to correct my English, ‘No, you are not going to break up with your girlfriend, you broke up with your boyfriend.’ So I always made sentences [...] heterosexual...”

Sayo, a lesbian student in San Francisco, in Kappra & Vandrick, 2006

“I was surprised, I thought [my young classmates] were more open-minded, they were very homophobic. I arrived and they were joking about gay people. They said that this city is full of gays, especially the boys, as usual. ... I was very angry...The teacher...did not say anything. She smiled. I can’t say she agreed with that, but she didn’t say, you don’t have to say that.”

Marcelo, a gay student in San Francisco, in Kappra & Vandrick, 2006

On teacher training and PD

Within professional development, I have examined the conference programmes of TESL Canada Conference, TESL Ontario Conference, and IATEFL Conferences between 2012-2017 and found only five talks by title or abstract that clearly indicated LGBTQ+ in any form (including my recent talk at TESL Ontario Conference last November, from which this article arose). I attended three of these sessions and they were highly popular in terms of attendance and ensuing discussion. Mine, on the other hand, was drowned out by the popularity of PBLA sessions. With apparent interest in how to incorporate LGBTQ+ sensitively, it begs the questions of why there are so few related sessions and then obviously, what conclusions can be drawn for the classroom itself.

Considerations within the classroom itself

What happens now? Perhaps LGBTQ+ inclusion is not being discussed enough to bother making a difference. Perhaps there are too many restrictions placed upon materials creation that bring the conversation and action to a halt. Perhaps another practical matter is perceived by teachers to be more pressing to address. While these are all considerations, learners are our priority when selecting, creating, or supplementing classroom materials. Statistics alone suggest that a member of the LGBTQ+ community has, is, or will be one of our learners. With these students in mind, I propose we ask ourselves two simple questions as we prepare our materials.

Consideration 1: Does the lack of LGBTQ+ images, stories, or vocabulary reflect the make-up of our society?

It can be challenging—not impossible—for anyone who is not part of a marginalized group to understand how much of an outsider and invisible person you can feel when no images, stories, or activities you encounter include anyone like you. It can cause you to question your value, make you feel as though you don't belong, and create a space where your voice feels unheard. It can increase hesitance to be yourself in your new language. Just as we might take a language class ourselves to help us shed light on learner struggles, it might resonate if you put yourself in LGBTQ+ learners' shoes, too. For example, if you identify as Caucasian and heterosexual, imagine all classroom materials—videos, stories, activities, and texts—involve only gay Asian men. It only depicts *their* successes, *their* concerns, and *their* relationships. It introduces language common only to gay Asian men. The thought of such a coursebook seems preposterous, perhaps. There is no society made up of only gay Asian men. You're right; it probably wouldn't happen. Of course, Canada is not made up of only Caucasian heterosexual people either. Beyond this question, consider how a teacher's avoidance of LGBTQ+ may fail to prepare other students for interacting within our society appropriately.

Consideration 2: Should LGBTQ+ issues be discussed as their own topic?

The underlying issue with creating a unit on same-sex marriage, for example, is that doing so perpetuates the heteronormative narrative that it's an abnormal, self-contained topic that can be used once to stimulate conversation and then discarded. When one's rights are discussed (or even conclusions made about them) by a group outside the community, it makes these rights appear to be against the norm, not simply part of everyday life. Especially when in the Canadian context LGBTQ+ legally are regarded no differently than anyone else for the most part, separating LGBTQ+ into its own boxed topic counters social norms. It perpetuates another us vs them perspective. It creates another space (in this case our "supportive" classroom space) where LGBTQ+ learners voices are drowned out by a majority group who are empowered by the teacher with the ability to make determinations. Our learners are already placed within a minority role as immigrants and language learners. This places the LGBTQ+ student in yet another powerless role, except this time also within an already new linguistic context and culture.

Ultimately, I suggest the answer to both these consideration questions is "no". Instead, I recommend instead that LGBTQ+ characters, storylines, and imagery be included alongside the heteronormative narratives in classroom materials without attention drawn to them; LGBTQ+ language is simply included as any other useful language; it's just another variety of humankind. Learners, particularly from those cultures where the point-of-reference on LGBTQ+ or any marginalised group is quite different, may initially blink, ask questions, or even react with resistance, but like nearly anything, the more they are exposed to what is common in the culture they are now a part of, the more normalized it will become to them and the more prepared they will be to communicate appropriately for their own benefit as well as that of those around them.

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Author Bio



Tyson Seburn is Lead EAP instructor of Critical Reading & Writing and Assistant Academic Director of International Programs at New College, University of Toronto. He holds an MA Educational Technology & TESOL from the University of Manchester. His main interest focuses on public spaces for exploring teacher identity and development. These include an EAP discussion group, #tleap (<http://bit.do/tleap>); his blog, 4CinELT (<http://fourc.ca>); and his work on the IATEFL Teacher Development Special Interest Group committee (<http://tdsig.org>). He is the author of *Academic Reading Circles* (The Round, 2015).

ENGLISH FOR (VERY) SPECIFIC PURPOSES

An ESL Course For Spanish Speaking Agricultural Workers in the Niagara Region

By Donna Pearce, Brock University

BACKGROUND

Last year, more than 18000 workers came to work on Canadian farms as part of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP)

Of these workers, more than 3000 are working on farms in the Niagara region

The majority of these workers come from either the Caribbean or Mexico

Although the SAWP is not without its problems, it provides Mexicans with a legal means to enter and work in Canada and the opportunity to earn significantly more than they could in their home country

Nevertheless, such opportunity comes at a price, since they must spend 6 to 8 months of the year thousands of miles away from the people they love, in communities that are often not as welcoming as they could be

One key factor contributing to these workers isolation is their limited, or in some cases, non-existent, proficiency in English

In recent years, the demographics of workers in the Niagara region have shifted, such that now only 33% are native English speakers, while 67% speak Spanish as their first language (L1) (Raper, 2017, personal communication). Hence, the need for language education for this population is increasing on an annual basis

In the past, several attempts had been made to offer ESL classes to the Mexican migrant workers in Niagara. However, since these classes used a traditional grammar-based, monolingual English approach, anecdotal evidence from the workers showed that they felt their needs were not being met and ultimately, the classes were deemed a failure

Such failure is not surprising, and is supported by the research of Pauwels (2014), who found that teachers who were unaware of learners' linguistic repertoires tended to view their plurilingualism as an annoyance, rather than an advantage

Enter Brock University, and its experiential learning course SPAN 3F80/4F80, Im/migrant and Community Outreach Internship

CHALLENGES

Limited time frame: One 1.5 hour class/week in each of two centres for approximately ten weeks

A range of proficiency levels, from beginner to advanced, in one classroom

Staggered start times; some workers begin arriving in Canada as early as February, but arrivals are spaced out over the growing season, depending on the crops of the farms where the workers are employed

Some of the students were not literate in their L1 (Spanish)

Extremely limited access to supportive materials and input in English

Limited transportation options meant we had to bring our classes to the students, rather than vice versa

In 2016, as part of this course, I designed an ESL program to meet the specific needs of the Spanish speaking SAWP workers in the Niagara region. This population presented me with some unique challenges, as well as some distinct advantages

Our 2016 Classes: On the left is the class in Beamsville and on the right is the class in Virgil

ADVANTAGES

Students who were highly motivated and hungry to learn

Many rode miles on their bikes after long days working in the fields just to attend the classes

SOLUTIONS

- A fully bilingual Spanish-English course design; in this way, we utilized the students' L1 knowledge to facilitate their L2 acquisition
- Use of English in the classroom gradually increased as the students became more proficient in the language
- A team teaching approach, pairing a Spanish/English bilingual with a TESL trained teacher in the same classroom
- Five "stand alone" thematically designed workshops that focused on the communicative tasks that the students needed to accomplish, such as grocery shopping, going to the doctor, sending money home etc.
- The cycle of workshops was repeated twice to accommodate later arriving students, or to provide additional practice for those in attendance from the beginning
- A strong focus on oral communication, but each workshop also contained a "real world" reading and writing task using realia, such as doctor registration forms and Western Union money transfer documents
- Teachers were trained in techniques to scaffold low literate students, using verbal explanations, gestures, pictures etc.
- Classroom space was donated by two local churches in Beamsville and Virgil
- Each student received a "school bag" containing the course book, a notebook, pen, pencil and eraser, all of which were donated

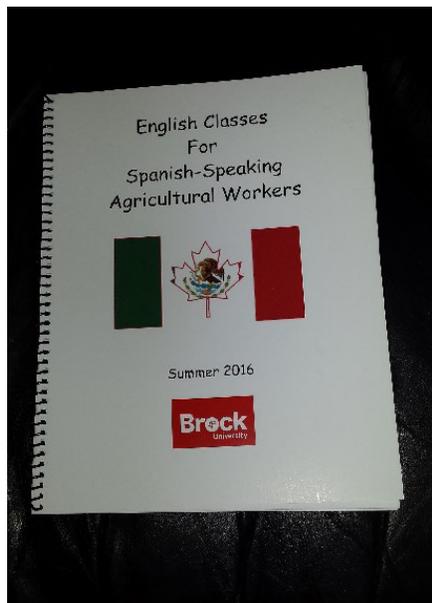
Every Saturday, I do my grocery shopping. I go to Valu-mart in Virgil. I buy all the food my family needs for the week. I start with fruit and vegetables. I always buy apples, pears, plums, bananas and grapes. Sometimes, I also buy strawberries or melon. My favourite fruit is pineapple, so I buy that too. Every week, I buy broccoli, lettuce, carrots and cauliflower. I want to make guacamole, so I buy avocado, tomatoes, onion and jalapeños. Next, I go to the meat department. I buy chicken, hamburger and pork chops. Finally, I buy milk, eggs, cheese and bread. I go to the cashier, pay for my groceries and take my groceries home. Now it is me to cook.

Now it's your turn- tell me about your grocery shopping. You can use the sentences below to help you and you can add any information you would like.

Every _____, I do my grocery shopping. I go to _____ in _____
 _____. I buy the food I need for the week. I start with _____. I always
 buy _____, _____ and _____. Sometimes, I al- so buy
 _____. My favourite _____ is _____, so I
 buy that too. I want to make _____, so for this I buy _____,
 _____ and _____. Then I go to the meat
 department. I buy _____ and _____. Finally, I buy
 _____, _____ and _____.

I go to the cashier to pay for my groceries and collect my PC points. Then I take my groceries home.

**ESL COURSEBOOK
 "SCHOOL BAG"
 SAMPLE LESSON
 WEEKLY SHOPPING**



**OUR 2016 CLASSES
 ON THE LEFT IS THE
 CLASS IN BEAMSVILLE
 AND ON THE
 RIGHT IS THE CLASS
 IN VIRGIL**

RELEVANT RESEARCH

ADVANTAGES OF A PLURILINGUAL APPROACH

A plurilingual approach in the classroom is grounded in three theoretical perspectives, namely engaging prior understandings, interdependence across languages and multilingualism as a qualitatively different system from monolingualism (Cummins, 2007)

Such an approach provides positive effects on motivation and self-esteem (Bernaus, Moore & Azevedo, 2007; Corcoll, 2003)

Use of learners' L1 mediates and facilitates the process of subsequent language acquisition (Payant, 2015)

Learners' awareness of their individual plurilingualism is viewed as an asset for communication (Marshall & Moore, 2013; Prasad, 2014)

Anecdotal evidence from our class members reported "increased motivation", "improved self-esteem" and a change in self-image, from "just a worker" to "a student", "a learner" and "an educated person"

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Brock University

St. Alban's Church, Beamsville

Cornerstone Community Church,
Niagara-on-the-Lake

Workers from the SAWP NorQuest College

AN INTERVIEW WITH SHEILA NICHOLAS

By Jane Carwana, Conestoga College

TESL Ontario honoured Sheila Nicholas with a Distinguished Contribution Award in November 2017. This award “is designed to recognize and honour the significant long-term achievements and contributions to the advancement of English Language educators, the English Language training sector and/or TESL Ontario.”

Nicholas, Program Manager of Adult ESL and LINC at St. George’s Centre for ESL in Guelph Ontario, has certainly contributed leadership and expertise to the ESL community. In addition to her role as Program Manager, she has chaired the Boards of Directors with both TESL Ontario and the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks and served in various other committees and boards.

I recently had the honour of chatting with Sheila in her office in Guelph. Her enthusiasm for the ESL profession was evident throughout our conversation. Not only does Nicholas continue to volunteer her time within the ESL profession, but volunteerism was actually the force that launched her career journey.

Jane Carwana: What first drew you to the ESL profession?

Sheila Nicholas: There was an advertisement for a volunteer position at St. George’s ESL program. After spending a year and half doing research in Zimbabwe for my doctorate in Political Economy at Queen’s University, I returned to Guelph to complete my dissertation. It was an isolating time for me and I was craving being with people from other cultures. So, I volunteered. The ESL program was growing and within a few months I was hired as a teacher. I never intended to be an ESL instructor. But after a while I realized that I loved it and I felt it was where I should be.

JC: It’s interesting how volunteerism can lead you to an unexpected outcome...a whole career path, in your case!

SN: Yes, I once volunteered with a learner from the Nuer tribe of Southern Sudan. They had almost no written language except some that was recorded by missionaries. I worked with her for quite a few months. Several years later, I ran into her. She was doing translation for someone. She was doing well and was happy. She was teaching Nuer at the Catholic Board’s International Languages Program. That she went from a non-literate person to a language

educator was amazing to me. She loved to teach. I think about her every now and again when I see learners struggling with literacy. I think keep going! It's possible.

JC: What was your first teaching assignment?

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JC: What surprised you as a teacher?

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JC: How did you become the Program Manager at St. George's?

SN: For several years I had worked as the summer program manager because the program manager had negotiated taking every summer off. This provided me with the opportunity to develop my administration and management skills. Like most program managers, I learned my job by doing it. I was hired to replace the program manager when she retired in 2000.

JC: Do you enjoy your role as a TESL program manager? What is the most challenging aspect?

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usually the person who hears the complaints. I miss being in the classroom and seeing the learners progressing. The challenging part is finding solutions to problems.

JC: What current trends in the TESL profession are exciting to you?

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COACHING IN TESOL

By Carolyn Kristjansson¹, Gwen Klassen, Michelle Goertzen Martins,
Matt Dissen & Shawn Rotchford

Coaching is a practice that many people typically associate with sports. What does it have to do with Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)? And what might it look like when used to support professional development in TESOL?

The answer to these questions starts with one's definition of coaching. As we understand it, coaching is a customized approach to personal and professional development. Like Flaherty (2010), we view it as a set of disciplines and practices aimed at helping others “develop new capabilities, new horizons, and new worlds of opportunity for themselves and those around them” (p. xi). Not only is this a useful definition of coaching, it's also a helpful way of framing what we try to do as language teachers. And it's an understanding that sheds light on what effective TESOL education is all about: helping pre-service and in-service teachers develop new capabilities, new horizons, and new worlds of opportunity for themselves and their students.

In recent decades coaching has been used to bring about positive change in diverse contexts. For example, performance coaching has significantly impacted the achievements of many in business (Whitmore, 2017). Leadership coaching has been widely applied to support the development of individuals and teams in organizations (Blanchard & Miller, 2013). Transformative coaching has contributed to significant changes in primary and secondary schools that have embraced it (Aguilar, 2013). And cognitive coaching has been used in education to support the professional development of teachers in multiple contexts (Costa and Garmston, 2015), including those serving linguistically diverse students (Gonzalez del Castillo, 2015). Yet, there are no known reports of coaching to support pre-service and in-service teachers in TESOL, nor of the impact of such coaching on the coaches themselves.

In 2017, a decision was made to incorporate strengths-based coaching in the MA TESOL program at Trinity Western University (TWU) to support incoming MA TESOL students. The TWU MA TESOL program views students as leaders, currently in their classrooms and spheres of influence and as emerging leaders in the language education profession. Strengths-based coaching is grounded in an understanding of leadership development which starts by recognizing strengths as an integrated aspect of human functioning (Linley & Harrington, 2006). This includes, for example, how strengths—those we use frequently,

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occasionally, or even neglect—come to bear on the way we make sense of circumstances, engage interpersonally, and go about our work, individually and collaboratively. It also encompasses an understanding that strengths develop and are deployed in relationship with others, and that teams which learn how to appreciate and harness the combined power of diverse member strengths can accomplish more than any individual alone (Welch, Grossaint, Reid, & Walker, 2014).

In what follows we provide an overview of what we did and learned during the first 15 weeks of the TWU MA TESOL coaching initiative. We touch briefly on the parameters of the in-house coaching program, our observations of benefits and challenges that emerged, and aspects of personal professional development for those of us who coached. We then briefly present ideas for additional applications of coaching in TESOL and conclude with some questions for reflection.

Coaching Program Overview

The TWU MA TESOL coaching program takes a non-directive strengths-based approach to coaching. First, a non-directive approach means the coaching process is grounded in an understanding that those being coached can generate their own solutions. From this perspective, the coaching relationship is seen as a collaborative thinking partnership in which the primary role of the coach is to listen and ask questions to help the coachee gain insight and awareness that lead to desired self-identified actionable outcomes. Second, our approach also draws on insights derived from the Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI; Scudder, Lacroix, & Gallon, 2014, pp. 1–9), an assessment tool that provides a snapshot of assessment-takers' underlying motivations and values and related deployment of strengths in two conditions: when things are going well and in conflict. In brief, this is built on the premise that an awareness of one's purpose and choice of strengths, along with that of others in such situations, can lead to enhanced personal and professional relationships and outcomes.

Program Design & Implementation

In early April of 2017, the first author invited four graduates from the TWU MA TESOL program to become part of a coach team to work with 16 incoming MA TESOL students from May to July. Because coaching was intended to support students in the eight-week online orientation program and first online course, we decided that coach training and ongoing support of coaches should also be conducted in an online environment. In fact, this was necessary as members of the coach team, like members of our incoming cohort, were spread across a range of locations and time zones. In-house coach preparation consisted of individual coach completion of the SDI along with personalized feedback reports and basic coach training. The latter was grounded in published coach training material (Essential Impact, 2013) and mediated via a series of online webinars distributed across several

weeks for a total of 10 hours. Ongoing support and development for coaches throughout the subsequent three-month interaction with students consisted of a 30-minute bi-weekly opportunity for each member of the coach team to be coached by the first author, also the lead coach, and 60-minute online monthly meetings for the coach team to touch base and compare notes.

Interaction with students took place online as indicated above. Each coach was assigned four incoming students who became their “quartet”. Incoming students did the SDI assessment and received personalized reports and individual debriefing from the lead coach, thus laying the foundation for a shared framework and metalanguage regarding strengths. Coaches were responsible to coach each student in their quartet once every two weeks for 30 minutes. In addition to individual coaching, they were asked to attend and help facilitate discussion in the seven weekly 45- to 60-minute webinars in which the quartets explored different aspects of strengths deployment. This ran parallel to students’ individual work in a customized version of a commercial e-book designed to prepare them for MA TESOL work. Overall, the goal was to create conditions that would facilitate students’ ability to maximize opportunities for personal and professional development in their MA TESOL journey and beyond.

What was the outcome? As participants in this new venture, we noticed certain patterns. Since we were not conducting research, what we present here are our observations as educator-coaches who engaged in the implementation of this new MA TESOL program component. We make no claims regarding student perspectives. We hope that future research will allow for an exploration of student insights, but in this article we start with what is available to us, our own experience.

Benefits

To begin with, based on our collective observations, we saw a number of benefits. Several interrelated elements stood out, including (1) space for student agency and autonomy, (2) enhanced student reflection and awareness, and (3) increased student options, along with (4) enhanced team dynamics.

First, individual coaching sessions were intended as opportunities for students to gain a sense of autonomy and empowerment as coaches posed questions to help them discover insights and identify options, resources, and actions available to them. Yet as coaches, early on we noticed that it was tempting to give advice. We had been told there was some limited scope for direct input (e.g., as it pertained to MA TESOL processes and procedures new to students), but overall, that our role was to partner with students’ in developing their capacity to navigate the online orientation and initial course with attention to intersections with their strengths, circumstances and future aspirations. As we learned to increasingly act on our understanding of students as a source of knowledge and manage the coaching process by means of exploratory questions rather than suggestions, we recognized a

complementary growth in space for student agency, which corresponded with an increased emergence of self-identified options for addressing the situations they brought to coaching. In short, when we asked questions that facilitated self-discovery, students came up with insights, possibilities, and action plans that exceeded what we could provide.

In Jordan's² case, this awareness was rooted in coaching she herself had received during coach training. At that time she expressed being overwhelmed by the many pressing needs of the new arrivals to Canada with whom she was working. The coaching team posed questions which helped her prioritize the most immediate needs and identify resources she had not yet thought of. Later when coaching her quartet, Jordan remembered how helpful that had been and posed similar questions to help her coachees. As a result, they were able to identify resources they could access to develop their writing skills, help with research, and adjust their schedules and finances to realize their goals and get the most from their MA TESOL experience.

Another example occurred in a session Morgan had with a student in the early stages of the online course that followed orientation. The student had been having trouble understanding course material and was convinced he couldn't do MA-level work. This was accompanied by a heightened state of emotions and he was ready to quit. As Morgan asked questions prompting reflection, there was a shift in the student's perspective. He realized it was not a case of being unable to deal with the materials or the tasks. Rather he became aware that the issue had to do with his own expectations for himself and his understanding of course expectations. Furthermore, this was linked to his default use of preferred strengths. The upshot was that there was a shift in emotional state, he decided not to quit, and he left the session with new strategies and increased confidence.

A final example is what we viewed as an emerging sense of group cohesion that developed throughout orientation and initial interaction in the first course. The MA TESOL program is highly collaborative, requiring students to participate in teams and perform regular interactive research projects. Weekly orientation webinars laid the foundation, introducing the students to each other while raising awareness of the technical and relational demands of online collaboration. Each week students were also presented with different scenarios and coaching questions were posed to facilitate discussion of how they might respond to diverse dynamics in light of their values and strengths. The webinars culminated in the co-creation of a team charter which was subsequently applied in a coach-led discussion of a sample case study of collaborative online work prior to the start of the first course.

Challenges

While the benefits outweighed the challenges, that does not mean it was all smooth sailing. Four areas of challenge that stood out to us included (1) logistics and scheduling, (2) student expectations about coaching, (3) readiness for coaching, and (4) difficult conversations.

2 Coach team members are identified by pseudonyms.

First, by its very nature, the online track of the TWU MA TESOL program can accommodate people from all over the world. In this case, coaches and students were distributed across seven countries and six time zones leading to logistical and scheduling challenges when we attempted to set up coaching sessions. Although effort was made to place students and coaches in groups with compatible time zones, challenges remained. Sometimes this resulted in late night and early morning meetings for coach or coachee as well as occasional missed appointments.

A second challenge we all faced was that of student expectations. As far as we know, with one exception, none of the incoming students had been exposed to non-directive coaching. In spite of having access to a brief introductory video and a written description of the coaching process, when students showed up for their first coaching sessions it became apparent that most did not know what to expect. This meant that coaches spent some of the initial sessions redirecting expectations and educating students about the intended process and focus of MA TESOL coaching sessions. In terms of process, students are often used to being told what to do in academic settings and some would come to coaching sessions looking to be directed in the next steps of the orientation or in a course of action for a particular situation. Similarly, our non-directive coaching model is based on the premise that the coachee bring to the session a focus of their choice. That chosen focus is then narrowed down to a manageable kernel, which is then explored, leading finally to an achievable action plan. Particularly early on, some students would arrive at their coaching sessions without a topic of focus. Depending on whether or not they wished to engage in a process of identifying a topic at that point, what was supposed to be a coaching session might become a mere conversation. While we could appreciate the value of this for relationship building, the potential benefits of coaching were lost.

This raises a third area of challenge, namely state of readiness. It's possible that those who did not come with a focus weren't yet convinced of the value of coaching for themselves or weren't sufficiently comfortable to want a coaching conversation. Simply put, for various reasons, at times it seemed students were not in a place where they were ready to be coached. In one case, a student in Chris's quartet was preoccupied with procedural matters regarding the weekly assignment, how to log into the online platform, and financial aid. While there were others in the program whose role it was to answer such questions, as long as the student viewed those unmet needs to be of primary importance, she was unable to engage in coaching. As such, Chris temporarily suspended coaching and answered the pressing questions.

A final area of challenge had to do with conversations that were difficult for one reason or another. While they did not happen often, when they did, we wanted to be able to handle them well. In one instance, one of us had a coachee who was not particularly comfortable with online technology and also had a fairly demanding work schedule. This left limited time for skill development and the troubleshooting needed to access and participate in online interaction and assignment completion. It seemed perhaps that an online MA

program was not the best place for her to be at this point in time. Given that the topic of technological challenges came up frequently, by the end of orientation, the coaching conversations with that coachee were focused on helping her realistically understand the demands of the program and the situational factors of her life so she could make an informed decision about continuing the following semester. The goal with this student, as with all, was to facilitate personal and professional development in the context of the coachee's unique circumstances.

Coach Benefits

In the process of helping others cultivate personal and professional development possibilities, we as coaches also experienced personal and professional benefits and growth. This took various forms, but to start, we all found ourselves enriched by insights that emerged from our personal SDI assessment and related discussions and exercises during coach training. The growth in self-awareness regarding our natural tendencies, values, and related use of strengths, both in conditions of well-being and when encountering conflict, was foundational to realizing our role as coaches, not to mention transferrable to a myriad of other roles. Some of us, for example, found these insights very helpful when interacting with people in other areas of our lives whose motivational values systems and strengths differ considerably from our own. The new insights led to new understanding and interactional choices we had not previously considered.

While coaching itself requires that both parties agree to the coaching purpose of a particular conversation, it is possible to draw on insights from coaching and take a "coach approach" to other types of interaction. Chris states that coaching helped her to be fully present when interacting with people in other situations. She notes that sometimes as teachers, we feel we have lots of answers, but coaching, in contrast, is about listening and asking good questions to help people gain awareness and find their own conclusions. Similarly, Sydney found a coach approach to make a difference in his interaction with students during teacher-student conferences. He took this approach to get students' perspective on their progress and find out what was truly important to them, how they might prioritize those things, and what changes he might make as instructor. One particular instance of this was when talking with a learner whose attendance had been irregular, putting his progress at risk. A coach approach to a conversation about these matters led to new insights for both parties and better ways of going forward.

Another example of benefit and growth came about through the opportunities members of the coach team had for personal coaching with the lead coach. Jordan reports how she found herself looking forward to preparing for her coaching sessions because it forced her to take some "me time." In her view, as teachers we have so many urgent and important demands to attend to, we rarely take time to dream and plan for the future. Coaching is an invitation to focus on ourselves and consider what we hope to accomplish in our personal lives and careers. She notes that she found it empowering to verbalize her aspirations

and fears to someone who listened intently, asked questions that helped her explore new options, and encouraged her to take next steps.

Coaching in English Language Learning

While our experience as reported above occurred within the specific context of a strengths-based MA TESOL coaching program, we see various other possibilities for coaching in the field of English language learning. For example:

- **Program Administrators and Managers** – Coaching with a trained coach for directors and managers can provide the same kinds of benefits as to leaders in other fields (Bower, 2012). In addition, program directors and managers, like teachers, are often accustomed to providing solutions. A coach approach to leadership and management can foster new possibilities and create enhanced ownership of solutions among those in the workplace (Stanier, 2016).
- **Teachers** – Professional development for teachers might occur with a trained coach or in reciprocal “collegial coaching” arrangements with colleagues who have a shared interest in coaching and a basic understanding of the coaching process (Kristjansson, 2016). This has the potential to support and provide a helpful means of cultivating the practices of a reflective practitioner (Sellars, 2013) in a manner that helps keep challenging issues manageable, while fostering engagement and action.
- **Teacher-Student Interaction** – A coach approach to teacher-student interaction can occur in any number of contexts both outside and inside the classroom. In general, rather than teachers simply providing solutions or directions, they might ask discovery questions to help students identify what has worked for them before or what resources they might not have yet recognized, including new ways of seeing and overcoming barriers. The potential is for increased student autonomy, agency, and engagement as illustrated in earlier parts of this article.
- **Pedagogic Design** – There are various ways of approaching teaching and learning, but for instructors who embrace constructivist models of student-centered learning, including problem-solving, inquiry-based approaches (Savery, 2006), and problem-posing approaches grounded in critical pedagogy (Crookes, 2013), a coach approach encompassing attentive listening and thoughtful use of questions has much to offer.

Conclusion

To return to the question we posed at the beginning: What might coaching have to do with TESOL? In our view, a lot!

Organizations that not only survive, but thrive, in changing times and conditions are learning organizations, organizations that seek to understand complexity, foster opportunities for reflective conversations, and create conditions for the kind of thinking where aspirations flourish and can be enacted. What’s more, the nature of these organizations and the nature

of interaction between the people within them is co-constitutive (Senge, 2006, pp. xi-xviii). In TESOL, this brings us back to the significance of what goes on inside and between people in a learning environment (Stevick, 1980) and the potential related implications for what goes on beyond (Kristjansson, 2013).

While the use of attentive listening and insightful questions is not new in education (Bird, 2002), an understanding of coaching and related processes provides a helpful framework for the application of these skills in a strategic manner that supports not only reflective thinking but also enhanced possibilities for agency and empowered action. In short, we see coaching as a means of developing new capabilities, exploring new horizons, and discovering new worlds of opportunities for ourselves and our students.

What are your thoughts on coaching in TESOL?

We would like to end with an invitation for you to unpack this big question by considering some of the reflective questions below. While this can be done alone, if you would like to take a coach approach to the activity, we invite you to find a colleague who has also read this article. Then take turns as coach and coachee. When in coach mode, ask your partner several of the following questions or other relevant open-ended questions of your choice. Refrain from commenting on your partner's response; your goal is to listen only, to help your colleague explore his/her understanding, and clarify his/her thinking. Enjoy!

Questions for Reflection

1. What aspects of coaching in TESOL are familiar to you?
2. What aspects of coaching in TESOL are challenging to you?
3. What opportunities do you see for coaching in your own TESOL context?
4. What's one small step you could take to explore this further?

If you would like to let us know your thoughts, feel free to contact us.

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Author Bios

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- Michelle Goertzen Martins, MA, is a TESOL educator who currently lives in Thunder Bay, ON. She has been a collaborating instructor and coach in the MA TESOL program at Trinity Western University. She likes her coffee black and her books long.
- Matt Dissen, MA, is the manager of an ESL program in Red Deer, AB. He is a collaborating instructor and coach in the MA TESOL program at Trinity Western University. He enjoys supporting newcomers and teachers as they journey together within the classroom.
- Shawn Rotchford, MA, is a TESOL educator who lives in Calgary, AB. He is a collaborating instructor and coach in the MA TESOL program at Trinity Western University. He believes in blending offline and online learning, so that everyone can benefit, regardless of how they learn.

THE LANGUAGE OF SUCCESS: AN INTERVIEW WITH DIANE RAMANATHAN, 2017 SPARKS OF EXCELLENCE AWARD RECIPIENT

By Amira Elkhateeb, Algonquin College

She packed her bag and followed her dreams across the globe, holding nothing but her aspirations and persistence to learn. She embraced life with a bold smile, open heart, and determined soul, learned psychology, and served in the military. Things weren't easy but her memory, as she mentioned, "is very selective" and able to edit all the negative feelings out and keep those memories which will sustain her throughout her journey of education. She is the inspirational Diane Ramanathan who was recently awarded the 2017 Sparks of Excellence Award, given every year by TESL Ontario to members who have gone above and beyond in their role as language instructors in Ontario. Diane took some time from her busy schedule to do the following interview.



Amira Elkhateeb: First, Congratulations on your award, tell us how was your feeling when you learned about it?

Diane Ramanathan: I was shocked that they nominated me and I was lucky and flattered that Dimitri Priven from Algonquin college and my manager at LINC Home study put down this application on my behalf, and then I was more surprised to win. It was amazing to see this support, not just in Ottawa but across the province and even across Canada and on social media. It is something that really made my year. It was a hard year for me and my family, so this really was a huge boon for us.

AE: When did you determine that teaching ESL would be your career path?

DR: I always liked teaching. I think I sort of just fell into it. I came to the ESL world in my late twenties, when I went abroad for many years, and came back in 2003, when I had my first baby, and that is when I started my research about teaching English in Canada. I found out about the LINC program then and realized that I needed to get accredited by TESL Ontario. I was living in Thunder Bay up north and I was pregnant so I wasn't really that mobile, and so I did the course online through the university of Saskatchewan. Shortly after, in 2005, I moved to Ottawa and have been here ever since. I have been lucky to have a number of different work capacities. We know it is a pretty tight field and Ottawa is not such a big city, so I got involved with TESL Ottawa right away. I was a member of the executive, but I gave some workshops to sort out the lay of the land and get my name out from there. I was able to get some different contracts and some part time work and here I am.

AE: What is your current title?

DR: I have numerous titles. I don't work full time. I teach in the TESL program in Algonquin college, and I am an online teacher with LINC home study, which is through the center of education and training in Mississauga. I'm also one of two community outreached coordinator for tutella.ca, and currently I am the president of TESL Ottawa.

AE: How can you consider all this as part-time work?

DR: TESL Ottawa is a volunteer position, and the other jobs are part-time, so together this is a full-time employment. But it allows me to be at home, because I have young kids, except when I come to Algonquin. Then I have to get dressed and come out. It is nice to see people face to face every now and then.

AE: What do you love most about being an ESL teacher?

DR: I like how it is very interactive in the classroom. When you are teaching language students, you can't be passive, and they have to be involved in learning. We get to know each other, and it is very collaborative, so I like the collaborative nature and the interactive nature of language teaching. It invigorates you.

AE: Is there anything you wish you had known before entering this field?

DR: I don't think so, because I think that the field is constantly evolving and changing in terms of what teachers have be able to achieve, in terms of students, in terms of work environment. So maybe there is maybe something that doesn't fit or something that you maybe don't really like, but in five, ten years it will be something different.

AE: Tell us about your experience of teaching abroad.

DR: I had done some training prior and then I wanted to travel. At that time in the nineties everybody was going abroad to teach English, like a way to fund travel. I have taught English in South Korea, Taiwan, Russian and Chili, all of them were awesome experiences. My first one was South Korea and I had no teaching qualifications. A friend of mine was going and I said, "Ok! I am coming too." So I just went, and I taught kids in a private language school. The teaching experience was ok, I learned, and I liked it, but I decided that my next job to be a better fit.

Then I came back to Canada and did the one-month CELTA course and I taught at a school for a summer. Then I went to Taiwan and this time I went there as a tourist without planning any employment. I picked a town and went to different schools, I went to the libraries and I looked at their curriculum. I talked with parents and then I was able to find work and was able to convert my tourism visa to a work visa. From there, I went to Russia, thinking that I want to move to adults. I found this job in Moscow, and I started doing workshops -that was required- by the school and things moved up. I became assistant director as well as being a teacher and I stayed there for a couple of years. Next, I moved to South America

with the same school that was in Moscow. They had just opened in Chile, so it was only private schools because I didn't have any education degree. I didn't even have a TESL certificate.

AE: Many would advise us to not burn ourselves out as teachers by volunteering. What do you think about that?

DR: I am volunteering as TESL Ottawa president. It is a completely volunteer job. I don't need to find work but I do it because you feel that building these relationships helps in the form of my own teaching, but it also helps me down the road. If I need a job or I need a contract, things come my way, I feel, if you give it your time and energy, even if it is unpaid, it comes back to you. Building those connections in the community is very important and is very rewarding in different ways.

AE: You mentioned that you started using technology not long ago, but the fact is that technology is popping everywhere in your teaching path, how did you do that in such short time?

DR: I went to many workshops. Algonquin offered me those workshops with "Kahoot" and "Padlet". The first time I introduced them to a class, I told them, "I don't know what will happen but I am trying this for the first time. I may ask you to help me." I do this all the time. It is scary when you are the teacher and then things don't work, but I feel like it is nice to be collaborative to ask the students if you need help, and then you can jump in and both try. When I started working at "Tutella" I didn't know anything about technology. They were aware that I didn't, and they said, "that's ok! We can teach you." There are still many things that I try to do and don't work, so I ask students with some experience if they can help me. If not, let's move to something else, but we will try this again next week without fear.

AE: What's your advice to the new ESL Teacher?

DR: Embrace technology, build up those connections, whether by volunteering in classrooms or any capacity, go to events, hang out in the teacher's room if you are a supply teacher, and talk to all the people. Those connections help you to grow as a teacher and help you to find work.

AE: What is the biggest challenge that TESL should expect?

DR: Particularly in Ottawa it is the tight job market. And don't be afraid of PBLA or this new technology. Don't react like, "oh no! Now I have to learn something else," because you can always ask for help.

AE: Which part of teaching do you find most satisfying?

DR: The connections with my students, when my TESL students come back and tell me we got this job I remember one or two who got jobs while developing a curriculum that was

so wonderful for me or my LINC students when they are able to reach some goals, when they have a new understanding of an aspect of the Canadian life and they can share information about their new community I feel that I really touched those lives.

AE: Tell us about the Curriculum Development course that you are giving at Algonquin College.

DR: In the TESL program, I teach a couple of courses, but Curriculum is the most interesting. This is the fourth year that we're partnering with another organisation in Ottawa: three years with the Ottawa Carlton District Board and one year with the Ottawa Catholic School Board. We developed curriculum based on CLB levels for them and the students work very hard, and then we run it again for the part-time students in the spring, so they usually augment what the full-timers had done. It is a large real project, an actual one that you can apply.



I think the students like it because it gives them a full understanding of content-based instruction, task-based learning, the language benchmarks, and the curriculum especially this year's project. And then it is something that they can put in their resume, and get inspired if they want to go on as curriculum developers.

AE: How do you see the future of TESL?

DR: I think it is going to continue to evolve. As LINC teachers, we are dependant on government funding and newcomers who come, and the types of newcomers who come, not all of them need language for settlement. The program itself is developing with technology and PBLA and it continues evolving.

AE: What are things needed to enhance the field?



DR: I know there are a lot of developments in the LINC program, from task-based learning with the PBLA to making the language more applicable so that students can take language with them out of the class and use it. I hear a lot of stories from TESL students who go out for observations. They tell me how some teachers have lots of resources and other have less. So, making things even would be great.

AE: Do you have a message for your students in the

TESL program, the future ESL teachers?

DR: Jump in with both feet and take all the opportunities on your way.

There is a proverb that is sometimes attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Some Pursue happiness, others create it." You can see how Diane was able to create her own happiness,

as she moved from a place to another learning, gaining experience, giving from her heart and time to serve her community, and paying attention to her family. She had the courage to choose her path and put success in her sights. She deserves the Sparks of Excellence Award and a special place in her colleagues' and students' hearts.