The complex situation with prepositions in the English language: A tiny word with much importance PLUS Teaching the pronunciation of vowels on Zoom AND MORE...

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Grabowska, K. (2021). Glass with frosted lines pattern [Image]. Pexels. https://www.pexels.com/photo/glass-with-frosted-lines-pattern-6757697/

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Editor's Note

Hello and welcome to the November 2022 issue of *Contact* magazine.

Another successful TESL Ontario conference has come and gone, and in the Spring issue, we will be featuring some of the work from the inspiring presenters and researchers (and also the submitted works of others from 2022). The opportunity to present and share ideas and findings helps as we make our way through these evolving times. I look forward to the submissions.

As for this issue, we are spotlighting Danielle Freitas, Associate Dean of the English Language Institute at Fanshawe College. Thank you, Danielle, for the candid and insightful information you have provided and the many things we can all take away and think about. It has been a pleasure working with you.

Also in this issue, we have some familiar faces and some new writers. Thank you all for your contributions. Your work is appreciated in more ways than you know. To start, Ricardo-Martín Marroquín writes about prepositions in the English language and how such simple-seeming words to many are actually quite important and complex to language learners. Mike Tiittanen talks about how pronunciation can be taught online using platforms, like Zoom. Jill Cummings and Ismail Fayed present their research on blended learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in LINC and ESL classes. Azadeh Pordel writes about online English learning and global opportunities. Masoumeh Gooya explores the application of word meaning expansion for teaching vocabulary. Finally, Zoe Flatman provides an overview of resources available from Elections Canada.

Thank you for reading. Happy Holidays from *Contact* magazine! Take care.

Nicola Carozza
editor@teslontario.org

CONTACT

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Spotlight — Danielle Freitas

Danielle Freitas is the Associate Dean of the English Language Institute at Fanshawe College, where she oversees the EAP and TESL Programs. She holds a Master's degree in Second Language Education from the University of Toronto, a Master's degree in TESOL from the University College London, and a PhD in Language and Literacies Education from the University of Toronto. Danielle also holds many ESL teaching and teacher training credentials from the University of Cambridge.

Tell us a little about yourself. Who is Danielle?

I would say that I am a proud non-native speaker, Latina, immigrant woman who truly believes in the power of equity, diversity, and inclusion and works to support and enable whoever I can through the power of education to reach their full potential, regardless of who they are, where they come from, and how they look and sound like. I was born and raised in Brazil and had the opportunity to learn the value of education at a very young age—my parents, as mature students, worked really hard to obtain their higher education

degrees while raising their two little kids, my brother and me, so that we could have a better life. My lived experiences as a child helped me shape my belief in the transformative power of education. I sincerely believe we educators have the power to literately transform lives, and this is a responsibility I do not take lightly. My passion and unwavering commitment to education are definitely key elements of my identity, which is why I am proud to identify myself as a lifelong learner. I am enthusiastic about learning and have no plans to stop embarking on new learning journeys!

In 2021, you received the Canadian Society for the Study of Education Doctoral Award for your PhD thesis, *It kind of made me think: Is this the real me? Is this really who I am? A mixed methods investigation of teacher learning and teacher development in CELTA courses*. How would you explain the contribution your thesis makes to English language teaching?

My thesis was recognized for its contributions to research on teacher education in Canada. I believe its main contribution to the fields of English language teaching and language teacher education was to shed light on how cognition and emotion are inseparable in the teacher learning and development process and how emotions play a decisive role in the classroom by influencing the way student teachers think, behave, and make decisions. By employing a three-phased enhanced exploratory sequential mixed methods research design, which involved qualitative data from CELTA programs taught in different countries and quantitative data from 880 participants from 78 countries, I was able to illustrate how student teachers' emotions signaled the emotional and cognitive contradictions they faced during

the CELTA course, and how these were mediated by the student teachers themselves, their peers, and teacher educators leading to the development of new aspects of their personality and identity as English language teachers. My research, therefore, challenges the dominance of paradigms that emphasize rationality and cognition by helping bring to light the inseparability of cognition and emotion as part of the nature of the teacher learning and development process.

Over the years, what has been the most challenging aspect working in English language education or education in general?

I believe it was the COVID-19 pandemic. It has undoubtedly affected our lives in myriad ways, including how we understand and perform our jobs as English language educators and administrators. It has now been almost three years since we all had to face uncertainty and re-imagine ourselves as we navigated uncharted territory, and the most challenging aspect of working on English language education has been to deal with the psychological, emotional, and physical impacts that such a global pandemic has had on our students, educators, staff, and everyone involved in the English language education field. From learning new technologies to supporting medical accommodations, our jobs have abruptly been transformed by the pandemic and are likely to continue to change as we start to live in a post-pandemic world. I do believe that the pandemic has expedited educational advancements that would have taken longer to happen in normal circumstances, and now they have already become a current and permanent part of our industry, such as technological advancements.

As the Associate Dean of the English Language Institute at Fanshawe College since August 2022, what has been the most rewarding aspect so far of this role?

I am thrilled to be the new Associate Dean of the English Language Institute (ELI) at Fanshawe College, and I would say that the most rewarding aspect of my role so far has been leading a team of outstandingly caring professionals who are proud to be part of a close-knit community. I have always valued the transformative power of human connections and feel inspired by the small acts of kindness and compassion I witness daily at the ELI. I look forward to continuing to learn and grow with such a special group of people.

Your paper on Plurilingualism in TESL Programs (*Plurilingualism in TESL programs? Are we there yet?*) looks at a paradigm shift in TESOL/ TESL teacher education and the pedagogy of TESL courses in Canada. What was your takeaway from this paper? Why did you want to write it?

The most relevant message I want educators to have from this paper is that we still have a lot of work to do to ensure that the curriculum and pedagogy of our TESOL/TESL certificate programs are supported by the most current research in the field. TESOL/TESL certificate programs have been qualifying English language teachers for over 60 years, and despite their importance for the English language teaching profession, little is known about these programs, as research on this context is comparatively scarce. As such, I wanted to write this paper not only to contribute to addressing the scarcity of research on this under-investigated context but also to investigate the extent to which the plurilingual paradigm shift had been adopted by the curriculum and pedagogy of a TESL Canada certificate program. Unfortunately, the findings of the study showed that the curriculum and pedagogy of this program were supported by a monolingual view of language teaching and learning, which reinforced the participant's past learning experiences, beliefs, and teaching practice regarding language learning. I am glad to say that

since this study was conducted in 2012, I have witnessed positive changes toward the adoption of the plurilingual paradigm shift in several TESOL/TESL certificate programs.

Are you currently involved in any research projects? What's in store for Danielle in 2023?

I am excited about 2023, as I plan to start my Post-Doctoral studies next year. I have been working on the post-doc project and look forward to being a student again! My goal is to build on my doctoral thesis work and focus on the cultural dimension of emotions and how it influences teacher learning and development. Presently, I am involved in two other research projects. In 2023, I will continue to work on them—one project focuses on developing a research instrument to measure learning in TESOL Certificate programs and the other on online cultural exchanges and their impact on student teachers' learning and identity.

If you would like to know more, please visit Danielle's LinkedIn.

Thank you once again for your contribution, Danielle!

The complex situation with prepositions in the English language: A tiny word with much importance

By Ricardo-Martín Marroquín, Redeemer University, Canada

Introduction

It is known that the English language is one of the most spoken languages in the world. With a large population speaking it as their L1, it has also become one of the learned languages as L2. Whether it is for pleasure or need, the English language has acquired a high place on the podium of most spoken languages. Some people may learn it to be able to read their favourite English writers, or they may have been influenced by North American culture. Others may come to learn English due to having moved to an English speaking country. Whatever the case may be, there is no doubt that learning English is both a need and/or a desire to most.

Speaking English that mimics a native English speaker takes more time and effort. As a matter of fact, I remember speaking to a highly-esteemed professor of languages who shared an important anecdote with me. As a professor of languages for many years, she had taught students from all over the world and with different needs to learn a new language. In a particular case, she had a couple of students from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) who were learning a second language—Italian. Nevertheless, for these students, it was imperative to pick up on cues related with inaccuracies such as accents, mispronunciations and lack of properly using specific words, and/or grammatical structures. It was important for them to be aware of the English language and how it may be misused by people who were learning English. Being part of an institution that performed investigations and also worked with immigrants, it became imperative being able to catch anyone illegally in the country. They would know how to use language in a way that would de-mascarade anyone pretending to be a born citizen of the United States. The secret to catching anyone illegally was their speech of the English language. However, it was noted that after a few years of being in the United States and with the opportunity to learn the language, it became more problematic distinguishing a citizen with an illegal person. Hence, an observation that they would focus on was how the *suspect* spoke the English language by using the appropriate preposition. Given that a native speaker would have learned well how to implement any preposition, it was then more noticeable to catch anyone who learned English as an L2, and therefore, could have been in the country, being considered an *illegal alien*.

The difficulties of the preposition

Given that my request to perform this study has nothing to do with the CIA's interest in catching *illegal aliens*, but rather to do with how to support ELLs to speak English like a native speaker, I focused on the use of prepositions. The idea was to help students use the appropriate preposition that follows a specific verb. At times, the verb would combine well with more than one preposition; however, in those cases, the meaning would change. More than being wrong, it may become embarrassing when misusing the wrong phrasal verb. It is important to clarify that a phrasal verb is a verb and preposition combination that is used in a full sentence or a phrase. Though the verb may be the same in several instances, the fact that a specific preposition is attached to the verb changes the meaning of the sentence and/or phrase. For this reason, it became important for me to teach phrasal verbs and/or verbs and their prepositions intentionally, to facilitate both oral speech and written language.

When working on this assignment, I tabulated the amount of times that mistakes were made when using prepositions. This is what I found:

Preposition in question	Use of preposition	Occurrence of error	Total opportunities to use the preposition(s)
in vs on	I was born in December and I was born on December 25	148	150
in vs on	I live on campus	140	150
in vs on	The child is on the bus	150	150
in vs on	The teacher is on a leave	141	150

Navigating through this study, I found important to explain one tool that is used in Ontario, Canada, to determine an appropriate and efficient level of English for an English language learner; this is called the STEP continua.

The STEP continua

The STEP[1] continua comprise a few checklists that determine language proficiency. Steps to English Proficiency, better known by its acronym STEP, is divided into primary (grades 1–3), junior (grades 4–6), intermediate (grades 7–8) and senior (grades 9–12). These documents exist for both ESL and ELD programing. Though similar in essence, the language competences (observable language behaviour) vary depending on the programming. Each STEP continuum contains oral, reading and writing sections, which comprehends a set of competences. The language learner (English as L2), would fulfil a specific section of the observable language behaviour in order to move forward, from one stage to the next. These *stages* are known as steps. Therefore, a student who is in step 3 in reading, has already shown aptitude towards all the

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1   The STEP Continua (Steps to English Proficiency) can be found in www.edugains.ca

competences in step 1 and 2, thus working at the step 3 level. The same also applies to the oral and writing forms of the STEP continua. It is assumed that an overall level of English is given depending on how well the student performs on all 3 components. However, in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, it is a common practice to place the level of the English language learner the same as their reading STEP. Thus, a student who is placed as a STEP 2 in reading, would be considered a STEP 2 English language learner overall. The idea of the STEP continuum is to push the language learner forward by teaching them specific language skills based on where they are. It is important to clarify that though the indicators in the STEP continuum are not meant to be used as a final report (in the student's report card), it is used in conjunction with the curriculum and to facilitate an appropriate report comment.

Among the STEP continuum, there are 6 main levels, which are also known as steps, and these range from 1 to 6; where 1 is for a student who is recently learning the English language, and 6 is mastering the English language. STEPs 1–3 and sometimes 4, require extra support from the teacher, which may be seen as modifications of expectations (in number and level of difficulty) and accommodations, which usually allow extra time for a determined activity and/or task. STEPs 5 and 6 are already working at grade level expectations and, therefore, students who have accomplished these levels are becoming to master English as their second language. However, based on conversations, anecdotal exchanges, and careful consideration with STEPs 5 and 6 students, it was noticed that these students may require extra attention when it comes to appropriately using prepositions in order to acquire a near-like native fluency in English. For this reason, I decided to ask more than 100 students who are in the range of STEPs 5 and 6, both in grades 1 to 12 and in university settings (performed in a period of 20 months) questions where they would need to choose the appropriate preposition with:

i. a group of 3–4 prepositions to choose from

ii. no support at all

iii. a free writing activity where the student's written work is assessed by placing extra attention on their usage of the prepositions

Supporting fluency in speech for English language learners (ELLs) to imitate native speakers (English = L1) is one goal that as an ESL/ELD educator I would like to accomplish. When speaking either at conferences or in meetings with fellow teachers, the question that stands out is how to help a STEP 5 (higher level of English) student truly speak English like their native English (L1) peers. Considering that the STEP continua focuses on 3 strands of language, which are oral (listening and speaking), reading, and writing, we hope to have covered all types of language indicators to produce bilingual students with a similarity language skills in English as their English-native speakers. However, the issue that I see most is in regards to how to properly use prepositions.

It is noted that native speakers of English have heard how to use the English language since birth. This means that since their beginning, they have heard their parents speak to them by employing verbs and their respective prepositions. Terms such as: look up, wake up, drive thru, put on, sleep in, among others, have already made their way to their linguistic portfolio (being implemented correctly and abundantly). However, what it is noticed through the course of this short yet concise study, is that most ELLs lack the knowledge and/or the ability to use the appropriate preposition following the right verb in question.

What is a preposition?

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a preposition is "a function word that typically combines with a noun phrase to form a phrase which usually expresses a modification or predication". That is, a preposition usually is combined with a verb or a phrase to form either a new phrase or a new meaning. Take for example the verb (in its infinitive form) *to sleep* and the phrase *sleep in*. Both cases have a similar meaning; however, the latter one adds a specific meaning to sleep, that is, to sleep until a late period of time. Similarly, this happens with the verb *to look* and *look up*; where in the former, it is used to ask someone to focus on an item or a specific point, while in the latter, is used to pay attention towards the front, or towards an activity being done. In both cases depicted, the preposition adds a specific and even an added meaning to the verb and consequently, to the meaning of the sentence.

Prepositions are essential in any language (at least in English, Spanish, Italian, and French), as it helps the language user convey a fluent and precise message. In English, prepositions acquire an added value, and that is that it may alter the meaning of a sentence with or without its presence. Such small words may enrich the value of a sentence; at the same time, omitting their proper usage or utilizing the wrong preposition may convey a wrong message either in language structure and/or in meaning, therefore, missing the *linguistic* mark. Hence, learning how to employ such nouns (prepositions are nouns) become essential in the pursuit of speaking English in a native manner. In the following, you will find different phrasal verbs, the times they were used in the exercise, and the amount of times an error was committed.

Examples of phrasal verbs

Preposition in question	Use of preposition	Occurrence of error	Total opportunities to use the preposition(s)
Put: on, in, out, forward	The girl **puts on** her favourite t-shirt. The teacher **puts in** his thoughts. I **put out** the fire in the kitchen. The class **puts forward** a new learning goal.	120	150
Check: in, out, on	We **check in**to the hotel later today. "**Check out** this new game." His mom **checks on** his bruised leg.	140	150
Used: for, to, at	This tool is **used for** fixing the door. I **used to** play soccer many years ago. This was **used at** the store.	130	150
Close: in, down, off	She is **closing in** on her baby. The store is **closed down**. The street is **closed off** from the public.	141	150
Look: over, at, into, on, overlook	The students **look over** their own tests. It is pleasant to **look at** the stars on a clear night. I will **look into** getting new tires for my car. The team **overlooked** the strength of their opponent.	118	150

The idea of this study was to help students (whenever possible) implement such verb and preposition combinations to facilitate fluency in a native-like way. It was noted that when a student made a mistake, a correction would be given to them automatically and then a short explanation followed. However, the majority of the times, the student was reminded how the preposition with the verb was utilized. At times, it was important to explain the difference in meaning when a distinct preposition was used. For example, the verb *drive* and now add the prepositions *by*, *through*, or *in*. In the first case, (*drive by*) it was explained

that the phrase *drive by* is intended for an occasion where there is a person (or more) passing by a house and shooting at a specific target (usually a home or a person). Moreover, a *drive thru* (through) is used for picking up food at a restaurant by means of a vehicle and approaching a specific window of the restaurant where one would pay and pick up a food order. Finally, *drive in* would be used specifying driving into a place, such as a drive-in theatre where one can watch a movie from the comfort of one's car. Though all cases use the same verb *drive*, the meaning of these phrases (*drive by*, *drive thru*, *drive in*) changes according to the preposition that is being implemented. Finally, another example that I would like to point out are the phrases *in your way* and *on your way*; where the former is used to describe a person or an object that is in someone's way. For example: *The child fell because the box was in his way*. *On your way* may be used to explain that someone is on their way to a specific location, such as: *"Honey, I am on my way to the store. Could I get you anything?"* Given that both sentences use a different preposition (in and on), their meaning (in the main clause) where *my way* is seen changes. Furthermore, it becomes important showing examples of both cases (which are both correct) in their own contexts.

Another common example are the phrases *hang on*, *hang in*, *hang out* and *hang up*; where *hang on* is used to hang an object on the wall and/or when a person is hanging onto an object, such as when rock-climbing, *"hang onto the closest jug on the wall."* *Hang in* is used to express a desire to stay on task and focused, such as *"I know this is difficult, but hang in there."* Furthermore, *hang out* is used to express going out and being (physical space) with someone. *"Today, I am hanging out with my friends."* Finally, *hang up* is used when a person terminates a phone call with someone else, such as *"I could not say goodbye because he had hung up the phone"*. I specify all of these due to being difficult for anyone learning English (regardless of their level of mastery) as a second language to grasp the different meanings of each scenario. Though the verb used is the same in every case, it is the preposition attached to the verb that makes all the difference in the meaning of a sentence. For this reason, it is crucial to teach students these verbs with their prepositions so that the students' speech (and writing) skills may become more fluent, efficient, and correct. It would be rather humorous for a student to say that they went to a *drive by* instead to a *drive thru*. In short, there are many other phrasal verbs being used in the English language, which may make the fluidity of oral and written (including reading) expression more troublesome for English as a second language learners.

Finally, I would like for you to take into consideration these final examples with the verb and phrasal verbs *grow up*, *grow out of*, *grow-up*, and *grow into*, and see how these examples could be taught in a way that may show their difference in a specific context.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the English language is well valued by many who are interested in learning it as their second native language. However, as a second language English learner, I know that learning it may cause many confusions, and these may continue even with students who have already achieved a higher level of English. It is clearly noted that prepositions can be a tricky word, which will amend the meaning of a sentence. For this reason, I wanted to explore this topic that could be seen as a conundrum by many English language learners. Nevertheless, by pointing out specific phrasal verbs and using them intentionally in oral, reading, and writing activities, may support the English language learner. For this reason, I find it important to teach this topic whenever possible and to point out and/or highlight an example whenever it is seen. Additionally, explicitly teaching this topic in a reading and then a writing activity, may become beneficial for ELLs. Most people who learn a second language may have as their goal to speak English as a native speaker, and most importantly, not make any of the mistakes that could cause embarrassment.

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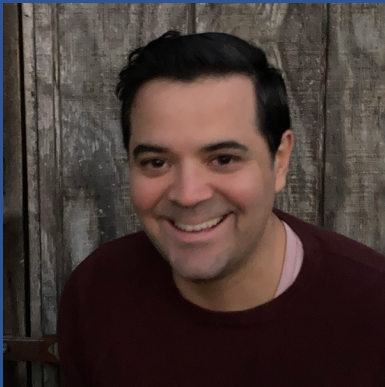
Author Bio

Dr. Ricardo-Martín Marroquín is a professor at Redeemer University and the Assessor for the HWDSB. He holds a doctoral degree focusing in second language teaching. He has written 3 novels: *El sobrino de las tías*; *Our Silent Journey*; and *Memoirs of an Inner-City Teacher*. Additionally, he has authored 3 articles called *The Complexity of Recognizing the ABCs*; *Thou Shalt not Speak English*; and *Cinema and the Teaching of an L2*.

Teaching the pronunciation of vowels on Zoom

By Mike Tiittanen, Canada

The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted many previously in-person ESL classes to online learning. Many of these online classes are taught synchronously using video conferencing software such as Zoom. The exclusive focus in this article is on teaching ESL classes using Zoom, since that is the software that the author uses to teach with and am thus most familiar with. However, the same points that are made with regard to synchronous video teaching with Zoom could presumably also be made for Zoom's competitors such as Microsoft Teams.

The use of video conferencing software such as Zoom for synchronous ESL classes has the obvious advantage of enhancing the safety of students and teachers from the COVID-19 virus. The advantages of using Zoom appear to be particularly evident for ESL pronunciation classes. This is because Zoom allows the pronunciation teacher to magnify his/her own video image (i.e. *spotlight* oneself using the Zoom function) while demonstrating the correct articulation of consonant and vowels. This makes it possible for an ESL teacher who is knowledgeable in the articulation of English speech sounds to show close-ups of their mouth while demonstrating the correct pronunciation of the target sounds of the lesson. In addition, students in the Zoom pronunciation class can see the position of their own mouths in their own video image on their screen while attempting to articulate the target sounds. Thus, they can readily compare their own articulation of the target sound with the model provided by the pronunciation instructor. As Bliss et al. (2018) argue in their review of computer-mediated pronunciation instruction, visual feedback is helpful for language students to improve the accuracy of their pronunciation.

Such close-ups of the instructor's mouth for pronunciation would not be feasible in an in-person pronunciation class during the pandemic as it would frequently violate social distancing requirements, as the demonstration of certain speech sounds would require the students to come physically very close to the instructor in order for them to see the position of the instructor's tongue and the articulatory motion of the tongue. This would be particularly ill-advised during the ongoing pandemic because the production of any speech sound results in the exhalation of air, which would naturally contain water droplets.

In addition to preserving student safety in the demonstration of speech sounds, such close-ups of the instructor's mouth avoid the violation of social conventions of maintaining a certain amount of physical distance between people. Many students may feel uncomfortable, for purely social reasons, even if there were no pandemic, if their instructor was physically close to them.

As is well-known, Zoom also has a breakout room feature that permits the instructor to group students into pairs or small groups. This breakout room feature allows the students to safely practice the target sounds using communicative/task-based teaching materials. One advantage of breakout rooms over in-person pair/small group work is that the participants do not need to struggle to hear one another, which is sometimes an issue in crowded, noisy classrooms.

Finally, teaching on Zoom allows students to attend ESL classes without needing to commute to class, which can sometimes be time-consuming, particularly during rush hour. This is particularly a challenge for students with daytime jobs who are attending night classes. Naturally, with Zoom, your students do not need to live in the local area. They may live far away, even in different countries.

In the following section, the author shall briefly explain how certain vowels, which are often problematic for English learners may be taught on Zoom. There are also video links that demonstrate the pronunciation of the target vowels.

Selected vowels

/iy/ versus /i/

Many ESL students have problems with the diphthong /iy/ (e.g. s**ee**d, n**ea**t) and/or the short, lax vowel /i/ (e.g. S**i**d, kn**i**t). Given how frequently minimal pairs such as *neat* and *knit* (i.e. the functional load) occur in English, it is very useful to explain the difference in articulation between these phonetically similar vowels and to practice them with your students.

Many of the crucial pronunciation differences between these vowels can be shown and explained in a Zoom-based class. As stated above, /iy/ is a diphthong, meaning that it begins with a pure vowel, /i/, and in this case it changes to a /y/ glide (O'Grady & Dobrovolsky, 1987), which has noticeable lip spreading (Lane, 2010), particularly when it is exaggerated. One can show this change in lip position on the video screen to one's students with representative words such as n**ee**d, l**ea**d etc. Also, /iy/ is longer than /i/, and the teacher should point out this difference in length using minimal pairs, or near-minimal pairs of words, such as l**ea**d/l**i**d, gr**ee**d/gr**i**d, n**ee**d/kn**i**t, etc. To see a video explanation of the difference in pronunciation between these phonetically similar vowels, please click here: /iy/ versus /i/ vowels

Because /iy/ is longer before a voiced consonant (i.e. a consonant with vocal cord vibration) such as /d/, /z/, etc., it is helpful to give examples of words ending in a voiced consonant such as /z/ p**ea**s (cf. p**ea**ce, which ends in a voiceless /s/). It is worthwhile pointing out to students that length is frequently symbolized with a colon, and that /iy/ will usually be written as /i:/ in most dictionaries that use IPA symbols. In general, depending on the first language of the student, the student will often have more problems with the short /i/ (e.g. – l**i**d) than with the longer /iy/ diphthong (e.g. l**ea**d).

After demonstrating and explaining the contrast between /iy/ and /i/ for your students, it is useful to do a minimal pair listening discrimination such as those explained earlier (e.g. *lead* and *lid*). After taking up the answers, students can practice pronouncing the words in the minimal pair list in pairs in Zoom breakout rooms, while the teacher monitors their pronunciation and gives feedback when necessary.

As stated earlier, there are many words which contain /iy/ and /i/, so it will be easy for the teacher to construct task-based and communicative practice exercises for the students to practice these sounds. If your students have more problems with /i/ than with /iy/, which has been the experience of the author, it would be useful to use more example words with the short vowel /i/ than with /iy/. The author personally uses questionnaires with the simple past tense auxiliary *did* for practice with his students, as *did* has the short /i/ vowel. In these questionnaires, students ask their partners in the breakout rooms various questions with *did you* (e.g. When d**i**d you immigrate to Canada?). In such cases, the author often points out that there is often an assimilation of /d/ before /y/ to /dʒ/, so many English speakers say *dij ya*, with a schwa (/ə/) for the vowel in *you*.

/ey/, /e/, and /æ/

Many students also have problems distinguishing between /ey/ (e.g. l**a**te) and /e/ (e.g. l**e**t) or between /e/ (e.g. b**e**d) and /æ/ (e.g. b**a**d) (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992), so it is useful to also practice these vowel contrasts in a Zoom class. The difference between /ey/ and /e/ is the same as the difference between /iy/ and /i/; /ey/ is a diphthong, in which the /e/ vowel becomes the glide /y/ (O'Grady & Dobrovolksy, 1987). And /ey/ is longer than /e/. Thus, the points I made about lip spreading and vowel length for /iy/ and /i/ are the salient differences, which should also be made about /ey/ and /e/. As for /iy/, which is frequently written as /i:/ in dictionaries, it is a good idea to inform your students that /ey/ will probably be written as /e:/ in many dictionaries that use IPA symbols. The instructor should slowly show the differences on screen between the vowels /ey/ and /e/ as discreet sounds, and then show the differences in minimal pairs such as l**ai**d/l**e**d, p**ai**n/p**e**n, etc. For a video demonstration and explanation of the differences in articulation between these phonetically similar vowels, please click here: [/ey/ and /e/ vowels](#)

As with the other sounds, it is useful to do some minimal pair listening discrimination work (e.g. laid and led; pain and pen, etc.), and to have the students practice contrasting these words in the breakout rooms. In terms of communicative practice, the teacher could make up some questions about the student's childhood using the causative verbs *make*, which has an /ey/ sound, and *let*, which has an /e/ sound. For example, a questionnaire such as the following could be created for the students:

"When you were 11 years-old…"

did your parents m<u>a</u>k<u>e</u> you t<u>a</u>k<u>e</u> music lessons?

/ey/   /ey/

did your parents l<u>e</u>t you st<u>a</u>y up l<u>a</u>t<u>e</u> on weekends?

/e/   /ey/   /ey/

When contrasting these sounds, it would also be useful to point out the common spellings of these two vowels; i.e. /ey/ is often spelled with an <a> and an <e> between a consonant or as <ay>, while /e/ is often spelled with the letter <e>.

As mentioned earlier, /e/ is often mixed up with /æ/ (e.g. h**a**t, c**a**t), so it is useful to show your students the difference in how these vowels are articulated. For /æ/, the mouth is considerably more open than for /e/, and with /æ/ the tongue touching the back of the bottom teeth (Orion, 1997). It is useful to put your hand under your jaw to show the lowering of the jaw to produce/æ/. Also, some students do not put their tongues far enough forward in their mouth for/æ/, so it is often useful to tell them to lightly push their bottom teeth with their tongue. To see a video explaining the articulation of this vowel, please click the following links: example 1 and example 2.

Minimal pair listening practice should be done to contrast /æ/ and /e/ [e.g. *bed* and *bad*; *met* and *mat*, etc.]. While doing this exercise with your students, encourage them to look at your mouth if they are having problems hearing the difference between these two vowels. Also please inform them that /æ/ is longer than /e/, which they might hear more easily before a voiced consonant such as /d/. As with the other vowels, it is useful for the students to practice pronouncing these minimal pairs in a breakout rooms while the teacher listens in and offers corrections and feedback when necessary.

In terms of communicative practice for this vowel contrast, one exercise I sometimes do is to ask the students to make up yes-no questions in pairs (in breakout rooms) with the present perfect; e.g. H<u>a</u>ve you <u>e</u>ver…? When spoken with a careful pronunciation style, the auxiliary verb h**a**ve has an /æ/ vowel and the first vowel in the adverb **e**ver is always correctly pronounced as /e/. It is useful to give the students some

examples (e.g. *Have you ever been to Niagara Falls? Have you ever eaten (some exotic food)?* etc.) It is also very useful to point out that, in terms of meaning, such questions refer to at least one previous time in the indefinite past. Once the students have finished making up some questions in their breakout rooms, the teacher can close the breakout rooms and the students can ask the teacher the questions. Afterwards, the teacher may choose to have the students ask each other these same questions. But, in this case, the teacher should write down the present perfect questions on MS Word as the students ask the teacher their questions. Then when the students are finished asking their questions, the teacher can email the students the list of questions and/or share the list of questions in the chat function on Zoom. Some lower-level students find it beneficial to be able to see the questions they are asking, so the teacher may choose to enable the share screen function for this purpose when the students ask each other the questions.

/ʌ/ versus /ɑ/

Another vowel contrast which some students have problems with is /ʌ/ (e.g. l**u**ck) versus /ɑ/ (e.g. l**o**ck; as pronounced in many regional dialects of North American English, including Canadian English); and/or /ʌ/ (e.g. l**u**ck) versus the back, rounded /ɒ/ pronounced in many other dialects of English. As the author lives in Canada, he focuses on the contrast between /ʌ/ (e.g. l**u**ck) versus /ɑ/ (e.g. l**o**ck), but teachers whose target English dialect is British English, for example, may chose to focus on the contrast between /ʌ/ and the rounded /ɒ/. For an explanation of the differences in pronunciation of these vowels, please click here: /ʌ/ and /ɑ/ and /ɑ/ and /ɒ/. As shown in the first video link, it is useful to put your hand under your jaw to show the differences in how more open your mouth should be for /ɑ/ than it is for /ʌ/. It is also useful to point out that /ɑ/ is longer than /ʌ/.

As with the other vowels, it is useful to do some minimal pair practice (e.g. l**u**ck/l**o**ck, sh**u**t/sh**o**t, d**u**ck/d**o**ck etc.) after an explanation and a demonstration. As well, naturally, it is a good idea to make up some questions with words that have these target vowels so that the students can practice these vowels in a more meaningful way.

In general, it is easiest to demonstrate the pronunciation of vowels that involve visible articulations of the mouth such as the lips (e.g. rounded lips, lip spreading) and for jaw movement (for more open or more closed vowels). In addition, the tongue position of some front vowels (e.g. /æ/ as in h**a**t and c**a**t) can be demonstrated. Many phonetic diagrams indicating tongue positions are also freely available on the internet, which the instructor can use as a teaching aid.

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Author Bio

Mike Tiittanen has been teaching pronunciation to ESL students since 1996. He has also taught a variety of other ESL classes with the TDSB, Seneca College and other schools. He is the author of *Brain Waves* (Oxford University Press), an ESL activity book. He has a PhD in Applied Linguistics and a TESL certificate.

Lessons learned during COVID-19: Towards blended learning and teaching in LINC and ESL

By Jill Cummings & Ismail Fayed, Yorkville University, Canada

ESL and LINC teachers and programs were shifted abruptly to online and blended teaching as COVID-19 closed physical classrooms in March 2020. In this article, we look back at some of the resulting changes in ESL/LINC teaching and learning due to COVID-19. We examine the growing shift towards blended learning that occurred because of pandemic restrictions, as well as its significance for blended delivery and implications for ESL and LINC teachers, teacher training and education, students, programs, and further research.

These findings were first presented and discussed with ESL and LINC teachers during our presentation (Cummings & Fayed, 2021) at the TESL Ontario Conference in November 2021. The findings came to light during our development of a publication project which led to the handbook *Teaching in the Post COVID-19 Era* (Fayed & Cummings, 2021) begun in Spring 2020 and published in December 2021 by Springer Publishing. This handbook aimed to document the global challenges, teaching practices, and innovations related to pedagogical planning and course delivery that were developed because of COVID-19. Early in March 2020 as teachers and students were required to stay home because of the worsening pandemic, we (Fayed & Cummings, 2021) questioned what we, as educators, could do to help other teachers and students. We started working on this publication project that eventually turned into a full handbook showcasing the extraordinary responses that educators made to navigate their way through the pandemic. This scholarly text discusses valuable innovations for teaching and learning in times of a crises like COVID-19 and beyond. Based on 73 chapters, case studies, and contributions from educators in more than 30 countries worldwide, the handbook examines effective teaching models and methods, technology innovations and enhancements, strategies for engagement of learners, unique approaches to teacher education and leadership, and also important counseling models and mental health support for students. In this article, we focus on those findings and experiences relevant to ESL and LINC students and teachers. Significant changes in teaching and learning were noted – mainly, an increasing uptake of blended learning/teaching as a frequent mode of delivery. Here we discuss this shift towards blended delivery and the changes in teaching approaches

needed to navigate blended teaching. We also anticipate implications for the ongoing development of ESL and LINC teaching/learning as we continue teaching in a *new normal* post COVID-19.

Background: Blended learning

It is first important to explain what we mean by blended learning (BL) before launching into discussion of its increased uptake during and post-COVID.

Blended learning (sometimes also referred to as hybrid learning) combines online interactions and resources with traditional in-class delivery. BL requires some physical presence of both teachers and students with elements of student control over time, learning path, or place. Generally, the type of blend may happen differently according to different institutions, times, and even activity levels (Graham, 2009). Watson (2008) described a five-stage continuum of blended learning with Stage I representing fully online instruction with options for some face-to-face (F2F) instruction; Stage II is mainly online with some time in the classroom or computer lab; Stage III is mostly or fully online with students meeting daily in the classroom or computer lab; Stage IV provides classroom instruction with substantial components online that extend beyond the classroom; and, Stage V is classroom instruction that includes online resources with limited or no requirements for students to be online. Each stage represents a different way of combining online and F2F instruction between the provision of fully online instruction with optional F2F to the fully in-class with additional online resources beyond the physical and/or virtual classroom.

Other modes of BL include hyflex where *hybrid* and *flexible* are combined. In this case, students may be given a choice in how they participate in the course (in the physical classroom or remotely) and engage with material in the mode that works best for them over the course and from session to session.

Towards blended learning and teaching

The significant shift towards blended learning was the immediate result of the constraints imposed by COVID-19 requiring ESL and LINC programs to transition to remote synchronous delivery and live online classes via virtual video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Google Classroom, and Microsoft Teams rather than physical classrooms. We know that since March 2020 there has been a large upswing in blended learning in ESL and LINC. Sturm et al. (2021) noted the extent of this shift towards blended learning based on the increased need for instructor training for blended teaching. The Avenue-LearnIT2teach project, which develops and provides the blended learning teacher training for online and blended learning and the learning management system platform and course resources and activities for learners, saw "286 new teachers…added to BL training by the end of March 2020 alone; and an additional 226 new teachers from April to June 2020" (Sturm, 2021, p. 596). The true shift in this case was the dramatic transition from

mainly F2F *on the ground* delivery in physical classrooms supplemented with a *blend* with some online and remote synchronous delivery (RSD) to fully online delivery with increased use of remote delivery via video conferencing platforms and classrooms in Zoom and Google. Sturm (2021, p. 594) explained that "the [original] teacher training, learner courseware, and support materials were designed for BL, that is teachers supplementing their in-person classes with online activities" from Avenue-LearnIT2teach. However, COVID-19 and closures of physical classrooms meant teachers "needed to use the learner courseware 100% online (OL)" with some synchronous video conferences/classes (Sturm, 2021, p. 594). Sturm noted that the Avenue-LearnIT2teach project found that in programs "where courseware had already been used for BL, a sudden shift to OL was easier than in other programs where many teachers decided to take the training and use the learner courseware, but some opted for other OL solutions like Google classroom instead" (Sturm, 2021, p. 594).

Based on post-training survey results (Sturm et al., 2021), 263 teachers completed Stage 1 of the Avenue-LearnIT2teach training for blended teaching, 359 teachers completed Pre-Stage 2, and 96 teachers completed Stage 2 of the training to prepare for teaching online. This uptake represents a significant surge of 4.6 times (Stage 1), 5.4 times (Pre-Stage 2), and 6.8 times (Stage 2) times more than before the pandemic crisis prior to March 2020. After the introductory Stage 1 training, the Stage 2 training levels require teachers to use and adapt an online course for blended learning/teaching.

Many teachers continued to Stage 3 of the training where they created their own courses, and some to Stage 4 where they designed their own e-activities. Between March 15 and June 30, 2020, 538 new blended learning LINC courses were set up in the learner courseware. Of these, 338 were set up by teachers who were new to the training, or in a few cases, by teachers who restarted the training after a long absence. Enrollments of teachers in courses surged to 5,251 in the last two weeks of March, 2020 compared to 1,085 on average per month in the two months prior (Sturm et al., 2021).

This trend suggests more capacity building and readiness for BL are shaping the way among instructors and programs since COVID-19. By moving towards these alternate modes of delivery relied on and made popular by COVID-19, it is possible to revise and supplement many of our existing teaching dynamics in various dimensions. Since that time, we have learned a great deal about how to effectively go online and blend face-to-face classes with asynchronous online activities. For example, many educators have shifted from introducing quizzes or tests to measure learning to using alternative assessments, online projects, virtual office hours and conferencing to support learners and assess their achievements.

LINC and ESL teachers quickly transitioned to a blend of synchronous teaching/learning via virtual classrooms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams combined with asynchronous online teaching/learning activities. The move to blended learning has been extensive. During the TESL Ontario 2021 Conference (November 4, 2021), we heard from LINC and ESL instructors who participated in our presentation regarding *Blended learning post COVID-19: An informed approach* (Cummings & Fayed, 2021). They confirmed their increasing move to BL in their responses to our questions and in the chat during the session, and also noted that in many cases, virtual and blended teaching/learning continue to be the norm for many ESL and LINC classes post COVID-19.

In September 2022, when questioned about the ongoing status of uptake of Avenue-LearnIT2teach BL training by instructors, Sturm (2022) reported that the trend towards blended teaching and learning has continued beyond COVID closures even though many LINC and ESL programs were allowed to return to their physical sites and classrooms by Fall 2021. The demand for training in blended learning by instructors and programs continues. Robert McBride, Executive Director of Avenue-LearnIT2teach, reports: "In November 2020 we installed a stats package on Avenue.ca and have been tracking the constant incremental uptake of teacher participation in BL training ever since. As of October 2022, there are over 50,000 accounts, of which abut 13,000 are active during any 30-day window as compared to the 1,000 that were active before Covid" (2022). The pandemic resulted in what appears to be an unforeseen shift towards blended teaching and delivery in LINC and ESL.

McBride also points out the significant expansion and additional elements added to the Avenue-LearnIT2teach BL training for instructors in response to demands since Covid. "We launched Zoom webinars early in the pandemic to address training gaps. There are now almost 50 of them archived on our project portal (www.learnit2teach.ca), and we continue to roll out new ones at the rate of at least one per month" (2022). Another significant enhancement to Avenue-LearnIT2teach training has been the set up of the teacher-only discussion forum on Avenue.ca. McBride explains: "Every teacher is automatically enrolled and this teacher discussion forum has become a lively environment for sharing problems and comments. Posts are monitored by our trainers and responded to promptly" (2022).

At the time of the TESL Ontario Conference in November 2021, instructors noted that a number of their programs continued to rely on blended delivery with synchronous video classes blended with asynchronous online activities and learning or F2F *on the ground* classes supplemented with asynchronous online activities and synchronous video conferencing. For example, Newcomer Peel Programs in Ontario followed this model which combines virtual F2F classes via video conferencing with online asynchronous activities and tasks.

Other ESL and LINC programs went back to in person classes in the physical classroom by Fall 2021; however, continued to provide blended online asynchronous activities beyond face-to-face class time. Some classes provided classes every day, but alternated days on which some groups of students would attend in person and some would participate online from home.

When and how to blend learning

The big question that remains for teachers is when to use F2F activities in the classroom—whether it be *seated* on the ground classes or a virtual classroom like Zoom—and when and how to provide asynchronous online activities outside the classroom—discussions, blogs, video presentations…and other online tasks and resources.

The University of Buffalo recommends three resources for blended teaching, that is, using seated F2F instruction in the physical classroom, asynchronous online learning, and remote course delivery modes via video conferencing. This model provides hybrid or BL by combining elements from these three delivery modes. Key components to plan for in each delivery mode include the pacing of instructions, content delivery and opportunities for practice, technologies, resources to share, and how to manage discussions.

The seated or physical classroom and virtual classroom where interaction amongst students and teacher(s) is mainly synchronous maximizes the necessary teaching presence and opportunities for social connections and development of community (e.g., social presence) for effectiveness in BL (Garrison et al., 2000; Fiock, 2020; Picciano, 2017); whereas in asynchronous online delivery modes that is not necessarily the case. In online delivery which is usually asynchronous by nature, independent learning is maximized through self-paced learning modules and activities. In that case, students need to have strengths in self-management and organization skills to be able to effectively manage asynchronous learning on their own. Based on instructors' choices, specific resources and technologies for each mode need to be considered and heavily utilized for teaching and learning. These many factors require extensive consideration by LINC and ESL teachers seeking to maximize blended learning for and with their students.

An example for blended learning in LINC and ESL

To clarify this further, let us consider how we could blend some sample tasks based on the LINC Level 5 curriculum. Students engage in a series of activities to learn and practice language related to workplace and employment law. They brainstorm problems in the workplace and learn how to give suggestions and advice. They do listening comprehension activities related to employment law. And, they read and discuss short case studies about workplace situations and problems to consider if laws have been upheld or violated.

Sample Tasks	LINC5

1. In groups, discuss a list of problems in the workplace and give suggestions and advice.
2. Listen to a presentation about employment law in Ontario and identify the main points and most important details.
3. Read short case studies about workplace situations. Decide if workers' rights have been violated and how by referring to information in the Employment Standards Act.
    ⌨ **Novice:** Work in a group to prepare a PowerPoint presentation for the class to defend your decisions in Language Task 3.
        Skills: (PowerPoint) Create a Blank Presentation, Font, Font Alignment, Show a Presentation
4. Write about a situation where an employee's rights were violated.	

Additional Tasks	
⌨ Novice: Cut terms and paste beside definitions in a scrambled instructor-made file about vocabulary related to the Employment Standards Act. Skills: Open, Save, Cut, Paste, Drag and Drop	
LINC 1-5	**301**

(Cummings & Fayed, TESL Ontario Conference 2021)

In preparing to teach such a lesson using a blended approach, there are a number of options for presenting and practicing these tasks. Teachers and programs choose from different modes, technologies, and activities based on what is best for their students' learning. For example, the warm up activity could be done as a brainstorming activity before class through an online discussion activity. This could be done in small groups or as a whole class; or, the teacher may decide to do the brainstorming in either the physical classroom virtual classroom via Zoom or Teams.

In the same way, you may decide to provide the listening activities online through audio case stories and questions or in the classroom or both—depending on the needs of your students and timing and program scheduling. Comprehension questions may be facilitated online through quizzes and Q & A online activities or in the classroom. And the presentations by students may be prepared and developed online by the student groups and uploaded for discussion and review by the whole class as video presentations online; or, you may decide that these presentations are best done in the classroom synchronously. Follow-up discussions may take place in the classroom and/or online. This means options and decisions need to be made by the teacher.

Warm Up: Brainstorm employment problems	Listen to case stories	Comprehension Questions	Discussion of Case Stories	Group Presentations
Online Forum or F2F or Both	• Online activity and/or F2F in Zoom or the Physical Classroom	• OL: Quizzes, H5P, SCORM - F2F or Both F2F and OL	• F2F or Online	• F2F in physical class or F2F in virtual class or Video Presentations uploaded OL & Peer Review

(Cummings & Fayed, TESL Ontario Conference 2021)

These multiple options speak at once to both the flexibility and advantages of a blended approach and its possible challenges. Teachers need to know the needs and strengths of their students, as well as to plan according to their students' availability to work synchronously in class or online asynchronously. Teachers also need and benefit from the instructor training and the blended learning activities and resources provided through Avenue-LearnIT2teach to efficiently and effectively implement blended learning. Significant amounts of time for planning are also required.

However, in spite of these heavy demands on teachers, BL has *taken off* in LINC and ESL since COVID-19 closed our physical classrooms and programs were required to adapt by providing blended and online learning. As noted by Sturm about the Avenue-LearnIT2teach project and the uptake of BL: "I would say that the trend [towards adopting BL] definitely continued with a few breaks in the summer months, especially after the first wave [of COVID] when many teachers probably just needed a break. We saw another significant surge [in teacher demand for training for blended learning/teaching] in the Fall of 2020 and continuous growth since then" (2022).

A demonstration research project, which investigated the effects of blended learning in LINC (Cummings et al., 2019) by studying blended learning classes, students, and instructors in real time prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, illuminated the many benefits of BL, as well as challenges. The ensuing report to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and stakeholders called for increased attention to blended learning/teaching in order to draw on the advantages of blended learning, including these important benefits documented in the research: increased student engagement; development of digital literacy learning (computer skills) and real world skills needed to manage the demands of jobs and daily life; support of learner autonomy and self-reflection; the capacity to provide more personalized learning for individual students leading to increased motivation; improved student attendance, engagement, and retention; flexibility and support of students' diverse schedules and responsibilities so they may attend to work and family demands while studying English; increased access to knowledge and information for students and teachers; support of teachers and teaching (Cummings et al., 2019, pp. 36–59). LINC instructor participants in that research project exclaimed support for BL. Their endorsement may be summed up by this quote from one of the instructors: "Blended learning transcends the classroom walls; it's engaging and creative; it connects[students and teachers] with the larger community; it breaks the potential of isolation of Traditional, classroom-based language learning; it's flexible. It's also sometimes challenging—as a teacher using this approach you have to update skills and knowledge continuously. You become a learner yourself, which I love" (Cummings et al., 2019, p. 63).

COVID-19 and our experiences with remote teaching have reinforced and strengthened that attention to and the uptake of blended learning considerably.

Implications and recommendations

In 2018, Shebansky noted that although "the integration of blended learning is well underway across diverse educational settings...There has been less interest, however, in examining the adoption of blended learning in English as a second language (ESL) contexts" (p. 52). COVID-19 has changed that trajectory, however. Therefore, in conclusion, we would like to highlight implications and recommendations in light of this trend towards embracing blended teaching/learning.

This is not an exhaustive list. We do propose here five top priority recommendations needed in order to prepare LINC and ESL teachers to adopt and implement blended learning effectively and to continue the momentum towards implementing the benefits of BL which COVID-19 hastened:

1. There needs to be continued development and promotion of instructor training and resources for blended learning/ teaching using innovative ways of BL delivery for both synchronous and asynchronous modes. Sturm (2021) highlighted: "The exponential increase in [BL] courses set up on the learner courseware site is a highly significant indicator in terms of the impact of the PD" (p. 600); Sturm also called for continued support and provision of both the formal PD training for BL and the more informal mentoring training and coaching provided during COVID-19 through the LiveHelp chat, email support, and teacher forums provided (p. 598). Sturm (2022), as well notes the need for standards for BL, plus ongoing training for leadership for administrators and lead teachers.

2. TESL teacher education and certification programs plus ongoing professional development programs will need to consider requiring courses and workshops (both theoretical and practice-based) focused on a blended approach. And the need to require inclusion of blended learning/teaching needs to be considered for the certification and re-certification of TESL programs. Teachers need to experience how to blend learning effectively and how to develop and co-ordinate BL activities and tasks. TESL practice-teaching courses and experience for ESL and LINC teacher candidates need to include experience and time in teaching in programs with practicum teacher partners and mentors who have already taken and implemented the Avenue-LearnIT2teach training for BL. TESL certificate programs and certification committees need to consider whether the Avenue-LearnIT2teach training for BL should be required for teacher candidates and how to best require and include that training.

3. Programs and funders need to recognize the increasing professional demands and time needed for teachers to effectively prepare for, plan and implement blended learning. There has been an ongoing call for support of teacher training and preparation for BL in the research and scholarly publications regarding BL (Costa et al., 2016; Cummings et al., 2019; Sturm, 2021). It is time now for programs and

funders to support BL teacher training and planning time.

4.   In light of the benefits of BL for learners, that is, learning of necessary digital literacy skills while learning English and settlement skills and the flexibility of BL for meeting the scheduling needs of learners who have work and family responsibilities (Cummings et al., 2019, pp. 36–59), students too need to explore new dimensions and learning environments where the curriculum is no longer restricted to the physical borders or space of the classroom but rather expanded in time, time-zone, space, frequency, immersion and location. These opportunities for BL and classes need to be expanded and established and "more of the norm than the exception" by programs and funders.

5.   More ongoing research examining the effects and best practices for BL is needed to study teaching practices that have developed during and past COVID-19 and the ongoing needs for BL delivery and teacher education.

As LINC and ESL stakeholders look toward a future of increased opportunities for flexible learning and teaching via blended approaches, it is time to increase attention to instructor training and blended learning resources, teacher education, funding and provision of time for professional development, and research.

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Author Bias
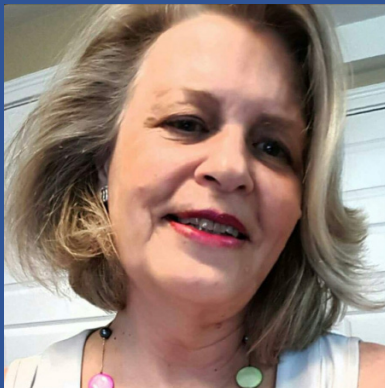
Dr. Jill Cummings (PhD, Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning in Second Language Education, University of Toronto) has been involved in ESL, English for Academic and Professional Purposes, and ESL teacher education extensively. Jill has contributed to numerous publications and served as a founding committee member of the TESL Ontario Certification Review Board. She developed and co-edited *Teaching in the post COVID-19 era* (2021) documenting the challenges, innovations, and strategies of instructors during COVID-19.
Contact: dr.jbcummings@gmail.com

Dr. Ismail Fayed (PhD, Education Technology from the University of Science Malaysia and an MA in Educational Technology and TESOL from the University of Manchester) is Project Director, Educational Technology at Yorkville University, Canada. He has many years of Higher Education experience in Canada, Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. Dr. Fayed is a co-editor *Teaching in the post COVID-19 era* (2021), the author of *ESL writing enhancement using moodle LMS* (2013), and co-editor of *Computers in English language teaching* (2011). He has served as an Executive Board member in several non-profit TESOL organizations, such as Qatar-TESOL.
Contact: ismailfayed@gmail.com

Global opportunities in online English language learning

By Azadeh Pordel, Western University, Canada

This paper argues that distance English language learning, which enables economic opportunities for non-English speakers, has not been equally available globally. In this article, I will explain that there is a need to learn English remotely for people whose lifestyles and family obligations do not allow them to attend in-person language learning classes. Yet, they need to know the English language to have better opportunities financially and academically. The theoretical framework that I have chosen for this paper is world culture theory seeing the world and people becoming more similar and connected more than ever with technology.

Significance of the subject matter

Inequality is increasing between countries and within countries, and the primary reason behind it is income and economic disadvantages (Hill & Lawton, 2018). Meanwhile, education and higher education specifically are closely tied to these inequalities in that higher education is costly for the governments (Hill & Lawton, 2018). I consider ELL (English Language Learners) part of adults' higher education. Therefore, the inequality that Hill and Lawton explained exists in higher education is present in the ELL realm and needs to be addressed.

Theoretical framework

This paper uses world culture as the theoretical framework. World culture theory argues that different locations in the world have become connected as a result of globalization, and schools are becoming similar (Anderson-Levitt, 2003). In this view of world culture theory, the world is evolving to be more united, equal, and connected. However, it is essential to see both sides of the debate on world culture theory. From an anthropologist's perspective, the world is becoming more divergent as local people create new cultures daily. From a sociologist's view, the world is convergent as the global norms are somehow being dictated either through colonization or culture adaptation of local people. Therefore, people are becoming more similar, and the world is evolving (Edwards, 2021).

In this paper, I take the stance of sociologists toward world culture and argue that the world and its citizens are becoming more similar than different. From this perspective, I say that technology has helped people from other locations become connected and virtually be connected. I also see the English language as a means to connect people, and the spread of the English language has made people speak English as a lingua franca. Consequently, by using one language for business or communication, the world has become more similar than before.

Overview of the spread of English as lingua franca around the world

English has become the "global default lingua franca" and it is spoken among people whose first language is not English, even more than native English speakers (Baker et al., 2018). Before I present some figures of the population of English-speaking nations and individuals, I offer a brief overview of how English gained power as the lingua franca.

More than 1.35 billion people speak English as their first or second language. This number is slightly higher than Mandarin, with 1.2 billion speakers (Statista, 2021). Although Mandarin has a competitive number of users who claim the lingua franca as well, the number of countries which have the English language as an official language (67) exceeds the number of countries having Mandarin (5) as their official language (Lingoda, 2021).

It is noteworthy to review why and how English became the global language. Before English, other languages like French, German, and Arabic gained international attention. Abdullah and Chaudhary (2013) consider adaptability and simplicity the main reasons for English becoming and surviving as the lingua franca. Another factor contributing to English as the lingua franca is the notion of power aligned with the British empire's control over a vast area of the world for so long. The British colonization has also contributed to the spread of English globally. Having many countries under their power and control, the British Empire wanted people to learn their language. One important aspect of spreading English is that the British Empire invested in educating people with the language in the countries they colonized. Therefore, the subject of English as a second or foreign language emerged. Besides Britain, the USA also has contributed to spreading the English language by providing education opportunities for people to learn the language. As a case in point, in the Philippines, American textbooks were used and taught at school even after their independence; further, after World War II, the USA was the most powerful country with English as the official language, and when helped with the formation of the United Nations (UN), English became one of the four languages spoken at the UN (Abdullah & Chaudhury, 2013).

With that in mind, English is the second or foreign language being taught at schools. English has also become a mandatory subject at schools. One hundred forty-two countries have English as a compulsory subject at school, and 41 countries have it as an elective course (The University of Winnipeg, 2021). In Europe, learning English has become a priority for almost all students at school. Eurostat reveals that in 2019 most elementary learners (99-100%) and secondary school students (96%) have studied English as their first foreign language (Eurostat, 2021). To conclude this section, I should once more emphasize that English has spread worldwide more than any other language, and the need and demand for learning English worldwide are increasing.

English language speakers and economic opportunities

Besides everyday communication facilitators, English has also become the dominant language for business (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2005). As a case, Nordic countries have recently moved to use English as the lingua franca. Traditionally, they had used Scandinavian languages. Communicating in Scandinavian languages caused confusion and misunderstanding with neighbouring countries with different dialects and word choices. Secondly, corporations in these regions are interested in cross-border mergers and acquisitions. As a result, they can fully understand the unions and communicate with them (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2005).

Another area in which language and economic growth are tied together is the labour market, specifically for immigrants to an English-speaking country. Research shows that when immigrants want to join the workforce in the destination country, their English language proficiency determines the type of job and income they could be earning. The better their English proficiency, the better job opportunities with higher salaries become available to them. This has also been reflected in the job ads, and employers seek to hire people with better English communication skills, both written and spoken. Therefore, the type of jobs that people not proficient in the English language will get are more "silent jobs" where communication is not much required (Alarcón et al., 2018). Therefore, with better English language proficiency, higher-income becomes available to the immigrants to a new country, mostly an English-speaking country.

Another tie between learning English and better economic opportunities happens when individuals gain access to more resources and networks due to their higher communication skills in the English language. Therefore, they make better connections, bringing them higher income and higher employment rates in English-speaking countries for immigrants. For example, one study shows for Muslim immigrants to Australia, if their English language proficiency improves from good to very good, there is a 6% higher chance of not being unemployed (Guven et al., 2019).

Benefits of online language learning

Online language learning (OLL) enables individuals who have joined the workforce and cannot take time off to attend a school. OLL is beneficial as it fits a variety of schedules, and it is suitable for employed learners. With work and life obligations, adult learners benefit from flexible hours, and there is no need to travel to attend school (Appana, 2008).

The second benefit of online learning for adults is learning autonomy. Autonomy or self-direction happens when learners take control of their learning plan. They can decide when to study, where to study, and how to study. Further, they become responsible for making better decisions based on their learning needs. Adult learners can plan their learning goals and are familiar with their learning styles. Therefore, having online classes will provide a better chance for self-directed learning journeys (Conaway & Zorn-Arnold, 2011).

The third benefit is the opportunity to be registered in classes with more diverse learners as they might join from various locations worldwide. Appana (2009) also adds that access to experts in the field might become more available with online education. The third benefit related to learners is the speed at which course material is being shared with them and updated as needed, saving time and providing a better opportunity to access up-to-date course content.

The fourth benefit of online classes is learning digital skills besides course content. Students will improve their computer skills while taking an online course. In a study, Wiener (2003) found out that the students taking an online class in America's Cyber Schools, have improved their computer skills.

The fifth benefit is related to anonymity. Appana (2008) points out that shy learners get an equal chance of participation. Moreover, the instructors treat the students more equally due to proper visual cues. In a case study, Freeman and Bamford (2004) focused on learners' identity in an asynchronous situation. Their research result showed that anonymity helps with participation in discussion forums and also clarifying the course expectations.

The last benefit of OLL for adult learners is the new market. This advantage mainly means having access to new learning opportunities and institutes from different locations worldwide. For example, a student in Asia can easily take a course in North America without relocating.

The spread of online/remote EFL learning opportunities

Many learners have turned to OLL to acquire English skills, given the benefits of learning English as a foreign language. The factors that attract learners are different based on their needs. This section will address the OLL opportunities for people who want to further their studies in an English-speaking country.

These individuals use communication technology daily, and people affected by crises find OLL a substitute for in-school person classes.

The high ranking of the universities with English as the means of instruction attracts some learners to join these universities. There are many reasons why OLL of the English language has become popular globally among those learners who want to pursue academic studies in an English-speaking country. Firstly, some English language learners who would like to attend a university in an English-speaking country prefer to improve their English language proficiency online from their home country before starting their course(s). In the case of learners who aim to attend universities in English-speaking countries, those who academically qualify but lack language proficiency seem to be more interested in taking online language courses instead of sitting for TOEFL tests. Moreover, there are some mental health and financial challenges when an international student moves to a destination university to study. These challenges are, for instance, culture shock, communication issues, rent, and other living costs. However, learners can focus on the classes only without engaging in other daily life challenges when taking online English courses. Finally, learning English online before entering the university even provides the advantage of pre-studying helpful content of their university course. Many English language programs adapt their content based on the learners' future field of study. Finally, autonomy is another skill that learners gain when taking their English language course online while getting support from the instructors (Andrade, 2016).

The second reason why OLL has spread worldwide is that knowing English works as a gate opener to a whole new world of information on the internet. Many young adults who seek access to more news, online gaming, social interaction with peers, and many more activities in the digital world find mastery over English necessary to access all the mentioned resources (Lamb & Arisandy, 2020).

The third reason behind the spread of OLL is learning English even during a crisis. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools and language institutes transferred their classes to online mode to avoid gaps in knowledge. This trend continued spreading worldwide, and some learners are happy that their education has not been stopped even when facing a global challenge. Hazaymeh (2021) claims students were satisfied with their engagement and continuity of learning English online even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, as OLL provides a chance for learners to continue their education, more people have become interested in learning English online, especially in times of crisis.

To sum up, there are many reasons why OLL has spread worldwide, mainly due to distance learning opportunities. However, besides all the motivation factors mentioned above, accessibility to online classes is another crucial factor that enables online courses. Digital access is primarily available with reasonable costs or even publicly available through public libraries or government-supported institutes. However, this

is not the case in global south (previously termed third world) countries where the basics like connecting to the internet through WIFI or owning a device for online classes may not be available (Torun, 2020).

The digital divide and inequality in the Global South

The expansion of OLL is a globalization process resulting from technological advances (Andrade, 2016). However, OLL has not been equally available to people from different locations globally, particularly those in Global South (GS). Two main reasons that cause the digital divide in the GS and GN are inadequate internet access and income equality. Digital equity is defined as not having equal chances of access to internet connection and devices, digital skills, and support (Resta & Laferrière, 2015). Although previous generations of telecom services such as telephone-use became accessible to most people worldwide, the new telecom, specifically high-speed internet use, has not been equally available to rich and poor people (Valenzuela-Levi, 2021). The unavailability of internet connection is evident in GS. For example, in 2016, only 46% of people in rural parts of the GS had access to the internet from home; that figure was 35% in India and even lower in Africa, and unfortunately, "for hundreds of millions of people in rural parts of the developing world, the digital age has not even started" (Hill & Lawton, 2018, p. 603).

Secondly, the income inequality is evident in World Bank data as it confirms that the divide in income has been increased in the GS countries and decreased in GN countries. The disparity in access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) is primarily the result of income inequality, which also contributes to "lower economic growth" and "lower educational achievement" (Bauer, 2018, p. 334). For example, in Africa, people lose many growth opportunities because of limited or no access to the internet; however, people from the GN have a better chance of connecting to the internet. With that comes economic opportunities and growth (Counted & Arawole, 2015). This division is not purely from state irresponsibility, and it partially originates from the platforms and online service providers who restrict GS access to their services. In contrast, the access is open to most GN users, which shows more inequality in digital access for the GS. Gross national income (GNI) is another economic factor that plays a vital role in connecting. GNI is directly related to the costs for broadband, and therefore, in countries where this cost is more than GNI per capita, access to internet connection is affected dramatically (Resta & Laferrière, 2015).

Discussion

This paper argues that while there are many benefits to learning English as a foreign language in an online setting, many people in the Global South are excluded from these opportunities. Thus, they face inequalities since their chances of learning English as the lingua franca is overlooked by the governments, institutions, and officials. The theoretical framework used in this paper was the world culture theory taking

the side that the world is becoming more similar, and schooling is becoming homogeneous. This has led to more and easier ways of connectivity and growth in communication among people worldwide, having the opportunity to sit in classes together from different locations in the world. English is the world's lingua franca, and more than 1.35 billion people speak English as a first, second, or foreign language. It is beneficial for people to learn English because it helps connect with more people around the globe because of the economic opportunities it brings to people who know the world's lingua franca. Many adult learners want to learn English to further their education, have immigration opportunities, or find a better job. However, they cannot always take in-person classes because of their busy lifestyles and workloads. Online language learning provides the chance to learn English from home without relocating. Unfortunately, as this idea seems appealing, OLL has not equally been available to people in the Global South. The inaccessibility to online learning opportunities mostly comes from poor digital infrastructure in the Global South. The future directions to solve this inequality in online learning opportunities could be made towards providing a global connection that is free of charge and not provided to a specific location in the world.

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Author Bio

Azi is an Ontario Certified teacher and teacher trainer currently completing her PhD in Critical Policies, Equity and Leadership Studies in Education at Western University. Azi has also completed her master's degree in TESOL at Western University. She has more than ten years of experience teaching ESL/EFL/EAP and LINC classes in Canada and overseas. In 2022, she was assigned as TESL London's Communications Chair and EGSA Equity Chair at Western University. Her research interest is in educational policy analysis and the inclusion of multilingual learners.

The application of word meaning expansion for teaching vocabulary

By Masoumeh Gooya, Canada

The following essay is a condensed summary of a completed thesis for achieving a degree of Master's of Art in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

If we imagine language as a living entity framed and supported by structure/grammar and fleshed with words, this organism requires both to function. It is impossible to learn a language without vocabulary. There exists at least 500,000 words in English, while the average native speaker only knows about 30,000 words receptively and 3000 words productively (Allen, 1983). Teaching every last word to English language learners is out of the question. Still, a more sustainable and feasible approach to helping students develop their vocabulary repertoire is by teaching them techniques of self-learning.

This mindset has led to the formation of several vocabulary techniques based on semantics phenomena such as word formation, synonyms, associated meanings, antonyms, etc. However, among these phenomena exists polysemy, a case that has almost been neglected for developing vocabulary repertoires.

All semantic theories must define the nature of meanings and their relationships, including the ambiguity phenomenon that can arise in a sentence for several reasons. According to Falk (1978), Fromkin and Rodman (1998), and Lyons (1979), ambiguity can occur through homonyms, polysemes, or ambiguous syntactic structures.

Reviewing the history of semantics reveals that with regard to polysemy and the relationship between the meanings of a polysemous word, unfortunately, almost all semantic theories, either traditional or cognitive theories, have failed in presenting an operational explanation.

Nonetheless, there has been an exception; metaphorical-cognitive semantics based on metaphorical structure has been successful in defining polysemy systematically. According to this theory, Lackoff and

Johnson (1980) argue that the way we think is metaphorical, and hence language operates metaphorically most of the time. Humans think and talk metaphorically with metaphors being a norm of communication, not an exception (not only for literary purposes). Accordingly, meaning is based on the relationship between the world and the human metaphorical perception or understanding of the world. Thus, it seems that a great number of mappings of the form to multiple meanings, such as polysemy, are due to metaphorical usage that is no longer consciously metaphorical. This mapping is structured on our understanding of more abstract domains in terms of our understanding of more concrete domains. That is to say, more abstract domains of meaning tend to derive their vocabulary from more concrete domains rather than vice versa (Levinson, 1995; Sweetser,1993; and Lakoff, 1987). Therefore, it is possible to define polysemy systematically in this way; a polysemy is a single form that conveys a group of senses related metaphorically and sequenced from concrete to more abstract meanings.

It is evident that almost always, whether theory-based or not, polysemous words have been taught discretely to learners (Hatch & Brown, 1995). This discrete approach, on the one hand, leads to learning a set of separate words with the same form by students while they do not know the relationship of these words. On the other hand, it may lead to the learning of only some of the possible meanings of a single form and not all the meanings as a related set. As Allen (1983) implies, employing the traditional discrete approach may seem reasonable and acceptable at the elementary and pre-intermediate levels where students need to learn a limited number of words that are more concrete than abstract. However, it does not help the students at higher levels—intermediate to advanced—where the students need to increase their vocabulary knowledge, specifically abstract vocabulary knowledge, through the use of the words that they have already acquired.

To be more precise, there are three major reasons why such a technique is essential. The first is due to the fact that most English words are polysemous (McCarthy & O'Dell, 1995). The second is due to vocabulary improvement, and as Allen (1983) mentions, one way of such can be making the students learn new meanings for already known words. The third is the lack of a technique for teaching polysemous words to the learners (Hatch & Brown, 1995).

This study with a focus on polysemy as a semantic phenomenon defined by metaphorical-cognitive theory proposes a technique—Word Meaning Expansion Technique—for improving the vocabulary knowledge of students. The Word Meaning Expansion Technique called the "Ripple Effect" by Fengying (1996) is a technique that through diagramming (ripple diagram), it illustrates the metaphorical expansion and relationship of the meanings of a polyseme. As suggested by Fengying (1996), this technique might be appropriate for teaching all polysemous words. However, for this particular study, its efficacy was tested for polysemous nouns.

The polysemous nouns with concrete core meanings (entities that exist in the physical real world like objects, body organs, etc.) were employed. This type of polysemous noun was chosen as most students have no difficulty with these core meanings. As Hatch and Brown (1995) state, the core nouns are the easiest and first words learned at the beginner levels. Therefore, in the treatment period of this study, the students and teacher can focus entirely on the more peripheral and abstract meaning expansions of these nouns in which they may have more difficulty (as they most likely do not know these meanings). Furthermore, such core-like polysemous nouns could confirm how weak the upper language learners are at the peripheral and abstract meaning expansion of even such simple polysemes.

For this study, the diagrams for these polysemous nouns were created based on the metaphorical expansion of the meanings from the core to peripheral and abstract domains. Each diagram illustrates not only the meaning expansion of the word but also the metaphorical link of concrete to more abstract senses. The central circle represents the physical entity in the material world. Mimicking a ripple, this further extends to other physical entities which resemble the core meaning or observable entities which denote an event, process, or state (more peripheral and abstract meanings). Thus, all of the meanings radiate and correlate from the center to the outermost layer along several lines by focusing on different features of the original entity.

As an example, in the diagram for *foot,* the central circle of the diagram shows the core meaning of foot—the lower end of the leg. In the next layer, the foot refers to other entities that share common features such as position, function, or shape with a foot. For example, in this layer, based on the function, the foot also refers to the state of walking, pace, and step. The function of the foot is not only holding the weight of the body as the lowest part of the leg but also walking which is considered a peripheral function (as a state). However, there is another peripheral meaning in the second layer closer to the line of the third layer (more abstract and different from others): *foot* as an infantry soldier. Based on the second function and also the position of the foot, a foot (soldier) is a person who served within the army that were too low in rank for membership in the cavalry. They also walked or learned to walk all the time. In other words, the foot can also refer to a person (refer to diagram 1).
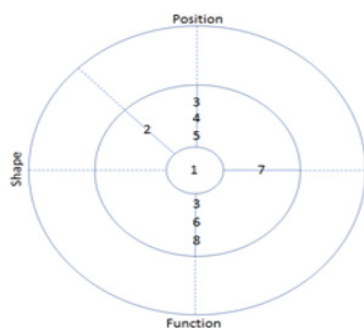
foot 1. part forming the lower end of the leg. Beginning at the ankle, on which the body stands and moves: he rose to his feet, stood up. *A dog's feet are called paws.* 2. the part of a stocking, sock, etc. covering the foot.
3. any part similar in position or function: *foot of a sewing machine.* 4. lower end of a bed or grave.
5. lowest part; bottom: *at the foot of the page ladder wall mountain.* 6. step, pace, tread *light swift fleet of feet.* stepping or walking lightly, swiftly, etc. 7. measure of length=12 inches: *George is very tall, he is six feet two.* (six feet two inches)

The research question of whether the Word Meaning Expansion Technique has any impact on learning polysemous nouns by Iranian EFL learners (at intermediate to advanced levels) was raised.

To conduct the research, two intact groups of Iranian EFL students as control and experimental groups were selected. The experimental group was instructed by the word meaning expansion technique and the students in the control group were instructed by the common traditional approach. A standardized test was applied to test the two groups before and after the treatment. A simple factorial design was established. To analyze the data, a two way analysis of variance (Two way ANOVA) was employed in order to determine the probable significant differences between groups, tests (instructions), and groups by tests together. Sceffe's tests were conducted to specify the exact location of the meaningful differences.

The results of the study proved that the word meaning expansion technique could be more effective for learning, for at least the core-like polysemous nouns. The result demonstrates that by searching and finding the metaphorical relationship between the meanings of a polysemous noun and using them in examples, students create a systematic net of related senses in their minds which helps them learn and remember the meanings more easily.

This study can have pedagogical implications for English learners, English teachers, and lexicographers. Since a great deal of the English vocabulary consists of polysemous words, this visual systematic technique receives utmost importance. Through diagramming the senses of polysemous nouns from core to more abstract ones and establishing a metaphorical relation between the senses, this method cannot only help intermediate to advanced students learn the polysemous nouns systematically but improve their vocabulary knowledge faster. Moreover, as the actual associations are culture-specific, by linking the meanings of a word through diagramming, the students are led to get familiar with the culture of the target language and the way that native speakers perceive the world.

Considering the limited time of classes which constraints the teacher from teaching all relative words, using this technique gives a powerful strategy to the students for learning and recalling the polysemous nouns by themselves. This way, their scope of vocabulary will increase, while they become more teacher-independent.

Lexicographers can also benefit from the Meaning Expansion Technique. In diagrams, the spokes in empty areas can indicate the possible different meaning expansion routes. Therefore, lexicographers may become aware of the future expansion and changes in the meanings of the words.

Although this study was focused on the word meaning expansion technique for teaching polysemous nouns, further research can be carried out on the application of this technique in teaching polysemous verbs, adjectives, prepositions, or modal verbs. It is also possible to investigate the effect of this technique on

other foreign language learners and even on ESL students. And finally, regarding the fact that metaphorical thinking and language use are universal, but the actual associations are culture-specific, contrastive research using a word meaning expansion technique can be conducted. The research can compare and contrast the metaphorical relationship that speakers of different languages set according to their different cultures. In this way, the probable problematic areas that two EFL learners of two different linguistic backgrounds learning the same foreign or second language (e.g., English) may have in learning polysemous words can be predicted.

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Author Bio

Masoumeh Gooya holds an MA in Applied Linguistics—Teaching English Language. She has taught EFL and ESL to students of varying ages and levels for over 15 years in Iran, Canada, and the USA. Her primary focus has been teaching English for General and Specific Academic Purposes and English Proficiency Tests (e.g., IELTS and TOEFL) preparation. Currently working, she is also an Interest Student at Queen's University with the goal of continuing her passion and education in Applied Linguistics in a PhD program.

Exploring elections and democracy with language learners

By Zoe Flatman, Canada

Finding age-appropriate resources to engage language learners can be a challenge. Elections Canada provides educators with free classroom-ready resources to support literacy development. These resources support action-oriented approaches by providing tools and activities that engage language learners in meaningful conversations about elections and democracy in Canada.

Each resource includes teaching tips to support both oral and written language development. We provide several discussion protocols to develop students' speaking and listening skills. For example, a think-pair-share protocol is suggested in Elections by the Numbers to help students develop their ideas individually and then share them with a partner before discussing in a small group or with the whole class. This gives language learners the time they need to think through their ideas and select their vocabulary before speaking. It is also an opportunity to give students feedback on their oral communication skills. In addition to discussion protocols, helpful vocabulary lists and graphic organizers are provided to scaffold students' learning and help them collaborate and communicate, no matter their literacy level.

Regardless if students are Canadian, they can learn about the history of voting in Canada or ways to take civic action outside of voting. Voting Rights Through Time and Civic Action: Then and Now engage students in these complex ideas in simplified ways. These resources are available in language learner versions with fewer words, simpler sentence structures, and shorter activities. The critical thinking and age-appropriate conversations remain the same, but the text is more accessible. Conversations about inclusion and exclusion in Canada's democracy, or how students can take action to bring about change, will bring elections and democracy to life in language learner classes.

Other resources engage students in critical thinking and inquiry on elections and democracy with minimal reading and writing. For example, Geography of Elections, Elections by the Numbers, and Mapping Electoral Districts invite students to complete different types of analytical activities that support literacy and numeracy. Students interpret information on maps and graphs and represent data in infographics, Venn diagrams or maps. The emphasis is on critical thinking and collaboration about real world issues while exploring Canada and its democracy.

After an active lesson with plenty of conversation and interaction, it is important for students to have the opportunity to quietly reflect on and consolidate their learning. Each resource includes a personal reflection in the form of an action plan or exit card where students can respond to a choice of suggested prompts or sentence stems. This helps language learners to express their ideas while reducing barriers to self-expression.

Elections Canada's resources support language learners with an action-oriented approach to language instruction. They can be easily adapted to various age levels and provide a variety of strategies to support oral communication. Whether or not students are on the path to citizenship, instructors can engage them in conversations about Canada's elections and democracy.

About Elections Canada

Elections Canada is the independent, non-partisan agency responsible for running federal elections in Canada. Elections Canada's civic education program provides information, tools and cross-curricular resources for teachers across Canada. The goal is to support instructors in preparing their students to participate in electoral democracy or understand the process in general regardless of eligibility. For more information or to order a free resource, visit electionsanddemocracy.ca.

Author Bio

Zoe Flatman is the Elections Canada Education Coordinator who has been providing professional learning services in the Greater Toronto Area since 2018. Zoe has more than 25 years of experience teaching for the Toronto District School Board and is a member of the Ontario College of Teachers. She has worked in a variety of schools with diverse student communities across Toronto. She has a passion for global citizenship and civic education. She has been a curriculum writer for the Ontario Ministry of Education and is a recipient of several awards for teaching excellence.