English Language Learning Magazine

CONTACT

August 2024

The role of making and correcting errors in second language learning **PLUS** An evaluation of the IELTS Academic Writing subtest: Practicality, reliability & validity **AND MORE...**

VOLUME 50 NUMBER 2, August, 2024
ISSN # 0227-293
Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario
https://www.teslontario.org/write-us

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Dicomanzano. (2020). Cappuccino [Image]. Retrieved from https://pixabay.com/photos/easter-brunch-coffee-happy-thought-4948010/

Calendar of Events

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October 30–November 1: 2024 CAEL Conference

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November 9: Wisconsin TESOL Annual Fall Conference

November 12: TESL Ontario Awards & Networking Event

November 13–15: TESL Ontario 2024 Virtual Conference

November 15–16: 2024 CoTESOL Fall Convention

Access **TESL Ontario's** webinars here.

Editor’s note

Welcome to another issue of *Contact*. Happy Summer 2024! Let’s jump right into it!

In the Spotlight, we have learning strategist Yaseen Ali of the University of Toronto. Yaseen is currently working on his PhD at OISE. His knowledge of the ELT field and beyond, includes, but is not limited to, the promotion of language awareness for those using English(es) in academic settings. His passion for helping students shines through his words and puts him in the *spotlight*. Thank you again, Yaseen, for taking the time to contribute to *Contact*!

We start the issue off with Dr. Brian Strong and Elif Once-Buyukerol of Carleton University and their work on errors in language learning as opportunities for growth. Next, Errol Pitts conducts an evaluation of the IELTS writing subtest. Plamen Kushkiev analyzes the integration of an artificial intelligence (AI) bot known as Pi (Personal Intelligence) within an EAP context and classroom setting. Ricardo-Martín Marroquín focuses on the importance of supporting all English language learners, with particular attention on students with uncertain status in Canada. And Jacqueline Johnson goes over her methods to help students become (better) writers. Thank you all for your inspiring work!

As summer wraps up, I am eagerly looking forward to the 2024 TESL Ontario Virtual Conference, November 13–November 15. As always, I welcome all presenters to submit their work as an article for *Contact*. When we can share our passions for ELT and research, it can really change and enhance the ways we can support language learners. To the readership, I hope you are inspired by the works of those that have been published here, and I hope you will ignite that spark to publish one day, too! I’m always an email away if you have any questions.

Until the November issue, enjoy the remaining days of summer and see you again once the leaves have fallen.

Thank you for reading. Take care.

Nicola Carozza
editor@teslontario.org

CONTACT

Contact is published three times a year (March, August, and November) by TESL Ontario. March is our conference issue. It is published for the members of TESL Ontario and is available free online to anyone.

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

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ISSN # 0227-2938

The statements made and expressed in articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies of TESL Ontario.

TESL Ontario

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TESL ONTARIO

Annual Virtual Conference
November 13th -15th, 2024

Navigating New Routes in Language Education

Mark your calendars for three days of exciting and innovative professional development at the 52nd Annual TESL Ontario Conference, taking place virtually from **November 13-15, 2024!**

This year, we're thrilled to offer two keynote addresses by Antoinette Gagné and Ruth Javier, over seventy sessions to choose from, our Research Symposium, TechKnow and Career Connections sessions, and the highly-anticipated 19th Annual Panel Discussion featuring ministry representatives.

Don’t miss the return of TESL Ontario Connect: Networking, Awards, and Fireside Chats at the MaRS Centre in Toronto, on November 12, 2024, from 5:00-9:00 pm EST.

Click Here to Register online today and join us for this incredible opportunity to learn, connect, and grow with your peers in language education!

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Registration is NOW open!

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as an **add-on** or **separate purchase**

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Spotlight — Yaseen Ali

You're currently working for the University of Toronto – tell us about your role as a Learning Strategist at the Centre for Learning Strategy Support (CLSS) and the workshops you have developed:

In my role, I support degree-seeking students in their academic performance and learning development through one-on-one-appointments. When I connect with these students, I find that they are curious about practical elements related to their studies, such as studying more efficiently and taking effective notes. Yet there is another domain that speaks to their emotions and that affects their all around learning—for instance, addressing the roots of their procrastination and reducing stress-motivated productivity—that students are eager to unpack as well.

At our department, learning strategists facilitate workshops on popular topics throughout the academic year, such as critical reading strategies and how to practice energy management. Additionally, we design spaces that address the centrality and salience of their identities in education; as such, my programming focuses on the experiences of international students and/or English as an additional language (EAL) users. Alongside student peer co-facilitators, we engage in storytelling to foster trust and community with the participants as we address layered topics such as addressing linguistic discrimination and accentism.

Your career trajectory has gone from English for Academic Purposes to Learning Strategist. How did that come about?

In the midst of a career transition a few years ago, I was weighing whether to continue a path in EAP or to attempt and translate my teaching journey to align with other student-facing support roles in higher education. I was fortunate to move into a position with the Centre for International Experience (within Student Life at U of T), where I collaborated directly with international student communities by running co-curricular programs focusing on intercultural experiential learning and conversational English spaces.

Yaseen Ali (he/him) works as a learning strategist at the University of Toronto and is pursuing a PhD in Language and Literacies Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. He is interested in the promotion of critical language awareness for all students using Englishes/Englishing in spaces of learning, as well as the principles of intercultural responsibility and humility that can meaningfully inform their collaborations.

Doing this work, I learned firsthand from these international students who generously shared anecdotes of joy, frustration, loss, vulnerability, bemusement, concern, and so much more. Of course, the term *international student* does not refer to an all-encompassing category and always benefits from an intersectional perspective, but I found that there were recurring themes around navigating complex cultural transitions, the hidden curriculum, and language-based gatekeeping that found their way into the curriculum that I have now developed at CLSS.

You mention the relationship between metacognitive learning strategies and enhanced academic performance. What exactly does this mean?

Learning strategy work is varied, nuanced, and covers a wide spectrum—and every practitioner has their unique voice—but to me, metacognition is about figuring out what works specifically for you and the task at hand, and then leveraging that awareness to study in ways that are sustainable and encouraging. This is not so much about learning "styles" (i.e. visual vs. auditory), but experimenting with multi-modal practice, breaking down material into smaller chunks, and adding some intentional challenge (e.g., self-testing) to support academic performance. When students are encouraged to think tangibly about how they learn—e.g., within communities of support, changing up their study environments, adding accountability practices—we find that this can fundamentally alter the way they approach their studies, namely with more intrinsic motivation.

If folks are interested, the The Learning Scientists website offers concise reference guides to guide instructors and students on how they might apply some of these techniques in their teaching and learning.

Let's talk about fostering linguistic equality in English(es). What do language teachers, or teachers in general, need to know about this?

Over the last few years, I have been using the terms Englishes and Englishing instead of English. This is meant to describe multiple and ever-evolving languaging practices alongside what we might call standard or academic English. I'm inspired by the writing of numerous scholars in applied linguistics, but particularly Suresh Canagarajah in his book *Translingual Practice: Global Englishes and Cosmopolitan Relations*, who has argued that communicative success hinges on dynamic negotiation strategies, not a shared vocabulary and/or grammar of *English* alone.

Sometimes the words *linguistic equality* can seem lofty or even abstract, but I pose that small actions and gestures can set a welcoming tone for EAL students. This can start with framing their additional languages as resources in their learning, as opposed to interferences. For example, this might be critically questioning the effectiveness of *English-only* policies in the classroom, an approach I once too used in my teaching. Another strategy might be to validate the many English dialects and accents that meaningfully contribute to a space of learning, perhaps even explicitly in a course syllabus or community agreement.

On this topic, I can't recommend Yukio Tsuda's *The Hegemony of English and Strategies for Linguistic Pluralism* highly enough.

On your LinkedIn profile, you mention advocating for "racialized, international, and/or EAL-identifying students to see themselves and their needs richly reflected in the curricula, campus programs, and services that they interact with" –how does your work do this and how can others participate even on a small scale?

When I was introduced to the concept of cultural humility in teaching, it was a total game-changer. This paradigm asks practitioners to consider their cultural and social locations, not (solely) their students', and how these considerations might unconsciously shape their pedagogy. This process can prompt discomfort, because one must readily admit the gaps in their knowledge and model uncertainty in front of their students. However, I also find it freeing because students can support us in deepening our intercultural awareness and commitment to lifelong learning.

How does this work in practice? I strongly believe in approaching racialized, international, and/or EAL-identifying students as co-partners, co-facilitators, and co-researchers in our work. This can be in formal roles such as work-study positions and internships, but also in terms of holding regular focus groups with students and inviting them to share feedback at professional development events. And in the latter cases, if possible, it's important to acknowledge their time and efforts with honoraria or gift cards.

Please tell us more about your current research and your PhD studies:

I recently conducted an action research study that examined the impact of my workshop Overcoming the Messaging that Your English "Isn't Good Enough" on EAL-identifying graduate students' language beliefs and practices over the course of an academic semester. Using frame theory and interpretive phenomenological analysis, I consider how critical language awareness can offer the participants ways to address – and even challenge, if they choose to – the impacts of harmful language ideologies (e.g., native-speakerism) on their Englishing.

After completing the study, many participants now share that they are actively practicing self-compassion and kindness, resisting suggestions that they need to reduce or eliminate their accent, and re-examining their "native English user" learning goals. But beyond the parameters of my research, I personally have learned the tremendous value in creating judgment-free forums for EAL-identifying students to engage in meta- and translanguaging activities. In doing so, we can have better insights into their agentive and conscious negotiations of language discourses and societal messages both within and outside of their formal learning contexts.

If you would like to know more about Yaseen, please visit his LinkedIn page: https://www.linkedin.com/in/yaseenali/
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Thank you once again for your contribution, Yaseen!

The role of making and correcting errors in second language learning

By Brian Strong & Elif Once Buyukerol, Canada

Understanding the role of errors in second language learning is crucial for developing effective teaching strategies. Despite their frequent occurrence, errors are often viewed negatively. However, they can provide invaluable insights into the learning process and serve as potent learning tools. This discussion aims to explore how making and correcting errors can enhance second language vocabulary acquisition, offering practical implications for classroom practices. Errors and mistakes are terms often used interchangeably, but they have distinct meanings in the context of language learning. Errors are systematic and occur due to a lack of knowledge; they reflect gaps in the learner's understanding and are often persistent. Mistakes, on the other hand, are occasional lapses that learners can self-correct when pointed out, often due to factors like fatigue, distraction, or inattention (Corder, 1967).

Traditionally, errors were feared and avoided, seen as signs of failure. However, contemporary educational theories have shifted this perspective. Today, errors are increasingly accepted as a natural and beneficial part of the learning process, seen as opportunities for learners to explore, experiment, and ultimately deepen their understanding (Butterfield & Metcalfe, 2006). In the dynamic and diverse environment of the ESL classroom, errors are inevitable and can vary widely depending on learners' backgrounds, proficiency levels, and individual learning styles. By examining the effects of making and correcting errors, we can develop more effective and responsive teaching strategies that cater to the unique needs of our students. This exploration will delve into both the negative and positive impacts of errors, helping teachers foster a supportive learning environment where students can thrive. Embracing errors as a natural part of the learning process can lead to more effective language acquisition and greater learner confidence, ultimately benefiting both teachers and students.

Historical perspective

The study of errors in language learning has evolved significantly, reflecting shifts in educational theory over the past century. Understanding these changes can help ESL teachers appreciate the nuanced role of errors in the learning process. In the early to mid-20th century, behaviourist theories, led by researchers such as B.F. Skinner, dominated the educational landscape. Behaviourism focused on observable behaviours and the use of reinforcement to shape learning. Errors were seen as undesirable and to be minimized through positive reinforcement of correct responses. Skinner's concept of operant conditioning proposed that learning occurs through the reinforcement of desired behaviours (Skinner, 1957). This led to language teaching methods like the audiolingual method, which relied on repetition, drills, and immediate correction to eliminate errors and reinforce correct language forms.

As educational theory progressed, cognitive and constructivist perspectives began to challenge behaviourist views. Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky were key figures in this shift, emphasizing mental processes and social interaction in learning. Piaget's theory of cognitive development suggested that learners actively construct knowledge through experiences, with errors being a natural part of this process (Piaget, 1952). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the gap between what learners can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance. Vygotsky viewed errors within the ZPD as valuable indicators of areas where learners are ready to grow (Vygotsky, 1978). Through scaffolding—providing support to help learners perform tasks they cannot yet do alone—teachers can use errors to tailor their instruction to the learner's needs.

In the latter half of the 20th century, humanistic and communicative approaches further expanded the understanding of errors in learning. Humanistic theories, influenced by Carl Rogers, emphasized the importance of the learner's emotional and psychological well-being, advocating for a supportive learning environment where making errors is seen as a natural and necessary part of learning (Rogers, 1961). The communicative approach, emerging in the 1970s and 1980s, prioritized meaningful communication over grammatical accuracy. This approach, championed by educators like Dell Hymes and Michael Canale, argued that effective communication is the primary goal of language learning (Canale & Swain, 1980). In communicative language teaching (CLT), errors are viewed as a natural part of using and learning a language, with a focus on fluency and conveying meaning, while providing corrective feedback in a way that does not disrupt communication.

Today, most language educators recognize the value of integrating insights from behaviourist, cognitive, constructivist, humanistic, and communicative theories. Errors are understood to be an inevitable and beneficial part of the learning process, providing critical information about learners' understanding and developmental progress. Modern pedagogical practices emphasize creating a supportive environment where learners feel comfortable taking risks and making errors. Constructive feedback is essential for helping learners understand their errors and improve their language skills. Techniques such as formative assessment, where ongoing feedback is provided during the learning process, are widely used to help learners correct their errors and build proficiency over time (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Additionally, recent research has shown that ESL vocabulary exercises are often implemented to promote learning through trial and error, highlighting the practical application of making and correcting errors in real-world classroom settings.

Negative effects of making errors

Understanding the potential negative effects of making errors is crucial for ESL teachers aiming to create an optimal learning environment. While errors can be valuable learning opportunities, they can also pose significant challenges if not handled appropriately. One major negative effect of making errors is the induction of a fear of failure, leading to increased anxiety among learners. This anxiety is particularly pronounced in language learning, where the fear of making errors in speaking or writing can be overwhelming (Horwitz et al., 1986). Anxiety affects cognitive functions essential for learning, such as memory retention, concentration, and problem-solving abilities. Consequently, anxious learners may become reluctant to participate in activities that involve speaking or writing, opting to stay silent rather than risk making errors. This avoidance behaviour hampers language practice and fluency development.

To mitigate this, teachers can create a supportive environment where errors are viewed as a natural part of the learning process. Encouraging risk-taking and reassuring students that errors are opportunities for growth can help reduce anxiety (Dörnyei, 2009). Normalizing errors by sharing examples of common errors made by both native and non-native speakers demonstrates that errors are a universal part of language learning. Another negative effect of making errors without receiving constructive feedback is the potential damage to learners' self-esteem and confidence. Students who consistently make errors may begin to see themselves as incapable of mastering the language, leading to a negative self-perception. This lack of confidence can deter them from engaging with new material and taking the necessary risks to improve their language skills. Over time, this can result in a self-fulfilling prophecy where the fear of making errors stifles progress, leading to more errors and further erosion of confidence (Bandura, 1997). To combat this, teachers should provide specific, positive feedback alongside corrections to help students understand their errors and learn the correct usage. Highlighting what students are doing well can also build their confidence. Encouraging a growth mindset, where language learning is viewed as a journey and making errors is seen as an essential part of the process, can help students view their errors as steps toward mastery rather than failures (Dweck, 2006).

Furthermore, if errors are not promptly and effectively addressed, there is a risk of reinforcing incorrect language usage. Learners may internalize these errors, making them harder to correct over time. This can lead to the development of bad habits and fossilization, where incorrect forms become ingrained and resistant to change (Selinker, 1972; Strong & Boers, 2019a, 2019b). Such reinforcement can impede overall language proficiency and make it challenging for learners to achieve fluency. To prevent the negative effects of errors, teachers should provide timely and clear corrections. Using examples and explanations can help students understand why their usage was incorrect and how to correct it. Incorporating regular review sessions to revisit common errors and reinforce correct usage can also be effective. Using varied and engaging activities during these sessions can help keep students interested and facilitate learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

While making errors is an inevitable part of learning a new language, ESL teachers must be aware of the potential negative effects. By addressing fear and anxiety, combating negative self-perception, and preventing the reinforcement of incorrect usage, teachers can create a more supportive and effective learning environment. Through thoughtful strategies and a positive classroom atmosphere, errors can be transformed from obstacles into steppingstones on the path to language proficiency.

Positive effects of making errors

Recognizing the positive effects of making errors can help ESL teachers leverage these opportunities to enhance their students' learning experiences. While errors may initially seem like setbacks, they offer several benefits that can significantly aid language acquisition. One key benefit of making errors is that it requires learners to actively engage with the language. This engagement is essential for deeper cognitive processing, which is crucial for long-term retention of new vocabulary. When students attempt to use new words and phrases, even if they do so incorrectly, they are actively participating in their learning. This active participation helps solidify their understanding and memory of new vocabulary (Strong, 2023). Teachers can promote this active engagement by creating activities that require students to use new vocabulary in various contexts. Interactive methods such as group discussions, role-plays, and language games can keep students involved in their learning process (Nation & Newton, 2009).

Errors also provide valuable opportunities for feedback and correction, which are vital components of the learning process. Constructive feedback helps learners understand their errors, learn the correct usage, and reinforce their knowledge and skills. When students receive timely and specific feedback, they can adjust their understanding and improve their language abilities (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Teachers can support

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this process by offering detailed explanations of why an error occurred and how to correct it. Balancing corrections with positive reinforcement can motivate students and build their confidence. Additionally, engaging in rial and error encourages learners to think critically and develop problem-solving skills. This process helps them become more autonomous learners, capable of identifying and correcting their own errors in the future. As students encounter and resolve errors, they enhance their analytical abilities and become more adept at navigating the complexities of language learning (Ellis, 2008). Teachers can design activities that require students to analyze language use, identify errors, and come up with solutions. Encouraging students to reflect on their errors and self-correct can promote independence and self-directed learning.

Experiencing and overcoming errors can also build resilience and persistence, qualities essential for language learners. Language acquisition is a challenging process that requires continuous effort and perseverance. By facing and addressing their errors, students develop the resilience needed to persist through difficulties and continue making progress (Dörnyei, 2009). Teachers can promote a growth mindset by emphasizing that making errors is a natural and valuable part of the learning journey, helping students view errors as opportunities for growth. Acknowledging and celebrating students' progress can reinforce their persistence and commitment to learning.

In summary, embracing the positive effects of making errors can transform them from obstacles into powerful learning tools. By encouraging active engagement, providing constructive feedback, fostering problem-solving skills, and building resilience, ESL teachers can create a dynamic and supportive learning environment. Recognizing and leveraging the benefits of errors can lead to more effective language acquisition and a more confident, capable group of learners.

Practical implications and strategies

Understanding how to effectively integrate the positive aspects of making errors into your teaching practice can greatly enhance your students' learning experiences. Here are practical strategies that ESL teachers can use to normalize errors, provide constructive feedback, and foster a supportive learning environment. Research over the past decade shows that errors can actually help students learn and remember things better, especially when they get feedback to help them improve (Butterfield & Metcalfe, 2006; Karpicke & Grimaldi, 2012; Kornell et al., 2009; Potts & Shanks, 2014). Emphasizing to students that making errors is a natural and beneficial part of the learning process is essential. When students see errors as opportunities rather than failures, their anxiety decreases, and their willingness to participate increases. Teachers can create a safe learning environment by fostering a classroom atmosphere where errors are expected and accepted (Horwitz, 2013). Sharing your own language learning experiences and responding positively when students make errors can further reinforce this mindset.

Timely and constructive feedback is crucial for helping students learn from their errors. Instead of merely pointing out errors, explain why something is incorrect and provide examples of correct usage. This approach helps learners understand their errors and remember the corrections. Teachers should offer clear, specific feedback that explains the nature of the error and how to correct it, using examples to illustrate correct usage. Combining positive reinforcement with corrections can keep students motivated and confident (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Activities that explicitly involve trial and error can help normalize errors and make learning more engaging. These activities allow students to experiment with language in a low-stress environment. Teachers can use exercises that require students to practice language skills in various contexts, encouraging them to try different options and learn from their errors. Incorporating role-plays, simulations, and games that require students to use new vocabulary and structures can provide opportunities for trial and error in a fun, supportive setting (Nation & Newton, 2009).

Peer interactions can provide additional support and feedback, creating a collaborative learning environment. Group activities where learners correct each other's errors can reduce the stigma associated with errors and foster a sense of community. Teachers can design activities that involve peer review and correction, such as having students work in pairs to complete exercises and then review each other's work. Organizing regular sessions where students give and receive feedback from their peers can encourage constructive and respectful dialogue about errors (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Promoting a growth mindset helps learners view errors as part of their language learning journey. Encouraging students to reflect on their errors and see them as opportunities for growth can enhance their motivation and resilience. Teachers can incorporate activities that focus on personal growth and learning from errors, such as reflective journals or discussions about progress. Reinforcing the idea that effort and perseverance are key to language learning success and celebrating students' progress and improvements, even if they are small, can further promote a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006).

Integrating the positive aspects of making errors into ESL teaching practices can transform errors from obstacles into powerful learning tools. By normalizing errors, providing constructive feedback, incorporating error-friendly activities, encouraging peer support, and fostering a growth mindset, teachers can create a dynamic and supportive learning environment. These strategies not only help students improve their language skills but also build their confidence and resilience, ultimately leading to more successful language acquisition.

Dos and don’ts of using errors in teaching

Dos:

1. **Remind students of their initial error:** Encourage students to keep track of their errors and the correct forms. Using exercises like gap-filling, matching, and insertion can help students connect incorrect guesses with the correct vocabulary. Maintaining a log of errors can help students recognize and recall patterns (Butterfield & Metcalfe, 2006).
2. **Practice different types of error correction strategies:** Different tasks and learners require different approaches to error correction. Teachers should be aware of various techniques and apply the most suitable ones based on the context, learners, and tasks. For example, metalinguistic error correction, where teachers provide comments or questions about the linguistic formation, can be effective for focusing on linguistic content (Nakata, 2015).

Don’ts:

1. **Do not cross out errors:** Avoid crossing out wrong answers, especially in multiple-choice exercises, as it may not help students learn vocabulary effectively. Highlighting errors instead of avoiding them helps students see the connection between the error and the correct answer, fostering better learning and recall.
2. **Do not delay the feedback:** Immediate feedback is crucial for effective learning. Delayed feedback can lead to reinforcement of incorrect behaviours, known as fossilization. Real-time feedback helps students correct their errors instantly and understand misunderstandings promptly.

Conclusion

Making and correcting errors is a natural part of the language learning process. By implementing strategies that leverage errors as opportunities for growth and learning, ESL teachers can help students improve their language skills effectively. Recognizing the benefits and managing the negative impacts of errors can create a more supportive and effective learning environment.

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Author Bios

Dr. Brian Strong is an assistant professor at Carleton University's School of Linguistics and Language Studies. He coordinates the CTESL program, overseeing practicum placements and guiding future ESL educators. His research focuses on methods of enhancing second language vocabulary acquisition. With 20 years of combined teaching experience in Japan and New Zealand, Brian brings a wealth of international expertise to his work. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Brian Strong.
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Elif Once-Buyukerol is a Ph.D. student in Applied Linguistics and Discourse Studies at Carleton University. She holds a bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching and a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction. She has taught ESL and EFL in Turkey for six years. Her research focuses on the effect of error on vocabulary learning, with a particular emphasis on phrasal verb learning. She aims to contribute valuable insights to the fields of second language acquisition and motivation in language learning.

An evaluation of the IELTS Academic Writing subtest: Practicality, reliability & validity

By Errol Pitts, Canada

Jointly owned by the British Council, IDP ILETS Australia and Cambridge ESOL, the International English Language Testing System, more commonly known as the IELTS test, is among the most widely recognized English language proficiency tests in the world. Indeed, it is the most popular visa and citizenship test in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (British Council, 2019); and it is accepted by all the universities in Australia and the United Kingdom, more than 3,400 post-secondary institutions in the United States and hundreds of others around the world (British Council, 2019). Serving governments and post-secondary institutions, the IELTS test has, accordingly, two versions, or modules: the General Module, which governments use for visa and immigration purposes; and the Academic Module, which post-secondary institutions use to verify the English language proficiency of international students for undergraduate and graduate admissions. Though serving different purposes, both modules have four subtests, one subtest for each language skill (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing). Although each subtest carries equal weight in the overall calculation of a total IELTS test score, for post-secondary institutions, the writing subtest of the Academic Module (AWST) is of particular salience because, as Uysal (2010) states, writing is central to success in university. Many university assignments are, after all, written compositions, discussion board postings, reports, and essays, for example. Thus, the AWST stands out as a high stakes test, playing a key role in the determination of who can and who cannot pursue their personal and professional aspirations in academia. Thus, the AWST merits an evaluation to determine to what degree it serves as an effective language assessment.

Though debate about how to evaluate language assessments exists, scholars have identified five to six qualities of an effective language assessment. For example, Bachman and Palmer (1996) propose that test usefulness requires a balance between six qualities: reliability, construct validity, authenticity, interactiveness, impact, and practicality. Among these qualities though, Bachman and Palmer emphasize the importance of reliability and validity. Along a similar line, Brown (2004; as cited in Thuy & Dung, 2020) emphasizes five criteria of an effective language test: practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and washback. Like Brown, Hughes et al. (2020) also highlight five qualities: practicality, reliability, validity, impact, and backwash. Though differing slightly, these three approaches to evaluating the effectiveness of a language assessment all share the aspects of practicality, reliability, and validity. Given this consensus among scholars, I therefore use these three characteristics to evaluate the AWST.

Surprisingly, despite its widespread recognition by post-secondary institutions around the world and its significant attention in the admissions process, there is a death of literature investigating the effectiveness of the AWST. To contribute to this shortage, I evaluate it. More specifically, in this evaluation, I provide an overview of the AWST, and then examine it drawing on literature and research with respect to practicality, reliability, and validity.

Overview of the IELTS Academic Writing Subtest

The AWST consists of two distinct tasks: Task 1 and Task 2, both of which must be completed in under 60 minutes. Task 1 is a report of at least 150 words and requires a description, explanation, or summary of a visual graphic: a graph, chart, table, diagram, map, or process chart. The report must have an introduction and overview and highlight and compare the main features or data (IDP IELTS, 2023a). To illustrate with an example, a test candidate may need to analyze a line graph that visually compares the number of men and women studying online and face to face in Canadian higher education across three time periods.

Unlike Task 1, Task 2 is an argumentative essay of at least 250 words and requires a response to a point of view, an argument, or a problem focused on a relevant topic. The essay must have an introduction, body, and conclusion, and "it is important that [the test candidate] complete[s] the task carefully using relevant ideas and examples to support [their] position. [Their] ideas should be organised clearly, using paragraphs for each idea" (IDP IELTS, 2023b, para. 3). For an example of Task 2, a test candidate may need to argue for or against a proposed law that prohibits homeschooling.

Evaluation of the IELTS Academic Writing Subtest

Practicality

The practicality of a test can be defined as the extent to which it is economical, easy to make, easy to score, and easy to interpret (Cervatiuc, 2023). Regarding the economics of the AWST, literature that describes the time and costs involved with its design and development is unavailable or difficult to locate on the internet; however, literature that summarizes its development and validation processes (IELTS, 2023, para. 1) is available, though rather general in nature. To explain, drawing on this general information from the IELTS (2023) webpage, the test design and development process can be construed to consist of the following five stages. First, IELTS commissions teams of language specialists based in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA to write prompts that adhere to test specifications. Second, IELTS pre-edits the commissioned prompts, and, if necessary, provides suggestions to the language specialists to revise the prompts. Third, IELTS reviews the edited prompts and either approves them for pre-testing or provides additional edits. Fourth, the IELTS Validation Team pretests the prompts on representative samples of test candidates to determine whether the prompts can differentiate between strong and weak test candidates. Fifth, IELTS constructs the tests considering multiple factors, such as, providing a range of cultural perspectives, and balancing task types, topics, and genres. To sum up, involving multiple stakeholders around the world engaging in a series of tasks, the test design and development process is potentially challenging and likely to require much time and money.

How easy is the AWST to score? Research shows that IELTS examiners have mixed perceptions. For example, a Cambridge ESOL study into the writing subtests of both the Academic and General Modules, which was conducted by Shaw and Falvey (2008), found that nearly all the IELTS examiners in their study believed that the scales are clearly worded, and nearly three-quarters of the examiners stated that the scales are easily interpretable. In a contrasting study, however, Mickan (2003) found that examiners struggled to find lexico-grammatical features that distinguish different levels of performance using the IELTS band descriptors. Mickan's study did focus on the writing test of the General Module though, not the Academic Module. Nevertheless, considering that in the General and Academic writing subtests, Task 2 is an essay, and the Task 2 rubrics are very similar for both Modules, the findings of Mickan's study does warrant consideration. Along the same line, some of the descriptors in the AWST Task 1 and Task 2 rubrics are somewhat vague, which can result in difficulty distinguishing different levels of performance. Consider, as evidence, the following band 8 and 9 descriptors under lexical resources on the Task 2 rubric: "Occasional errors in spelling and/or word formation may occur, but have minimal impact on communication" (IELTSTutors, 2023, p. 7), and "minor errors in spelling and word formation are extremely rare and have minimal impact on communication" (IELTSTutors, 2023, p. 7). Differentiating between *occasional errors may occur* and *minor errors are extremely rare* can indeed be challenging.

Reliability

A characteristic of test data, reliability can be described as consistency of test data across repetitions of test administration (Chapelle, 2013). Put another way, if a test yields similar results in several administrations with the same students, the test data is reliable.

To foster reliability, IELTS implements several appropriate training and certification processes. For instance, IELTS subjects writing prompts to trials on sample populations of test candidates, which, according to Chapelle (2013), builds reliability. Additionally, IELTS provides rigorous initial training and ongoing certification processes for its examiners. More specifically, potential examiners undergo standardized training by an experienced IELTS examiner trainer, and this training requires potential examiners to score IELTS writing tests for 1.5 days. This training also includes norming or standardization training, which, according to Weigle (1994), has been shown to help examiners apply rubrics in their intended ways. Furthermore, norming, according to Jacobs et al. (1981; cited in Weigle, 1994, p. 198), has also been found effective in neutralizing the effects of the backgrounds of examiners, a particularly beneficial effect since examiners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds are diverse.

With respect to the quality of IELTS training, two studies evaluate it highly. First, McDowell (2000) investigated the perceptions of IELTS examiners about IELTS training and found that most examiners are satisfied with the training, but some did state that they want more time to 'digest' the band descriptors, giving weight to Mickan's (2003) study regarding the perception that some examiners found the descriptors difficult to distinguish. Second, in an IELTS Australia and British Council published report, Cotton and Wilson (2008) investigated cohesion and coherence in Task 2 and conclude that

> No effect could be found for IELTS marking experience, higher qualifications, training in linguistics, and either the level of most teaching experience or for the number of years of teaching experience. This would seem to suggest that the IELTS training, certification and re-certification processes have been effective in ensuring the reliability of examiners regardless of differences in their background and experience. (p. 49)

In addition to trialing prompts on sample populations and providing high quality training, potential IELTS "…examiners must mark a series of exams consistently and accurately" (IDP IELTS, 2023b, para. 2) to become certified examiners, and all examiners are re-certified every two years to ensure standards are being maintained (IDP IELTS, 2023b). Furthermore, IELTS requires examiners to use analytic scales to score writing tests. An analytic scale "…includes a number of separate criteria to guide the assessor's judgements and so generates a number of different scores – e.g., a score for grammar, a score for pronunciation and a score for task fulfilment" (Green, 2020, p. 252). Analytic scales, according to Shaw and Falvey (2008), provide advantages over global scales as they provide enhanced reliability through increased observations, encourage greater discrimination across a wider range of assessment bands, and discourage norm-referencing.

Despite these strategies to build reliability in the AWST, Uysal (2010) challenges the AWST's inter-rater reliability, that is, the extent to which the same test re-scored by a different rater yields similar results. Uysal challenges the inter-rater reliability because the AWST are single scored locally, and double scoring, according to Green (2014), is one way to build reliability. On this point however, IELTS does subject selected samples of scored writing subtests to be double scored (Uysal, 2010). That is, after a test candidate has completed their test at a local IELTS centre, IELTS selects samples from these test centres, and then senior examiners double score the samples. Despite the fact that most tests are still single-scored though, the correlation between local and senior raters was 0.91 in 2003 (Hashemi & Daneshfar, 2018; Veerappan & Sulaiman, 2012), which indicates high reliability (Chapelle, 2013).

Validity

Although it produces reliable test data, the AWST falls short of demonstrating a high degree of validity, a complex quality which is, according to Messick (1989; cited in Fulcher & Davidson, 2007), the quality of a test that provides a teacher with a degree of justification to make inferences from a test result to a test construct. Three kinds of validity are briefly examined: content, construct, and predictive validity.

Content validity refers to how well a test "…constitutes a representative sample of the language skills, structures, etc. with which it is meant to be concerned" (Hughes, 2003, p. 26), and the AWST is concerned with, but is somewhat unrepresentative of, post-secondary writing assignments. To this point, several studies serve as evidence. For instance, Moore and Morton (2005) compared the Task 2 rubric to writing assignments in two courses in two Australian universities and found that, although there are some similarities between Task 2 and university assignments, there are "…important differences between the writing required at university and that required to pass the IELTS test" (p. 63). In a similar vein, Cooper (2014) compared lexical bundles, or groups of words that occur frequently, between first-year undergraduate essays and samples of academic Task 2 writings, and found that

> there are notable differences in the structures and functions of lexical bundles used in Task 2 of the IELTS writing test and in students' undergraduate assignments. The nature of these differences suggests that the style of writing expected in the IELTS test does not correspond to that expected in student assignments. (p. 78)

Another differentiating characteristic between the AWST and university writing tasks is that university writing assignments typically require students to draw on external resources (e.g., academic studies, reports and books) while Task 2 requires test candidates to draw on personal knowledge and experience (Nguyen, 2016), a flaw that also connects to construct validity.

Construct validity, according to Cervatiuc (2023), is the ability of a test to measure what it intends to measure, and, as its name implies, the AWST intends to measure academic English writing proficiency. To that extent, it is rather effective, but, like all assessments, it is imperfect. Namely, there is an issue with Task 2: Task 2 is designed to measure academic writing skills such as the ability to argue and support an opinion, but Task 2 also evaluates non-academic writing skills. To highlight these non-academic skills, some Task 2 prompts instruct test candidates to use relevant examples from their own knowledge or experience. Thus, test candidates' knowledge and experience play a role in the result (Nguyen, 2016), which is problematic because "in language testing, we are not normally interested in knowing whether students are creative, imaginative or even intelligent, have wide general knowledge, or have good reasons for the opinions they happen to hold. For that reason, we should not set tasks which measure those abilities" (Hughes, 2003, p. 82; cited in Weigle, 2002, p. 45). Therefore, the construct validity requires improvement.

Although the AWST's content and construct validity require attention, research studies about its predictive validity, "...the term used when the test scores are used to predict some future criterion, such as academic success" (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007, p. 5), are mixed. For example, an ESOL Cambridge study by Kerstjens and Nery (2000) investigated the ability of the IELTS test to predict the academic success of first-year international students in an Australian university and found that there was a weak positive correlation between the reading and writing tests and GPA. Another study by Yen and Kuzma (2009) investigated the predictive validity of the AWST and found that there is a significant correlation between first-year students' GPAs and their AWST scores. In a different vein though, Mauriyat (2021) reviews literature about the AWST's predictive validity and concludes that the AWST demonstrates low predictive validity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the AWST is a globally recognized high-stakes English language test with strengths and shortcomings. Although scholars evaluate language assessments differently, three qualities that are acknowledged by some scholars are practicality, reliability, and validity. With respect to practicality, the test development and validation processes of the AWST are arguable time consuming and expensive; however, considering the widespread recognition and administration of the IELTS test, potentially profitable. The ease of scorability of the AWST is, however, doubted. One possible reason for this doubt lays in the rubrics' descriptors, some of which may be difficult to differentiate. To address that potential shortcoming, IELTS should investigate further IELTS examiners' perceptions of the descriptors to determine whether descriptors need rewording.

About reliability, AWST data has been found to be reliable. Potential reasons for this strength include the trialing of prompts on sample populations of test candidates, high quality training and continuous certification processes, and the use of analytic scales. Although the AWST produces reliable data, research presents issues with its content and construct validity. Specifically, research highlights that the AWST fails in some ways to represent university writing assignments, tainting the content validity. Research also points out that non-academic writing skills and knowledge are assessed in the AWST, polluting the construct validity. Taken together, that is, the issues with its content and construct validity, post-secondary institutions should interpret results of the AWST cautiously. In fact, such institutions should consider designing, developing, and administering an internally and locally constructed writing test to measure academic writing skills. With respect to predictive validity, research indicates slightly more positive than negative results. Regardless, when viewing the results of the AWST through the lens of predictive validity, post-secondary institutions need to be vigilant because a host of issues, in addition to language proficiency, affect the future academic success of international students, for instance, financial matters, cultural differences, and personal traits. Though research has presented issues with the validity of the AWST, as Uysal (2010) mentions, "IELTS is committed to improving the test further [IELTS test] and has been carrying out continuous research to test its reliability and validity" (Uysal, 2010, p. 319).

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Utilizing the affordances of an AI bot to facilitate a grammar lesson in an EAP classroom

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Purpose

In this article, I critically analyze the integration of an artificial intelligence (AI) bot known as Pi (Personal Intelligence), introduced by Inflection AI in May 2023. The insights and implications that I share in this essay represent my observations and reflections as an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) professor at a public college in Ontario. These are not meant to present the results of a formal study but to create a dialogic space to problematize and conceptualize the applicability of Pi as a personal assistant bot to both the professor and intermediate-level EAP learners during in-person class activities. Although the bot has also been used for pedagogical and interaction purposes in class and as part of specific home assignments, this article will shed light on one type of grammar-based lesson that draws on the TATE model (Anderson, 2020) as a curriculum design framework, which is informed by the sociocultural perspective of language learning.

Theoretical and contextual background

This reflective and analytical exploratory essay reflects Kushkiev's (2022) position that "personal narratives can be powerful vehicles for introspection, reflection, and transformative action" (p. 155). As an EAP professor in Ontario, I conceptualize my professional role as a language facilitator who continuously reflects on the adaptation of pedagogical practice and adoption of heutagogical approaches to meet the individual learning needs of the students. Each EAP course should therefore not only develop the learners' discursive and discourse competences (Ding, 2019), but it should also weave their social identities, lived experiences, and individual analytical skills into the fabric of the lesson design and planning. Emerging research has indicated that carefully planned and purposefully integrated Generative AI (Gen AI) can support EAP learners' digital literacy skills (Hudson, 2023), oral skills development strategies (Wang et al., 2023), and enhance their learner autonomy and self-efficacy (Kuhail et al., 2023).

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Wearing social constructivist theoretical lenses (Lantolf, 2000), I conceptualize language learning as a process of negotiating meaning and making sense of the course material and learning activities in a complex and multi-layered social milieu. This process can be subjectively interpreted by social agents as they re-negotiate their sense of achievement, belonging, and investment in the learning process. EAP courses, as college and university pathways and bridging programs, are designed according to specific learning outcomes that place the EAP learners' developing language and discourse abilities at the centre of curriculum design and lesson planning. In addition to enhancing learners' intercultural and interpersonal critical thinking abilities, research and study skills (BC TEAL, 2013), EAP courses should also help students develop and hone their discursive competencies (Hyatt, 2015) to be able to navigate their higher studies more meaningfully.

Colleges in Ontario provide academic training to a diverse body of learners (Douglas & Landry, 2021). This important induction into the academic community of the institution (Hyatt, 2015) recognizes the pivotal role of social interaction, learner autonomy, and continuous reflection. A growing number of studies on ChatGPT, the most commonly analyzed Gen AI bot, have indicated that the purposeful and ethical integration of such AI tools holds the potential to support and enhance learners' autonomy and language abilities (Liu et al., 2022). Guided by the study results and implications from research in other EAP contexts, I integrated Pi.ai into the stages of a grammar-based lesson based on the TATE model (Anderson, 2020). In the following sections of this article, I will justify my decision to select Pi and the TATE lesson design frame, present my reflections on the potential benefits of leveraging an AI tool for EAP learning, and conclude with specific recommendations for further exploration of this technology in similar settings.

Rationale for selecting Pi and utilizing the TATE model

The affordances of AI have been integrated into learning management systems (LMS) for several decades. However, Generative AI (Gen AI), as a subset of machine learning and deep learning, has only gained prominence in education since the introduction of ChatGPT in November 2022. The number of studies that explore its capabilities as a chatbot and the risks it poses to academic integrity have grown exponentially. Numerous other bots have also been introduced and made available to educators. However, the integration of AI bots in EAP contexts has received much less interest in the literature, with the majority of studies being based in Asian contexts.

In May 2023 Inflection AI, a California based technology company, introduced a new bot- Personal AI: Pi, which was advertised as the 'first emotionally intelligent AI' (Pi.ai/onboarding). Despite the promising contentions that Pi can act a "coach, confidante, creative partner, or sounding board" (Inflection.ai, para.

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2), this bot remains ostensibly understudied in the area of EAP. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first reflective attempt to study its capabilities in a Canadian EAP classroom.

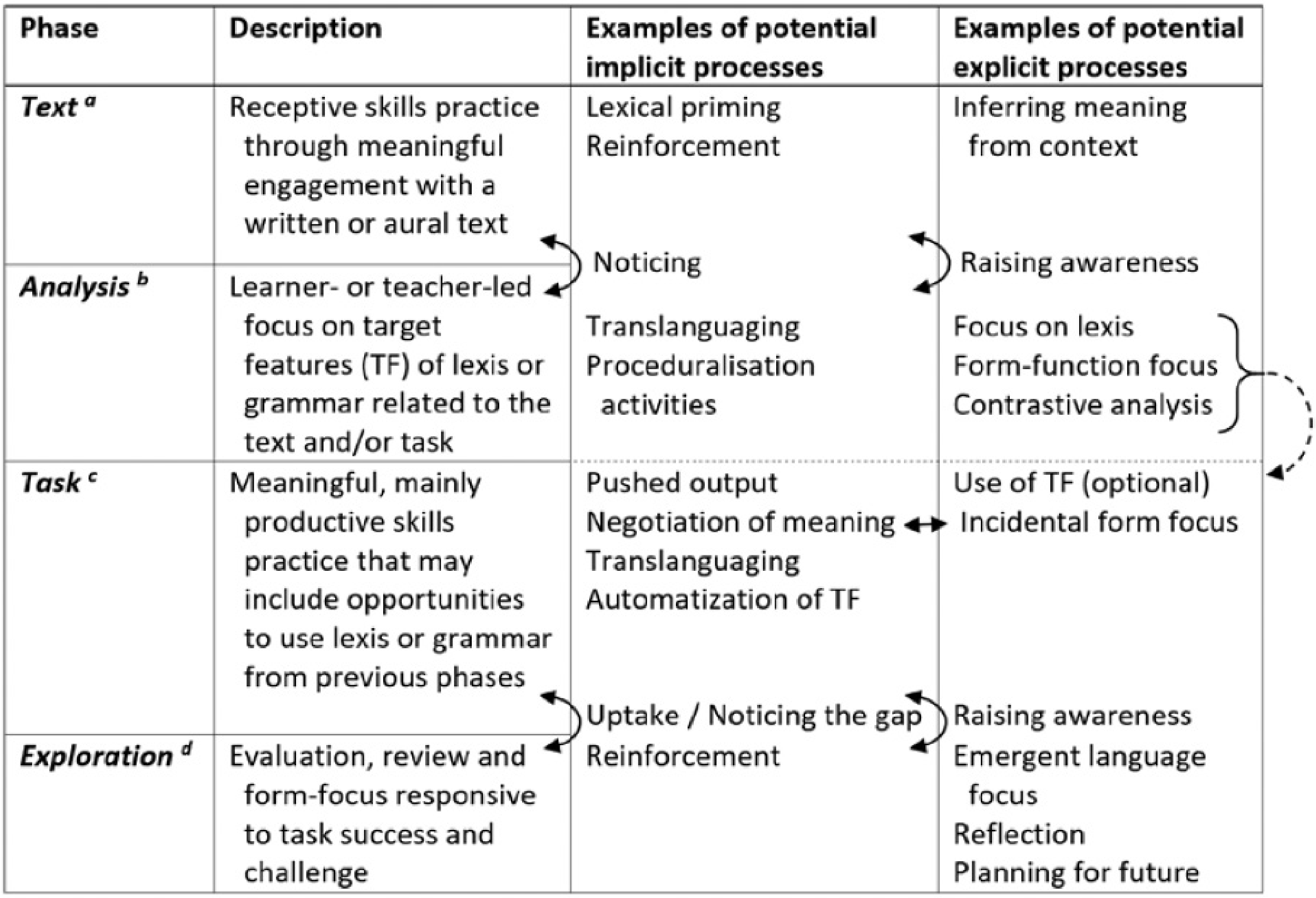
I became interested to explore the affordances of this tool because of its ability to generate concise responses “in a natural, flowing style” (Inflection.ai/press, para. 1) with an embedded capability to emulate human-like conversation, show empathy and traits of emotional intelligence (EQ). Such features demonstrate an immense potential to support EAP learners in all four language skills, language systems and pragmatic competences. At the same time, I am wary of the risks to privacy and company’s underexplored commitment to AI companionship because Pi is not immune to hallucinations like any other AI bots. I am also cautious of some promising expectations for being “a game-changer” in EAP (Djelal, 2023), so I subscribe to the more cautious position that it can enhance EAP learners’ engagement with the new target language and support them with their developing receptive and productive skills when purposefully integrated into the learning experiences.

There are very few examples and reflections available in the published works that demonstrate how Pi can be leveraged to complement the teaching and cognitive presence (Garrison et al., 2000) in an EAP classroom. The creators of this bot have adeptly foregrounded the essential role emotions play in teaching and learning another language (Kushkiev, 2019). I believe their conscious attempts to train the bot to be more emotionally intelligent and responsive to the lived experiences and social identities of its users distinguish this tool from its counterparts. I believe that Pi possesses the potential to be integrated into EAP lessons, and this article provides a starting point for EAP teachers to conceptualize this bot’s possible use in their teaching contexts.

Lesson objectives and overview of TATE

The observations presented in this article are based on facilitating an intermediate EAP class in Winter 2024. The lesson aims were to learn and practice the meaning, structure, and use of the verb ‘to hope’ in the context of being a newcomer to Toronto. The class consisted of 20 learners from diverse sociocultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds. Based on my observations from previous classes, some were more comfortable using technological and Web 2.0 tools when doing the practice tasks, while others preferred to handwrite their answers to the tasks on paper. Before introducing Pi to the learners, I did not have an understanding as to which AI bots, if any, they had previously used.

For this reason, I decided to utilize the TATE model: Text, Analysis, Task and Exploration (Anderson, 2020), as it provided a lesson template for an integrated skills lesson that can also focus on new grammar or vocabulary. Like any other model in English language teaching, it can be better suited for some learning contexts than others. This model reflects current research on social constructivist approaches to language teaching and integrates meaning-based and form-based tasks in authentic scenarios. I also consider its flexibility and versatility in lesson stages, as well as the opportunity for explicit and implicit grammar presentations, to be its major advantages. Because I was trying a new bot for the first time in my EAP classroom, I needed a current lesson design framework to ensure the learning outcome would be addressed in each stage of my lesson.



Phase	Description	Examples of potential implicit processes	Examples of potential explicit processes
Text [a]	Receptive skills practice through meaningful engagement with a written or aural text	Lexical priming Reinforcement	Inferring meaning from context
		Noticing	Raising awareness
Analysis [b]	Learner- or teacher-led focus on target features (TF) of lexis or grammar related to the text and/or task	Translanguaging Proceduralisation activities	Focus on lexis Form-function focus Contrastive analysis
Task [c]	Meaningful, mainly productive skills practice that may include opportunities to use lexis or grammar from previous phases	Pushed output Negotiation of meaning ↔ Translanguaging Automatization of TF	Use of TF (optional) Incidental form focus
		Uptake / Noticing the gap	Raising awareness
Exploration [d]	Evaluation, review and form-focus responsive to task success and challenge	Reinforcement	Emergent language focus Reflection Planning for future

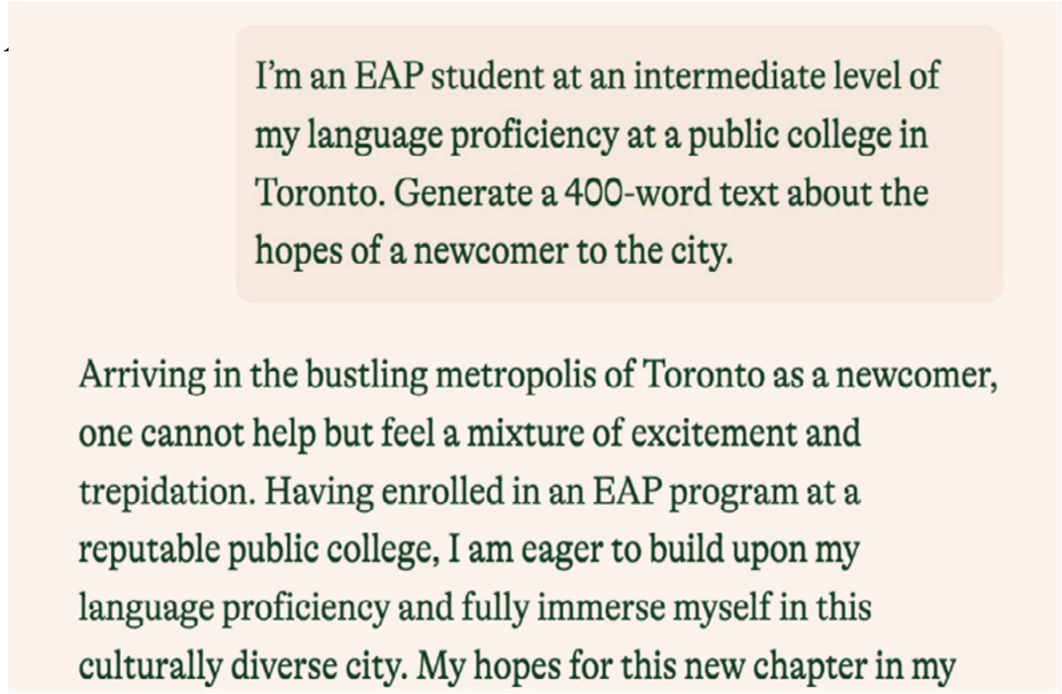
From: Anderson, J. (2020). The TATE model: A curriculum design framework for language teaching. *ELT Journal*, *74*(2), 175–184. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccaa005

Integrating Pi into TATE lesson stages

In this section, I present the integration of Pi into each of the stages of the TATE model.

Text: The learners navigate to the ‘Learn a new language with Pi’, or a similar tab, on Pi.ai and enter the prompt, ‘*I’m an EAP student at an intermediate level of my language proficiency at a public college in Toronto. Generate a 400-word text about the hopes of a newcomer to the city.’* The students are then given time to read the text, look up the meaning of the new words by asking Pi in order to understand the story. They are then invited to summarize their text in pairs or small groups and compare how similar the information is. The bot usually creates a slightly different response even if the same prompt is entered numerous times. The learners can add more details about their prior learning experiences to the prompt to receive an even more personalized response. If time allows, the learners can exchange their devices and read their partners’ text for further reading practice.

Figure 2



I’m an EAP student at an intermediate level of my language proficiency at a public college in Toronto. Generate a 400-word text about the hopes of a newcomer to the city.

Arriving in the bustling metropolis of Toronto as a newcomer, one cannot help but feel a mixture of excitement and trepidation. Having enrolled in an EAP program at a reputable public college, I am eager to build upon my language proficiency and fully immerse myself in this culturally diverse city. My hopes for this new chapter in my

From: Pi.ai/talk

The students then enter the prompt, '*Create five reading comprehension questions based on this text*.' They work alone to find the answers and then discuss them with a partner. The teacher monitors and assists as necessary. At the teacher's signal, the students enter the prompt '*Can you provide the answers to these questions?*' and are given time to review the answers.

Analysis: Now that the students have become more comfortable with the meaning of the words and details in the text, they can focus on the new target language. The teacher can provide a paper copy of a sample text on this topic and display it on the screen. Alternatively, the students can continue to work with the text on their device. They are invited to identify and type or handwrite in their notebooks all sentences that include the word 'hope':

Samples Sentences:

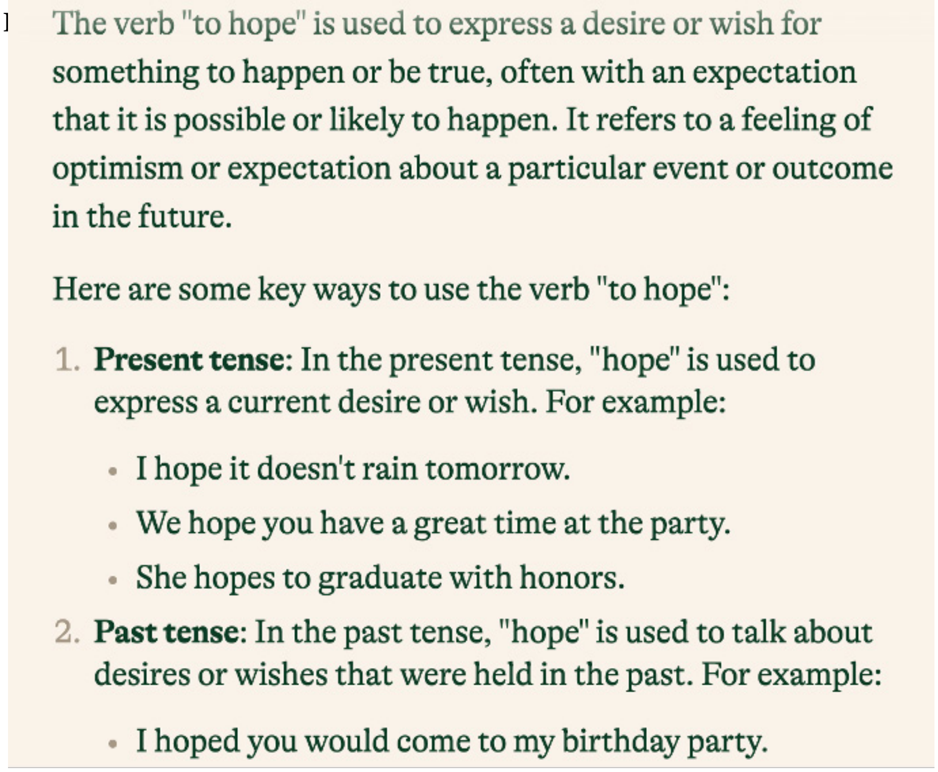
1. You likely have many hopes for your new life here.
2. Newcomers often hope to connect with others who share a similar cultural heritage.

One useful approach to facilitating the learners' ability to notice the meaning and form of the verb 'to hope' is to ask concept-checking questions (CCQs):

- Is the word 'hope' used as a noun or verb?
- Does it refer to a situation in the past, present, or future?
- When it is used as a verb, is it followed by the base form of the other verb?
- Can the verb 'hope' be used in past or future verb tenses?

If some explicit explanation or clarification is needed, the teacher can now explain the meaning and use of the target language in this context. After that, the learners enter the prompt, *'Explain how the verb 'to hope' is used*'. They read the bot's responses and ask the teacher any further clarifying questions. The teacher uses the same prompt on the screen and asks the learners how they understand the bot's definition and examples. For instance, the bot may use this verb in the continuous tense, but the learners know that 'to hope' is a state verb. The teacher should monitor the process and support each learner as needed.

Figure 3



The verb "to hope" is used to express a desire or wish for something to happen or be true, often with an expectation that it is possible or likely to happen. It refers to a feeling of optimism or expectation about a particular event or outcome in the future.

Here are some key ways to use the verb "to hope":

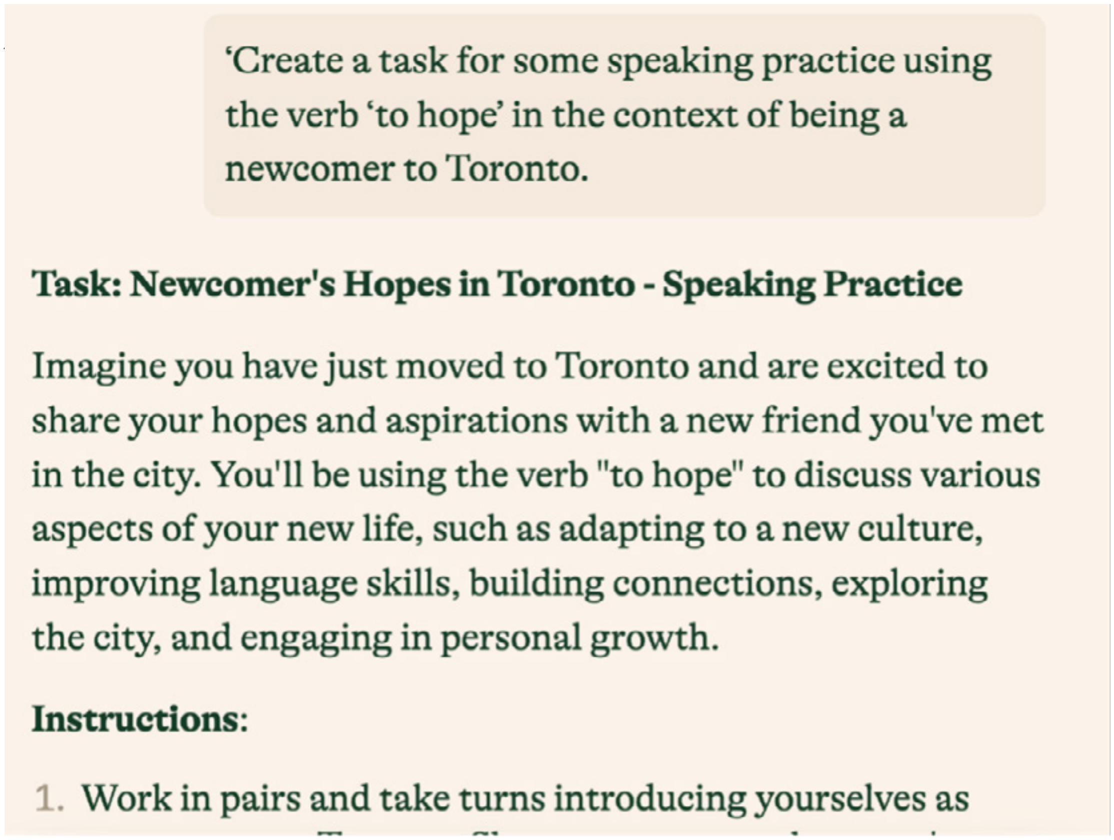
1. **Present tense:** In the present tense, "hope" is used to express a current desire or wish. For example:
    - I hope it doesn't rain tomorrow.
    - We hope you have a great time at the party.
    - She hopes to graduate with honors.
2. **Past tense:** In the past tense, "hope" is used to talk about desires or wishes that were held in the past. For example:
    - I hoped you would come to my birthday party.

From: Pi.ai/talk

Task: This stage should provide “a meaningful opportunity for extensive productive skills practice” (Anderson, 2020, p. 7). It can also be extended as a project-based task in which the student will potentially rely on their grasp of the new grammar from the analysis stage. The learners can first do some restricted practice tasks, such as filling in the blanks with the correct form of the verbs. They enter the prompt ‘*Create 10 sentences with fill-in the blanks to practice the meaning, use, and form of the verb ‘to hope’*. If the students type their responses, they can ask the bot to check if their answers are correct.

The students can now work in small groups and use the bot to generate ideas for speaking and practice using the new grammar focus. They enter the prompt ‘*Create a task for some speaking practice using the verb ‘to hope’ in the context of being a newcomer to Toronto*. It is important that the teacher monitor the discussions and assist as needed. In case a learner is not comfortable interacting with the bot, the teacher can provide them with a different task and adapted instructions. The teacher can also observe how effective the learner's engagement with the bot is and how they use the new target language during the productive task.

Figure 4



'Create a task for some speaking practice using the verb 'to hope' in the context of being a newcomer to Toronto.

Task: Newcomer's Hopes in Toronto - Speaking Practice

Imagine you have just moved to Toronto and are excited to share your hopes and aspirations with a new friend you've met in the city. You'll be using the verb "to hope" to discuss various aspects of your new life, such as adapting to a new culture, improving language skills, building connections, exploring the city, and engaging in personal growth.

Instructions:

1. Work in pairs and take turns introducing yourselves as

From: Pi.ai/talk

Exploration: For this stage, the teacher will not utilize the bot so that the learners can feel a sense of confidence as they normally would in a classroom setting without the integration of AI bots. The teacher can again ask concept-checking questions to ensure the learners understand the meaning, use, and structure of the new grammar focus. The learners can share their experience using the bot to assist the teacher with the creation of tasks and facilitation of in-class discussions. Another possible alternative for the students is to ask the bot for extension activities to practice the new words or even create a daily training plan with Pi that can tutor the learners on any aspect of the meaning, pronunciation, or use of the new words and grammar language. To illustrate, the learners can download the Pi application on their phones, read aloud sentences or words from the text, and ask Pi if their pronunciation is correct. Pi can also correct their grammar and recommend practice sentences when suitable prompts are used. Before introducing Pi to the class, I demonstrated its different capabilities on my phone and provided them with a list of sample prompts they could adapt for their specific needs.

These kinds of meta-tasks (Anderson, 2020) can take the form of self-reflection, peer feedback and discussion, or peer review activities to be completed as a home assignment or during the following class. The model allows the flexibility to briefly switch back to any of the previous stages to ensure every learner has a proper grasp of the new grammar. The interface of the bot is regularly updated, but once the learner has signed up with their email account, the bot will ‘remember’ their previous conversations and use that record when generating its responses to the prompts.

This lesson plan should initially be utilized with learners in a classroom setting to be able to provide more critical and constructive feedback and conceptualize new avenues to explore the integration of the bot into regular classroom learning activities. The teacher can initiate a class discussion, informed by their observation of the students’ work during the previous stages. These interactions can serve as a dialogic and learning space to plan their future lessons, in which the bot can be fully or partially integrated.

Concluding thoughts and implications for EAP teaching practice

Although I have integrated Pi into several of my EAP lessons, I have become aware of its immense pedagogical significance when carefully integrated into the lesson stages. My position is that not all learners feel equally comfortable or willing to use the bot because this places more responsibility on them, so they need to rely on their own skills as the teacher only supports the process. It is also important to provide options and alternative ways to complete the tasks to meet the needs of all EAP students.

The introduction of this bot has created an opportunity for both professors and learners to experiment with Gen AI through Pi, which can generate responses that are shorter, more personalized, and less robotic. Although I have not explored any specific aspect of digital companionship, nor have I suggested replacing classroom instruction and facilitation with the bot, I believe this tool can be trained to support EAP learners with pronunciation challenges, explanations of vocabulary and grammar, and the generation of sample texts and practice tasks. More importantly, Pi can be the preferred AI tool to enhance learners’ autonomy, independent learning, and discursive capabilities that are essential as they navigate their academic journey in the Canadian higher education system.

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Anxiety during the Silent Period

Anxiety of the *unknown* specifically for temporary and refugee claimant students

By Ricardo-Martín Marroquín, Canada

Abstract

This article focuses on the importance of supporting all English language learners, specifically those who endure an added level of stress due to their immigration journey. In this article, I will raise awareness by pointing out the importance of not only being aware of temporary/visa/no status students but also to be more compassionate while teaching them. Moreover, recent numbers such as the number of newcomers, visa students, and study permits will be shared, and the topic of anxiety will also be discussed, with the intention to best support students who are hoping to stay in Canada but do not necessarily have the permit to do so.

The reason for this article is to promote empathy and allow for greater support for newcomers, specifically for those who may not be able to stay in Canada permanently. In the past few years, the number of newcomers has increased. Furthermore, there has been an influx of temporary study permits and work visas. Most of these professionals come to Canada with their children (grades K - 12), with the intention to stay permanently. As a teacher, I have written an article to raise awareness of this influx of students, with the intention of supporting them in the classroom. Furthermore, the Silent Period is a stage that all language learners (L2) will enter. Stephen Krashen (2009) coined this term with the intention to raise awareness of English (L2) learners and why these students may remain quiet during the initial phase of language learning. I will discuss how this phase may become longer than expected, and one in which the student may become anxious. It becomes imperative, therefore, to acknowledge students entering this phase with the intention to best support them during classroom activities. As any language teacher, the main goal is to teach student to become (more) prominent in language learning by recognizing first what might deter them from learning and/or by breaking down barriers that might impede language fluidity.

Introduction

In recent years, Canada has seen an increase of newcomers, which has been denoted as an important move to relocate people into Canadian territory. In fact, in 2021, Canada welcomed 401,000 newcomers in the form of permanent residents; this number set a record which was placed in 1913 (Government of Canada, 2023). Currently, Canada is set to break this short yet aggressive goal by allowing more than 1.5 newcomers within a 3-year plan (Government of Canada, 2023). These numbers, however, do not represent the number of temporary asylum seekers and/or refugee claimants entering Canada via a point of entry (border) legally or illegally. It is difficult to measure the number of immigrants that enter Canada outside of the official ports of entry such as a border crossing, given that these people might be smuggled and/or crossing to Canada without the necessarily legal documents. Nevertheless, it is crucial to mention this number that represents what our government has labelled as “irregular border crossers” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2023). Since 2017, there has been a total of around 110,000 known cases or irregular border crossers (it is unknown the exact number of how many people cross the border without a permit/legal document). Adding approximately around 550,000 work visa, study and work permits (although this number has recently reduced to 360,000 – January 22, 2024, with the idea to stabilize the economy (Government of Canada, 2024b), the number of newcomers is simply increasing. Additionally, approximately 30% of newcomers have left Canada, primarily due to the cost of living (DeLaire, 2023). This information is important because “temporary” living conditions may affect language learners in their school, especially during the so-called Silent Period.

I consider temporary living conditions for any language learner who may not know if they will be staying in Canada permanently and/or has not received a permanent residence permit or is seeking asylum. As you may be aware, not everyone who seeks asylum in Canada is granted this coveted permit (More than 22,000 people were rejected permanent residence whereas close to 8,000 either abandoned Canada or were withdrawn, within February 2017 – September 2023 (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2023). In fact, not all who come with a work and/or study permit are guaranteed permanence in Canada. There is a points system established by the government of Canada (Canada PR point system, 2024), in which one can calculate a score that will then be used for the application of permanent residence (This applies exclusively to study/work permit holders who are considering staying in Canada permanently).

A high score depicts a better chance of being invited to stay in Canada permanently and subsequently, be considered a Canadian. A low score, however, may lead towards being rejected from staying in Canada, even if you and/or your family is already accustomed to the country's language and culture. This application process may last months if not years prior to being finalized.

The Silent Period

Any second or multi (I will be using English as a second language rather than multi language learner) language learner will embark into a Silent Period which is depicted by a time when the student does not communicate with the language that they are learning. In Canada for example, a student learning English as a second language, will enter this linguistic stage in which they will speak very minimal English. This may be due to the lack of English skills accompanied by the lack of feeling emotionally stable. It is also important to note that if a student has performed well in his previous school (where their L1 is spoken), they might feel an additional level of anxiety because they would not want to score a lower grade due to the lack of linguistic skills in English. This is considered fear of failure, which is linked to the fear of a negative evaluation or test anxiety (Front Matters, 2002).

The Silent Period is also known as a pre-production phase of language acquisition, in which a student is learning by listening and seeing language conventions (body language and non-verbal cues) (Shibata, n.d.). According to Stephen Krashen, the language learner (ELL) takes time to observe and to listen to the teacher and the other students, before using English as L2 (Silent Period, n.d.). This chapter is considered the earliest stage of language acquisition, where one can see the student is not only quiet but rather actively learning vocabulary, receiving, and processing information, and I would add, even producing a silent response (either as a 1-word answer, a short phrase, or a simple sentence). It is a vital stage in language learning given its nature to develop receptive vocabulary while observing other language users (English native speakers). Andie Cunningham and Ruth Shaoury (n.d.) also add that children in the Silent Period should not be forced to speak before they are ready to do so, given that they are unwilling and/or unable to communicate orally, perhaps due to not feeling comfortable in using English as an L2. Finally, Kristina Robertson and Karen Ford (2020) express that in the Silent Period, the student learns the language but does not yet speak it. Moreover, they add that this stage may last at least 6 weeks. In any case, it is important to know that a new language learner (ELL, MLL, or EL) may be acquiring language by listening, seeing, and by being engaged in formal and/or informal learning, while still being quiet and seen as nonparticipant.

The numbers in HWDSB (Hamilton Wentworth District School Board)

By January 18th, 2024, my school board, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) reached 700 assessments for elementary students. This high number was reached only once before (late May of 2022 – '23 scholastic year). There is no reason to believe that these numbers will slow down any time soon, given the current immigration patterns. Out of the mentioned 700 assessments, approximately 90 students were seeking asylum which would account for just under 13%. Moreover, approximately 250 students had a temporary study permit, which would justify a 36% of the total population of students. If we were to add both numbers, we would produce around 340 total students who have not acquire a permanent permit to staying in Canada. If we were to only calculate these numbers, we would notice that close to 50% of new students in the HWDSB are not sure if they would stay in Canada permanently. Again, this number does not consider the other 30% of newcomers (permanent residents) who leave Canada primarily for the inflated cost of living.

Why is this information deemed crucial to me? Purely because the lack of stability, that is, not knowing if one day you will be invited to leave your new home/country, may bring additional stress or even anxiety to any student.

Allow me to talk about Samuel (a pseudonym), a student whose father was seeking refuge in Canada. Samuel, like many others, came to Canada with a travel visa. However, after staying a few weeks, his family decided to seek refuge and attempt to stay in Canada permanently. This meant that his family needed to change their immigration documents from visa to seeking refuge in Canada. His family entered a long and painful migratory process of waiting for a definitive answer from the government of Canada. This meant that the student and his younger sister were allowed to enter a publicly funded school without having to pay any school-related fees that international students would have to pay. However, it also meant that the student and his family would enter a long, yet unpredictable process filled with uncertainty for their permanency in their future. That is, once a person seeks refuge in Canada, this person (and his family) must gather evidence pertaining to their lack of safety in their home country. Hence, this person will have to create a good case to convince the Canadian government why the family needs to stay in Canada. Failure to provide solid evidence of safety and/or showing a lack of proof, may result in their refugee application to be cut short and not be granted permanent residence. If this were the case, then the family is invited to leave the country by a specified date. If the family decides to stay longer than the pre-established departure date, they are considered living illegally. At that point, the immigration police (the RCMP) detain you, charge you for committing a crime, and then deport you back to your home country. Though this family had suffered political turmoil in their country of origin, along with terrorism, they were denied staying in Canada permanently. Nevertheless, the final letter of rejection came a couple of years after having tried to stay in Canada. This meant that for this family, just like most who endure this journey, everyday living was interrupted by the constant worries of being declined to stay in Canada. Therefore, the children at home would see their parents trying to plan the next steps if given a negative response by the Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) department. This also meant that they needed to save their money, keep a low profile, and/or live under the radar, and try to think of either crossing the border to the USA, travel to another country, or be content with being sent back home. For the children, it signified that they were constantly exposed to the anxiety of not knowing what the future may hold and knowing the idea of needing to leave their *new* home country, Canada. It also meant that these two children showed an elevated level of anxiety even before they received their notice to leave Canada. This is mainly because their parents would often talk about their uncertainty of staying in Canada. Additionally, his parents constantly looked for the mailman hoping to receive a letter of acceptance from the government. The day that the letter arrived, the children's father had just come back from work. Two years had passed by, and he was already feeling useful and a contributing member of the Canadian community. He had even been promoted to supervisor in his employment, given that he had shown great leadership qualities. He parked his car in the driveway of the house that they were renting and greeted the mail carrier who was delivering the weekly flyers and monthly bills. He quickly noticed a Government of Canada envelope. He placed his thumb in the crevice of the envelope and opened it. He took the letter out and read the first few lines. Tears fell, and so did the flyers and other letters that he was carrying. As he dropped his arms down, his wife noticed his low spirits too. Her female intuition made her believe and understand that what he read was precisely the letter for which they had been patiently and anxiously waiting.

After finding out that they were not welcomed to stay in Canada, I felt a sense of sadness and distress for them. Knowing how much the family was trying to stay in Canada and how hard-working all of them were. I understood the anxiety that this family had been living since the moment that they left their country, the precise arrival time in Canada, the instant they decided to change their status to 'refugee claimant', and the second that they received the letter.

What is anxiety and how it is linked to learning?

According Anxiety.org, anxiety is denoted as a physiological and psychological response to an external stimulus that is stressful, dangerous, and uncommon in nature (Jovanovic, T., 2024). Further, this state of being manifests in discomfort due to the lack of knowledge of a specific event. Mayo Clinic indicates that it is normal to feel a dose of anxiety especially if one is undergoing a time of stress in their lives. However, the problem lies the moment that the person cannot control the level of anxiety, and this therefore interferes with regular day-to-day activities (Mayo Foundation, 2017). Mayo Clinic also adds that living with generalized anxiety disorder may lead to long-term challenges. These feelings attributed to the level of anxiety may affect students who do not know their permanency in Canada.

According Diane Couto (2014), anxiety may be linked to learning. In fact, elevated levels of anxiety diminish the ability to learn. The opposite can also be said. That is, lower levels of anxiety equal higher levels of learning. It is important to state the difference between anxiety and stress, given that a healthy dose of stress may lead to making changes in one's behaviour that may facilitate learning. The American Psychological Association (2022) denotes the difference between stress and anxiety by pointing out that stress is an emotional reaction caused by an external trigger, whereas anxiety, though the same, is the persistent and extreme worries that stick around even after the stressors are absent (Goldin, 2022). You might ask, how does stress or anxiety be linked to a newcomer who is undergoing the Silent Period? Moreover, would a student who does not know whether they might stay in Canada indefinitely suffer from more stress caused from the lack of stability or the lack of knowledge?

As an assessor, part of my job is to welcome newcomers into my city. It is critical that as an ambassador to the school board, that I help all families feel welcome and safe; valued and heard. I also try to listen to their needs, and at times, their demands for their own children. At the end, once we are finished with the interview/assessment, I reassure the parents by providing any feedback to support their child(ren) in the school board, I thank them for their time and finally, I welcome them to Canada once again. It is important to mention that the number of newcomers who only have a temporary permit to stay in Canada, and yet are hoping to stay permanently has increased tremendously (based on the numbers at the HWDSB that are above). In reality, 1 in 2 (340 out of 700 assessed students) students are either seeking refuge, have a study permit or visa, and/or their parents have a work permit (which allows them to study in any publicly funded school). Moreover, these students may be lacking stability and might be living an ongoing worry of not being able to stay in Canada permanently. It has been pointed out that a challenging event may provide the student with stress, which could lead to anxiety if not properly taken care of. In the case of the family mentioned before, their lives were filled with stress simply for knowing that one day they may be unwelcome in Canada, hence sent back to their home country. Imagine for a second a war-torn country that lacks opportunities for a better future, is politically unstable, and does not provide the safety for a younger generation. Hence, the fact of not knowing your permanent status in Canada may add an incredible amount of stress to the newcomer.

A language learner might stay quiet in the classroom for two main reasons; the lack of English language to express their thoughts and feelings and the elevated level of anxiety attributed to (a) not wanting to make a mistake (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002) and (b) not knowing if they will stay in Canada permanently. It is important to point out the settlement curve for any newcomer and focus mainly on the downward slope. This part of the curve is present during the Silent Period. During this phase, a student is new to the culture and language (if they speak an L1 other than English), is beginning to adapt to a new culture and way of living and may be missing family, friends and routines that were once part of his daily living. I would also add that a student might be embarking on a new lifestyle that involves 6 plus hours of daily schooling which may have been different for them in their home country.

How to support during the Silent Period?

It has become imperative that teachers continuously foster a classroom environment filled with respect, empathy, care, trust, and dignity so that English language learners may strive in their language acquisition in their search for becoming part of the class community. Further, a teacher should be vigilant and act timely and gracefully against actions of abuse, control (from one student to another) and bullying (Government of Ontario, 2023). It is also important for the teacher to recognize the so-called Silent Period (Krashen, 2009) —a critical stage of social and language development, which cannot be cancelled or taken lightly. This is the time when the teacher and the class help the newcomer feel a sense of self-efficacy because when ELLs know that they are learning, they will be more in control of their learning. It is also important to note that during the Silent Period, a student is learning by using all of the senses. And during this phase, they are processing information even if production of second language is not happening. DaSilva and Jang (2008) echo Krashen's study and affirm that in the Silent Period, there is a direct implication in language learning. That is, their receptive skills are improving and becoming greater each day even if they are not able to express (expressive vs. receptive language skills). Therefore, it is fundamental to allow extra time for processing information, for internal translation of information and for creating a potential response in their L1 (first) and then in English. Finally, Eleni Pappamiheil (2002) reiterates maintaining a safe environment by not demanding language learners to participate in front of the classroom. Nevertheless, it is important to know your learners to find out whether class participation may add to their anxiety, or if they would thrive in such an environment should they be gregarious, social, and feel safe to doing so.

Many studies suggest that allowing your English language learners to speak their L1 with another student (someone who also speaks this L1), will create social interactions and hence facilitate communication and therefore break a language barrier.

Conclusion

As a second language teacher and a former refugee student, I find it important for my colleagues to know that refugee and study permit students may be feeling a greater sense of anxiety due to not knowing their future dwelling plans. Students who come with a work/study permit or refugee status to Canada, do not necessarily know how long they might stay in Canada. Most, if not all, refugee seekers hope to stay in Canada permanently. However, as we have already seen, there is no federal promise to allow them to stay, and their application via a formal process will have to be adopted, then reviewed, and finally accepted or declined. If rejected, as we saw with Samuel's family, the outcome may be detrimental, tiresome, and slow, and subsequently, may negatively impact the well-being of the student and their family. Finally, this Silent Period may be used in a positive way to help ELLs learn but we must be aware of the added level of anxiety displayed by our "temporary" students who are hoping to become Canadians. It is for this reason that I would like to suggest building a friendly and welcoming environment where all learners know that mistakes are normal part of learning and allowed, and where a newcomer may feel safe to take initiative in their L1 or L2 and be in control of their learning. After all, DaSilva et al. (2008) described the Silent Period as being a linguistically stretch of silence; nevertheless, it is a time where the student may also be involved and active.

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Teacher, I write a photograph

By Jacqueline Johnson, Canada

Introduction

Writers make the blind see. We are talking about readers here. Readers see only what writers show them. I tell my students this, adding that luckily readers can see photographs and it is their job to make good photographs.

Then we get down to business, and I run through a drill that goes something like this.

"Let's make some pictures: Read these words: *Car*—What do you see? *Woman*—What do you see? *Baby*—What do you see?"

"Let's make some moving pictures. What do you see now? *The woman drives the car*. *The baby smiles."*

I tell them that these are general pictures, and I extend the lesson. "I would bet that while you all pictured a car, if I asked you what colour that car was, there'd be some different answers, and the baby you pictured doesn't match the picture I made. I would also bet that your video of the woman driving isn't much like mine either" (Mine looks like my mother racing my brother and his teammates to a hockey game.).

At this point the learners want to talk nouns and verbs—all that stuff about person, place, thing, and action. I would bet that as teachers, that is what you are thinking right now, too. Let me reassure you, as far as real writing goes, those things are just *cool* paint brushes.

There's nothing wrong with this. As teachers, we teach vocabulary, adjectives, and insist on a period in the sentence.

It is the first step. But in the real world, writers must use words that make readers see what they do. Most readers are not teachers. They just know if they get it or do not. This is where editors come in. An editor helps the writer bridge the gap between what the writer sees and what the writing says. An editor says, *I cannot see it*, and in four short words identifies what the reader cannot see. It is then up to the writer to figure out how fix that. Being edited is real life practice, so after we teach, the biggest gift we can give students is to act as their editors as they practice.

At first this is hard. We want to point out those nouns and verbs. We want to provide answers, to see them. However, when we edit, we become blind and guide the writers, our learners, with our blindness.

This becomes easier with practice, and as we become more comfortable with not knowing, teaching writing becomes so much easier. Like the reader, the editor cannot see the picture. Unlike the average reader though, the editor knows where the writer has hidden the picture and can tell the writer where to look and how to make it visible. I know, you would rather be a copy editor, but take heart, copy editors do not get paid nearly as much and it is boring, in my opinion.

I came into ESL teaching from an editing background. When you say the word editor, the picture that usually pops up is something like a woman in a plaid skirt with no nonsense heels brandishing a dictionary in one hand and a red pen in the other as she feverishly inserts and deletes commas. That is a copy editor. The copy editor is the last person to edit writing. The first editor is the one who can and does say, *amazing work! This has got such promise; by the way, I kind of lost the picture around paragraph 2, where you said your daughter is beautiful. Let's do another draft and see what happens. Your deadline is in two days.*

This article offers editing tools for teachers. It has 3 parts: The Writing Process, The Daily Diary, and PBLA Applications.

Part one: The writing process—nine basic truths about writing

#1: Writing is scary.

You have to nurture the writer like a small child. This is the hardest thing to remember. Writing is not natural even for native speakers. Editing requires curiosity about what the writer is saying. (or, more accurately, has not said). We want to teach…but we have done that. Writing is applying the teaching. Editing is guiding. I had the privilege of having Anne Collins as my first editor. She worked with Carol Shields and other Canadian stars. I just lucked out. The first time we spoke, the first words she said were: "You know, your writing reminds me of Dickens."

She then proceeded to give me about twelve pages of edit notes. I was putty in her hands. I adored her. I worked with another editor. He sent me a note saying that my grammar and punctuation were terrible, and the piece was poorly written. He too gave me twelve pages of edit notes (for a 4-page article). I could not write for years after that edit.

#2: Action verbs are the powerhouse of English

Teach students that action words create videos.

He runs.	He is a runner.
She ran.	She was a runner.
They're running.	They were runners.
We will run.	We will be runners.
You've been running.	You have been a runner.

The verb *to be* creates a still picture and usually a boring one. A good exercise is to have students find all the verbs *to be* and change them into action verbs. We often do this, but more as a grammar exercise to differentiate the tenses as opposed to teaching the power of words.

#3: A verb can have many words

Teach this – not even Native English Speakers know this. Most people are afraid of verbs. While I don't usually spend a lot of time on grammar, I do spend a lot of time on verbs, and, on the fact that a verb can and does have many words.

Count the words in these verbs.

I run every day.	I will have been running for 6 hours by noon.
I ran yesterday.	Have you been running lately?
I will run tomorrow.	*Can* you count on running?
I will be running tomorrow.	
Can I run tomorrow?	

Verb identification is important. Many writers cannot improve their work because they do not know that shortening the verb is often like focusing a lens. More than adjectives, verbs are the descriptors that keep a reader awake.

#4 : KISS – Keep it simple and specific

This is my marking mantra (It is also what I use when I write. One of the beauties of teaching L2 students is that they are naturally inclined to simplicity. They do not have the vocabulary to be wordy. The trick is to teach enough vocabulary that they can be specific. Students tend to resist acquiring new words that will be more explicit than the ones they have chosen. I often find that rather than teach synonyms, I like to teach the differences that these words make. Specific also means accurate.

5: Good writing talks about something you know and care about. *It's also a million times easier.*

Tell students this. It is a little bit of insurance against plagiarism. I choose writing topics and prompts carefully. If you know about something, you will want the L2 language to express it. There is motivation. You also have confidence. This helps deal with the scariness of writing. Also, even if you do not have the language in L2, you do have the picture. Sometimes the role of the editor is simply to point out that the writer does not give a darn and needs to find where he or she does.

#6: Writing is discovery. Sometimes you don't know until you write it down.

This is why Copy Editing comes last. Grammar and spelling mistakes are often clues about where the writer has lost the picture—indicating that the writer is confused.

Let your students play. Do not mark first drafts. Be curious. Good prompts encourage discovery through writing. I remember one student who realized just how much he liked a restaurant by writing about its menu and the joys of having brunch there.

#7: Writing well is exciting. Be enthusiastic.

It is really important to mark great sentences, great images, and great choice of words. Sometimes editing is simply being an obsessed cheerleader. Do not be afraid to clap and jump up and down.

#8: Writing is rewriting. It's not wrong, just clearer.

The terrible reality about writing is that the reader can read in 20 seconds (even an L2 reader) what took you as the writer an hour to write. It is a bit like cooking. Finding words is hard. Finding the picture takes time. Rewrites are a bit like going on a canoe trip—everyday you get up and paddle. The same thing—but it is getting you somewhere. When we view rewrites as correction, rather than process, it sets the writer up as a failure. When I mark, I note improvement not product.

9: One way to edit is to read your work aloud: *The ear is more discerning than the eye.*

L2 readers tend to read every word and miss the meaning, but often, they will miss letters—the ones that are silent or they do not hear. Reading their own writing aloud will help students identify speaking and listening issues (or, at least, help you do so for them). First language readers tend to read and miss words. This is a great skill for students to acquire. Teaching students to respect their writing motivates them to do their best.

Part two: The daily diary process

Dear diary: Principles and practices to make them work

My favourite writing tool is the Daily Diary. Students write one or two prompted paragraphs on Day One which is edited and must be rewritten over the course of the next four days.

1) We write what we know. Make diaries relevant.

Your daily prompts are important. They might be on everyday things. Or on your theme or topic. People write best in first person initially, so diaries are a good place to instill the practice. Some of my favorite prompts are: *Write five good things that happened today or yesterday; describe your baby (if applicable); five things you did in your country (if applicable); five things you love about Canada.* I do a lot of lists. They lend themselves to pictures and simple sentences. Good writing uses simple sentences. They also can act as great introductory paragraphs.

2) Students need to write every day in class.

This can be an original or a rewrite. The entry should be only one or two paragraph. Remember: You have to read it.

3) Read each draft.

- **Give one success**
- **1-2 suggestions to make the picture clearer**

We always write to a reader. We always talk to a listener. You need to read what the students have written. You do not need to comment. Make one or two suggestions that need to be fixed. Do not fix them. Give an example instead. Your comments should focus on the picture. I do not see this. *I love how you showed me what the flowers looked like*. Do not correct punctuation. Do straighten out sentence structure and vocabulary. I am not saying punctuation is not important, just not here in the daily diaries and especially not in the first draft.

4) Your comments are always about the picture.

Student writes: *"My daughter is beautiful."*

Your Comment: "I don't know what beautiful looks like? Tell me."

5) As students advance, get them to use all their senses.

These are good prompts: *What does your favorite meal from back home taste like? Describe the smell of an orange*; when you create pictures using all the senses, they become memorable. Learners will struggle with these, but we all do, and that is good information to share too.

6) Sometimes accept weird syntax as poetic.

I think the best line in this article is *"Teacher, I write a Photograph."* One of my students wrote it.

7) Students have to resolve your comments.

Yes, mark them for resolving the comments as well. If you make a comment, they must understand it and use it in a rewrite.

8) Diary Prompts: Always provide an example/template for learners to follow.

Diary Topic: A Daily Tradition in my Country

<u>Prompt:</u> Describe the bread you eat in your country

9) Give your students first and last Sentences: Make them the same.

"We eat bread in my country. The bread is called injera. It is a sourdough bread made from spelt flour. It takes three days to make. It is soft. I like eating injera. It reminds me of my country. We eat bread in my country."

When your first and last sentences are the same, you can get away with a lot. Worst case scenario your students hand in poetry.

10) Punctuation and grammar are the final touches. Tell students that they frame the picture.

While we are aware of punctuation and grammar while we are writing, the final rewrite is about punctuation and grammar. Give the student a checklist of what they need to check. Have them do this systematically. Make the list short. For example: *Do all your sentences have verbs?*

How and where to create diaries:

Diaries can be created in a looseleaf binder, online using Google Classroom, or as a 3-page handout with the first page giving the prompt for the first draft, the second for corrected copy, and the third as final polished copy. They can be handwritten or typed. I like to have a student submit a typed final copy because it looks more professional and boosts their confidence as a writer. I also teach students the higher levels how to use Grammarly.

My biggest criterion is that whatever form the diaries take, I must be able to mark them in under a minute as I walk through the classroom. Google Classroom with its Assignment capabilities allow more formal marking and recording, but it is really hard for students with phones to use. Remember that an editor does not spend much time assessing. Their time is spent pointing the writer in the direction of a better draft.

Part Three

Recycle writing exercises:

PBLA Assessments in reading/writing/speaking/listening

Writing and speaking are expressive. They are outputs. Reading and listening are inputs. Whatever you do, recycle. If your students write, they have to speak their words, listen to them, read them. It reinforces. If they write about their traditional clothing, they need to read what others write, they need to learn to read that story with expression and tell the same story without notes.

Set your writing assessments as a process. Set the tests as improvement drafts and mark each. If a draft does not change from beginning to end, it is not writing, and chances are it is not the student's own work. Always ensure that the topics are real

From diaries to reading & listening

1. With careful prompts, students can create original letters, notices, instructions for classmates to read, or listen to.
2. Upper levels can also create reading/listening comprehension questions on their writing.

From diaries to speaking & listening

1. By listening to classmates read their diaries, students can practice listening strategies like reflective listening.
2. The intersect between speech and writing is heightened with oral reading of familiar topics.

Skill building & skill using tasks

Daily Diaries become references and repositories for templates for a variety of real-life tasks.

- Use diaries to practice writing scripts for roleplays
- Use diaries to create writing templates for real life tasks
- Use diaries as ongoing assessments for all skills

Conclusion

When we teach our learners to write, and when we help them practice with editing, then they become writers. They become writers with the power to make the blind see. How good is that? How good is it when a student passes you a piece of writing and smiles, “*Teacher, I write a photograph*.”

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Jacqueline Johnson BA, MA, OCELT is an award-winning journalist and editor and an ESL instructor at St. Georges ESL Centre in Guelph, where she has taught all ESL and LINC Levels and is a frequent presenter at TESL Conferences. Jacqueline believes that there is nothing more satisfying than the look of pride and wonder on a student’s face when they realize that they have written something important, and they’ve done it in English.