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CONTACT

Evidence-based teaching
Changing your mind

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Calendar

September 18–20	The third world congress on extensive reading (Dubai, UAE)
September 19	BCTEAL : Bridging the Cultural Gap in the EAL Classroom
October 2	International Student Success Symposium
October 2–3	Ontario Modern Language Teachers Association Fall Conference
October 5	International World Teachers' Day
October 24	TESL Windsor's Fall workshop
October 29–31	TESL Canada Conference (Lake Louise)
November 4–5	Educational Computing Organization of Ontario & the Ontario Association of School Business Officials Conference
November 7	People for Education Annual Conference
November 8–14	ESL Week
November 12–13	TESL Ontario's 43rd Annual Conference: “Expanding horizons: Drawing on experience and knowledge”
November 18–20	York Region District School Board Conference
November 20–22	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages; ACTFL Annual Convention and World Language Expo

Please, contact us (editor@teslontario.org) to let us know about upcoming events.



EDITOR'S NOTE

What is so rare as a change of mind—not a simple switch of dinner plans or a decision to repaint your bedroom, but a fundamental realization that an idea you held to be true was wrong or that one you rejected was right after all? It takes a lot of work and humility to realize and admit that you were mistaken.

Nevertheless, in this issue we present a number of short essays from teachers and researchers who have changed their minds. Paul Nation presents a whole list of topics that he's had to rethink; Tyson Seburn tries to get his head around his antipathy for the trendy *because* + NP construction; and Maria Glass, Alister Cumming, and Ron Thomson each talks about teaching ideas they've only come to accept by giving up their previous ideas. In each case, authors looked hard at the evidence and decided it didn't support their practice.

Along those lines, John Benseman presents a set of evidence-based techniques for teaching literacy skills. Stuart Webb goes more in depth to explain the value of repeated reading. We also have articles on mentoring, reflecting, and teaching one-on-one, the idea of grit, and another installment from Eufemia Fantetti and "Viva La Lingua Franca".

As always, we welcome and depend on your contributions. I hope to hear from you.

Brett Reynolds

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TEACHING RESEARCH-BASED LITERACY SKILLS IN TRAINING COURSES

By John Benseman

Most second-language teachers are usually trained (either in formal degree programmes or informal professional development) in the methodologies of language teaching, but few are also trained in the teaching of literacy skills. While this omission is usually not a problem when teaching learners with reasonable literacy skills in their first language, it is more problematic where learners have little or no schooling experience.

So how are literacy skills best taught with second language learners? The reality is that most teachers teach based on their own personal experience, trial and error, or by observing other teachers around them. The validity of their methods is subsequently rather hit and miss in terms of effectiveness.

An alternative approach occurring in many educational contexts is that of basing teaching practices on research findings. While this approach has long been standard in fields such as health and engineering, it has only become a serious consideration in education over the past decade, especially in the schooling sector. This approach has been made possible by the work of educational researchers using large-scale meta-analyses of research (see for example, Hattie, 2009, 2011).

This brief article looks at how trainers can include research-based strategies for teaching adult literacy skills. While language teachers' prime focus is on the development of language skills, the following discussion offers a range of literacy teaching strategies that have at least some reasonable quality research backing for their effectiveness.

Research base

While there is still only a small body of quality research about the teaching of adult literacy relative to other educational sectors, there is a growing base of studies that can inform our teaching. I have drawn material for this article from three main sources (Brooks, Burton, Cole, & Szczerbinski, 2007; Kruidenier, MacArthur, & Wrigley, 2010; McShane, 2005).

It is important to understand that the strategies being put forward are based on high-quality research evidence; they are not just "good ideas" or based on what someone believes is successful. They come out of reputable research studies where there has been a demonstrable gain in reading skills either compared with other strategies or against control

groups. Using these findings to guide our teaching is what it means to be “research-based” and therefore more effective than working from hearsay.

There are undoubtedly additional effective ways to teach literacy that have not been researched to date and could be included at a future point. It is not that these other strategies are any less effective, it is just that the research evidence is not available to demonstrate their effectiveness as yet.

Effective Generic Teaching Strategies

Much of the teaching of literacy skills involves strategies that are common to any teaching situation, whether they explicitly identify literacy or not. It is important therefore to reflect good adult teaching strategies as well as those specific to the teaching of literacy.

Explicit instruction (also known as Deliberate Acts of Teaching)

- Make goals, lesson objectives, activities, and expectations clear
- Make connections between lesson activities and broader skill goals
- Address background knowledge and pre-requisite skills
- Explain and model all aspects of the task
- Assume nothing and leave nothing to chance

Strategy instruction

- Teach learning tools: principles, rules, or multi-step processes to accomplish learning tasks
- Model and demonstrate; prompt and cue learners to use strategies

Scaffolded instruction

- Provide supports for learning as needed: breaking into steps, providing clues, reminders, or encouragement
- Withdraw support gradually as it becomes less necessary

Intensive instruction or active engagement

- Keep learners focused, active, and responding
- Provide plenty of time on task

Structured or segmented instruction

- Break information and skills into manageable parts
- Teach parts systematically and in sequence
- Bring the parts together to re-focus on the whole

Other elements to consider include

- Providing frequent, realistic and immediate feedback
- Working in pairs or small groups rather than relying heavily on learners working alone
- Achieving high rates of attendance – learners need to be present in order to learn!

- Contextualising the teaching content to learners' interests, immediate concerns and work environments
- Being aware of learners' previous educational experience – they may not have been successful, especially at school
- Consider that learners may be 'rusty learners' who have not done anything educational since they left school – they may well be apprehensive and take some encouragement to become involved and gain confidence in their learning skills.
- Seeking a good balance between supporting and challenging learners – both are needed, but need to be used appropriately.
- Set follow-up work to be done before the next teaching session – this helps increase the amount of learning in addition to the face-to-face time. This work should help consolidate new learning by practising and not be too daunting.
- Ensure that all learners receive a fair degree of attention.

Reading material should be:

- Related to the learners' work context, their particular work roles and tasks
- Of an appropriate reading level (without being condescending)
- Of reasonable print quality and font size
- Supplemented by diagrams and other visual material where appropriate.

Teaching the Key Reading Components

Alphabets Including Phonemic Awareness and Decoding Training

Given the constraints of most courses and the fact that most learners who need this type of reading instruction will have limited skills, it is unlikely that teachers will be able to implement much of this component during their course; it is therefore not given any detailed consideration here. For more information, see especially chapter four of McShane (2005).

One strategy for helping with decoding an unknown word is:

- Step 1: read to the end of the sentence again and think of a word that makes sense.
- Step 2: If still unknown, identify the initial sound of the unknown word and ask, "what word beginning with that sound would make sense in the sentence?"

Fluency

Fluent reading is rapid, efficient, and largely free of errors in word identification. But fluency is more than speedy, accurate word reading; a fluent reader also uses appropriate phrasing and expression. Fluent reading sounds like speech.

Fluency is required for comprehension. At a minimum, accurate and efficient word reading is necessary. Comprehension suffers when poor readers must focus on "getting the words off the page" and therefore aren't able to give much attention to the meaning of what they

are reading. In contrast, fluent readers are able to focus on meaning because for them, decoding is automatic and effortless. It is important that decoding becomes increasingly effortless if fluency is to be achieved.

Research suggests that guided **repeated** oral reading may improve one or more aspects of fluency as well as comprehension. These approaches call for the learner to read a passage several times, with guidance, until an acceptable level of fluency is reached, at which point she begins work on another passage at the same or a slightly higher level of difficulty. Guidance may involve any of the following:

- Modeling, either by the teacher or off a tape-recorder;
- Simultaneous reading by the teacher and learner(s);
- Assistance and correction by the teacher (to maintain the momentum of reading).

Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary refers to knowledge of word meanings. Oral vocabulary is the words we can use and understand in speaking and listening and reading vocabulary is the store of words we recognise and understand in print.

Oral vocabulary is a key to early literacy development, and reading vocabulary is a crucial component of reading comprehension at all levels and “seems to occupy an important middle ground in learning to read” (NICHD, 2000, p. 4-15).

Ways to develop learners’ vocabulary include:

- Pre-teach words in the text being taught. Teaching the meaning of those words before the learners read the text improves comprehension of the material and builds vocabulary.
- Ensure multiple exposures to new words. To be sure learners encounter new words frequently, teach vocabulary they will use.
- Keep learners actively engaged. Be sure they use the new words they are learning.
- Teach word-learning strategies. Give learners tools for discovering the meanings of words they encounter during independent reading.
 - Introduce common prefixes and suffixes (e.g., *un-*, *post-*, *-ful*, *-ly*) and demonstrate how they alter the meaning and function of base words.
 - Teach specific strategies for using context clues to derive the meaning of unknown words (e.g., noticing a definition or explanation following the word and set off by commas).
 - Teach learners how to use a dictionary.

Indirect approaches to word learning. Encourage wide reading in varied subject matter areas. Vocabulary is often acquired indirectly through reading. The context of an unknown word provides many clues to meaning. Be sure, though, that the reading material

is not too difficult. If a text has too many unknown words, the reader will not have enough context clues.

Choosing words to teach. For direct instruction in general vocabulary, you might decide to teach several new words each session, perhaps choosing especially useful or difficult words.

Useful words:

- *Signal words* and phrases that mark relationships between ideas and information, like *therefore, however, despite*;
- Idiomatic expressions, like *straight from the horse's mouth*;
- Words in the news (select words used in company newsletters);
- Technical terms related to the workplace context.

Difficult words:

- Homophones (words that sound the same but have different spellings and meanings, e.g., *brake* and *break*);
- Homographs (words that look the same but have different meanings, e.g., *bear*: “animal & support” or “carry & tolerate”).

Comprehension Strategies

Comprehension is the ultimate goal of the reading process. Although there is considerable debate about what comprehension involves, it is essentially about taking meaning from the written text.

Comprehension requires active, strategic thinking, but it also requires basic reading skills: decoding (word identification), fluency, and vocabulary (knowledge of word meanings). Unless decoding is automatic and reading is fluent, comprehension suffers. So another way to understand the reading process is to see it as a hierarchy of skills. Beginning with letters and sounds, moving to identification of words, fluent use of those skills, and understanding of the meaning of words and sentences, comprehension is the culmination of a series of processes.

All adult readers, regardless of their reading level, can benefit from comprehension-strategy instruction. Meaningful reading, including practice of important comprehension strategies, should be part of every training session for all adult learners.

Ways to teach comprehension strategies include:

- **Comprehension monitoring:** check out what learners understand by periodically asking them to re-state what's been read in their own words;
- **Graphic organisers:** using diagrams to show or summarise key understandings in the text;
- **Story structure:** analysing a text by asking key questions such as *who, where, what, and how?*

- Question answering: asking questions to check understanding, not only simple recall (e.g., “how many reports are required?”), but also more evaluative ones (“what makes a good report?”);
- Question generating: teach learners to ask their own questions about the text;
- Summarising key or main ideas.

Discussion among learners is central to many comprehension strategies.

Also remember that the learners need to do the work; teachers’ constantly answering their own questions is a disservice to active learning.

While these suggestions are by no means exhaustive, they do provide a useful start for trainers wanting to grapple with literacy issues in their teaching.

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Bio



Dr John Benseman has worked in adult education and literacy for 33 years as a practitioner, programme administrator, researcher and evaluator. He studied adult education in Sweden, then worked in a range of adult education organizations including continuing medical education for general practitioners, the Auckland Workers Education Association, The University of Auckland and Unitec as well as a self-employed researcher and evaluator. Over recent years he has worked in literacy research projects for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). From 2007-2010 he ran a series of national workplace literacy, language and numeracy research projects. He is currently the Continuing Professional Development manager for the New Zealand Planning Institute and is re-training as a financial literacy and ESOL teacher.

REPEATED READING

By Stuart Webb, Western University

As children, many of us were read to by our parents. Many favorite picture books were read and reread until they were so carefully memorized that any slip or deviation from the text by the parent was instantly corrected by the child. This shows the power of repeated reading; texts are better understood than through a single reading, and words may be learned and remembered. While we may not have the passion to revisit a text quite so many times as we did as young children, repeated reading can still be an interesting and rewarding experience if used judiciously.

Repeated reading, as its name suggests, involves reading the same text several times. There are two forms of repeated reading: assisted and unassisted repeated reading. The unassisted form involves silent readings of the text, while the assisted form involves reading while listening to an oral version of the text. The oral version might be an audio recording, or the text may be read aloud by a teacher or parent. Each form of repeated reading can be used separately or they can be used together in varying combinations. The form that is used may depend on practicality, whether audio versions of texts are available, or someone is willing to read the text aloud.

Repeated reading is a technique that has been commonly used in the L1 classroom to help children who are having difficulty reading at the target level. In ESL and EFL classrooms, repeated reading may also help to expand the reading skills of those who are struggling to develop L2 reading fluency in extensive reading programs. With L2 input lacking in the EFL context, researchers have stressed the importance of including extensive reading in the language learning curriculum. Extensive reading provides the opportunity for students to read for pleasure and in turn develop their reading skills and increase the amount of written input they receive. Most of the research that has examined the efficacy of repeated reading has been in the L1 context (e.g., Dowhower, 1987; Herman, 1985). There are only a handful of second language studies that have investigated repeated reading, but their results have been consistent with the L1 studies. Research has shown that repeated reading may contribute to improved reading comprehension and fluency (Gorsuch & Taguchi, 2008), vocabulary learning (Webb & Chang, 2012), and motivation to read (Blum, Koskinen, Tenant, Parker, Straub & Curry, 1995; Koskinen, Blum, Bisson, Phillips, Creamer, & Baker, 2000).

Comparisons between the two types of repeated reading indicate that they are both effective, but overall the research tends to suggest that assisted repeated reading might be of greater value and should be the preferred option (e.g., Webb & Chang, 2012). There are several reasons why assisted repeated reading is particularly effective. First, it speeds up the reading process. Audio recordings of text may help students to process passages in meaningful chunks rather than word-by-word. Moreover, reading the text in a shorter amount of time allows more time to read the text again, and research indicates that the greater the number of times that a text is read, the more words that are likely to be learned, and the better the text is likely to be understood.

If we consider our own reading experiences, we may be able to understand why repeated reading is effective in improving comprehension and reading rate. When we read, we often read sections, paragraphs, and sentences multiple times. We do this because our comprehension of the text is imprecise; during reading we recognize that we have not fully understood what we have read so we go back and read things again. In some cases when a text is particularly difficult to understand we may go back and read the same passage several times. Moreover, if we consider our learning experiences, when we study, a large part of that process is reading again what we have read before. While part of this process may simply be to better retain information, another part of it may be to get better control of the content, because our previous understanding had been limited to some degree. Thus, we read things again and again to improve our comprehension of the content. Similarly, when we do go back and read things again, we may read at a faster rate. This is likely due to our improved comprehension in subsequent readings allowing us to skim over well understood points and focus greater attention on aspects of the text that are less clear. It is this move in attentional focus that likely contributes to increased vocabulary learning in repeated reading. The first time that we read something challenging, we might focus our attention on general comprehension of the text. However, with further readings, we may move our focus to gaining more precise understanding of the text, and in doing so, we may attend more to unknown and partially known vocabulary. In other words, it is difficult to pay attention to the words that we do not know in text that we do not clearly understand, but when our comprehension is more precise, we might focus our attention on understanding and learning difficult vocabulary. Thus, in our own personal context we might notice the benefits of repeated reading on a regular basis.

Using repeated reading in the classroom

Above, it was pointed out that repeated reading may help to motivate learners to read. This is likely due to their increased comprehension of text in subsequent readings; students may be more engaged in the process of reading when their understanding is sufficient to read for pleasure. That said, repeated reading is not a technique that should apply to all students and all reading situations. While some students may struggle with L2 reading, others may have adequate comprehension the first time they read a text. Thus, repeated reading for

some students may not be necessary, and rather than encourage further reading, the lack of perceived value in multiple readings of the same text may instead discourage reading. Teachers should therefore weigh the advantages and disadvantages of using repeated reading in the classroom.

Repeated reading should follow many of the principles that guide extensive reading. First, the texts should be enjoyable. Allowing students to choose their own texts may increase the likelihood that they are motivated to read a text more than once. Second, the texts should be at the appropriate level. The aim of repeated reading is to improve reading comprehension and fluency, so repeated reading should encourage further reading. Texts that are at too difficult a level may have the opposite effect and discourage reading. Third, students should understand the purpose of repeated reading. Making students aware that their reading comprehension, reading rate, and vocabulary learning may improve through repeated reading may help to motivate and engage them in the process. Finally, students should not be forced to read the same text too many times. Instead they should read as many times as is necessary to achieve an adequate understanding of a story. If gains in reading comprehension are apparent to students, they should also become more engaged in subsequent repeated reading.

Webb and Chang (2012) suggested that repeated reading might be most useful in the early stages of an extensive reading program. Repeated reading prior to extensive reading may help students to become more comfortable and confident reading longer texts. Moreover, when it is done with audio support, the need to read at a quicker pace may require students to process the text in a more native-like manner. Moving from processing texts word-by-word to larger lexical sequences may improve reading fluency. With widespread availability of audio versions of graded readers, there may often be appropriate resources for audio assisted repeated reading these days. Because it is essential that L2 learners, particularly those in the EFL context, receive sufficient L2 input, spending time developing reading skills is necessary. Extensive reading programs have taken a central role in increasing the amount of L2 input. Providing support to learners in the form of repeated reading prior to the start or at the beginning of an extensive reading program might be one way to help to encourage a greater amount of extensive reading.

Extensive reading has great value but may be more effective for some students and less effective for others. First language research has shown that learners with a larger vocabulary size are more likely to read more, and in turn are more likely to learn vocabulary through reading (Stanovich, 1986). In contrast, learners with a smaller vocabulary size are likely to read less, learn fewer words through reading, and fall further behind in their vocabulary development. Second language research suggests that this also happens in L2 extensive reading programs (Webb & Chang, in press). Determining the vocabulary knowledge of students who are taking part in extensive reading programs using established tests such as the Vocabulary Levels Test (Schmitt, Schmitt, & Clapham, 2001) would allow teachers to learn which students may need support. Repeated reading with those learners who are

behind in their vocabulary development may be one way to help them to reach the level of their more successful peers.

Looking Ahead

Further research on repeated reading in the L2 context is needed. Studies investigating how it affects comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary learning in longitudinal studies of extensive reading would provide a better indication of the value of repeated reading. Perhaps what is most important is determining whether repeated reading has a positive effect on the amount of extensive reading. Teachers might look at the amount of reading that is done prior to and after learners are involved in the repeated reading of a series of texts. This may shed light on whether repeated reading might help increase the amount of L2 reading.

Researchers have also suggested that the concept of repeated reading might also be applied to viewing L2 television as a means to enhancing listening comprehension and vocabulary learning (Lin & Siyanova-Chanturia, 2014; Webb, 2014). Research has indicated that listening comprehension may increase through watching different episodes of the same television program, and that vocabulary learning through watching television may occur at a similar rate to that of reading (Rodgers, 2013). Moreover, research also indicates that students are motivated to learn from L2 television (Gieve & Clark, 2005). Using television as a supplement to reading and having students complete repeated viewings of the same episodes to help support comprehension and vocabulary learning may be one way to apply the findings from the repeated reading studies to other discourse types and perhaps expand on potential learning gains. Further research investigating the potential learning gains through repeated viewings of television programs is needed.

Conclusion

Repeated reading (and listening) is a well-established learning technique in the L1 classroom. Recent research indicates that it may also be an effective approach to improving the reading skills of ESL and EFL learners. Although further research on L2 repeated reading is warranted, it is a relatively easy technique to implement into extensive reading programs, and may provide a means to improve reading comprehension, reading rate, motivation to read, and vocabulary learning.

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Bio



Stuart Webb is a Professor at Western University. His research interests include vocabulary and extensive reading. His articles have been published in journals such as *Applied Linguistics* and *Language Learning*. His recent book (with Paul Nation), *Researching and Analyzing Vocabulary*, was published by Heinle (2011).

MENTORING TESL STUDENTS

By Rina Levy, Afghan Women's Organization

Throughout my childhood and adolescent years, I never dreamt that I would become a teacher. After all, my grandfather was a detective, my father was a customs inspector, and I spent countless years engrossed in Nancy Drew detective novels; naturally I thought I would follow in my family's footsteps and do something in the legal field. It was only during my undergraduate studies that I started teaching part-time and realized not just my love for teaching, but also how daunting and overwhelming teaching could be.

I will always remember entering the classroom for the first time with absolutely no methodology or teaching skills behind me, faced with eager (and mischievous) smiles of twenty-five young learners, my heart both sinking and excited at the thought of having to teach them for the next three hours. At first, all went well, but when the students stopped listening and the class clowns started acting up, I could no longer manage to maintain class order. I knew I needed the assistance of someone who had done this before to provide me with the tools that I was missing. I needed a mentor.

The word *mentor* originated from the character Mentor in Homer's *Odyssey*. Odysseus, the king of Ithaca, placed his son, Telemachus, under the care and guidance of his trusted friend, Mentor, when Odysseus left to fight in the Trojan War (Shea, 1997). Since then the word *mentor* has evolved and is now defined as a wise and trusted advisor, friend, teacher, supporter and guide (Shea, 1997; Villani, 2002).

When I look back, I know I would have failed as a teacher if it hadn't been for a mentor, a kind-hearted, sympathetic teacher who noticed my struggles, took me under her wing, and guided me in the right direction. She often put our two classes together and had me observe her while she taught the students. From her I learned effective classroom management, ways to catch and retain the students' attention, new creative ideas and educational games, and numerous other valuable lessons that years of experience had given her. Slowly, with the skills I had learned from her and with the confidence gained over time, I developed my own teaching style that has brought me to where I am today.

There is immense value in having guidance from an experienced, dedicated, supportive, and sincere mentor. Research has shown that an effective mentor is critical for success, and advantages of a relationship between a student-teacher and a mentor not only benefit the student-teacher but the mentor as well (Schrubbe, 2004; Cherian, 2007; Villani,

2002). This article will focus on this mutually-beneficial relationship and how important mentoring is in the TESL field.

The Student-Teacher

Since each student-teacher is unique in personality, teaching ability, and knowledge of the intricacies of the English language, each will face a unique set of challenges during the process of becoming a teacher. Nevertheless, the three most common struggles I've seen in my years of mentoring are: (1) challenges providing inquisitive ESL students with answers on the spot - due to not yet having mastered the complexities of English and difficulty thinking on the feet, (2) teaching as opposed to talking—developing a teacher persona and projecting the voice (which shows confidence)—with a smile, and (3) breaking down complex topics to their lowest common denominators and then explaining them in simple terms to students, a fundamental skill to teach lower levels.

Studies conducted with new teachers at the start of their careers have documented some other challenges, which include:

- The difficulty adhering to the format they are expected to follow while teaching complex subject matters. One teacher stated, “I need to learn to teach subject matter in a way that students are going to get it, not necessarily the way the teacher’s manual says to do it.” (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, p.26)
- Developing classroom management skills, dealing with individual differences among students, and obtaining sufficient materials for adequate instruction (Villani, 2002, as cited in Veenman, 1984).
- Constantly evaluating and reflecting on their previous lessons and using what they learn to inform their future planning and teaching. (Feiman-Nemser, 2003)

It is important to remember that the challenges and struggles faced by student-teachers are an expected part of the learning process. During this time, having the help, support, and encouragement of an effective mentor is invaluable.

The Mentor

Anyone can be a mentor. You don't need to have any one trait to be a successful mentor. The mentor-mentee relationship is similar to any other partnership in life, where traits such as good communication skills, patience, mutual respect, commitment, and enthusiasm are helpful in fostering the relationship.

Feedback from my previous mentee with regards to her challenges in the classroom:

Knowing the Students:

- Understanding their mindsets and how to explain concepts in a way that they feel comfortable.
- Comprehending the accents of newcomer students (“What if I don't understand them?”)
- Recognizing what is and isn't acceptable behaviour in the classroom

Knowing the Materials:

- Preparing the materials in a way which is consistent with being the teacher
- Choosing culturally-appropriate material

-Selena Wenhui, personal communication,
Aug 10, 2014

Mentors who are empathetic, caring, and generous with their time and patience have a strong positive impact on their student-teachers. When asked about an ideal supervisor, one student-teacher responded, “A caring associate is one who is open-hearted and open-minded. Open-hearted in the sense that they want you to be in their class, and open-minded to accepting the kind of person you are and the teacher you want to become” (Cherian, 2007, p. 32). Assisting the student-teacher in finding a niche in the world of teaching is an honour, and the affective component of mentoring is just as or even more important than the practical elements in building the confidence of a new teacher.

The Mentoring Process

Many mentors meet with their student-teachers several sessions before the student-teacher is scheduled to teach, and together they discuss what the student-teacher will teach, which materials are suitable to use, what activities would be appropriate, and so on. Sometime before the scheduled lesson, the student-teacher sends the mentor the finalized lesson (usually it has already been seen by the student-teacher’s TESL instructor) for final modifications or adjustments. From my experience, I have found that reviewing the lesson plan thoroughly and paying close attention to any potential impediments such as difficult vocabulary, inaccurate timing, or overly simple or complicated activities is crucial for a lesson to unfold smoothly. No one can know a class like the teacher does, so it is imperative for the teacher to review the lesson with a fine-tooth comb before it is presented to the students.

Following the lesson, the mentor and student-teacher usually spend some time reflecting on the strengths of the lesson and which areas need improvement. Student-teachers can use this time to be introspective, evaluate themselves, and talk through areas of difficulty. In a constructive manner, mentors give their feedback to the student-teacher as well, and advise the student-teachers on future planning.

The practical elements of mentoring are clear—review the lesson and provide feedback—but mentors are so much more important than that. They are also a source of emotional support and encouragement. Mentors who visibly welcome student-teachers into their classroom and help the student-teachers find their sense of place in a classroom that is not their own (they are the ‘newcomer’ in the classroom) provide a sense of security for the student-teachers who are already coping with the anxieties of teaching and being evaluated (Cherian, 2007).

Qualities mentors rated as most helpful in their mentoring

- Approachability
- Integrity
- Ability to listen
- Sincerity
- Willingness to spend time
- Enthusiasm
- Teaching competence
- Trustworthiness
- Receptivity
- Willingness to work hard
- Positive outlook
- Confidence
- Commitment to the profession
- Openness
- Experience in teaching
- Tactfulness
- Cooperativeness
- Flexibility

(Villani, 2002p. 19)

Why should I be a mentor?

Career Satisfaction

Teachers who mentor have the opportunity to see teaching through the eyes of an enthusiastic (albeit nervous) beginner, fresh with the most current methodologies and innovative ideas. Throughout the process of guiding student-teachers, mentors become reintroduced to the fundamentals of teaching, naturally engage in reflection of their own teaching and subsequently develop a heightened awareness of their own practice (Villani, 2002). At times, there is a mutual learning process occurring as well, as student-teachers often create activities or have teaching ideas that are new for the mentor. Personally, after having a student-teacher in my classroom, I feel re-energized; a good student-teacher adds excitement to a classroom, gives the students something fresh, and puts me, as a teacher, in a different role for a few days.

PD Hours

In order to maintain accreditation, TESL instructors must renew their TESL Ontario memberships and complete the necessary professional development hours annually. Standards have recently been updated and as of their renewal date in 2014, members are now required to complete ten hours of professional development (instead of the previous five hours) in order to renew their memberships for 2015. For more information about this change, please see [the TESL Ontario website](#).

Every hour of mentoring is recognized as one professional development hour. With TESL Ontario's increase in required hours for professional development, mentoring is a valuable way to meet those requirements (TESL Ontario, n.d.).

Personal Gratification

Thinking back on our lives, there have always been people who have influenced us, whether it be formally or informally. Family members, grade school teachers, coaches, friends, colleagues, even political figures or celebrities... people constantly influence our lives in a variety of ways. Conversely, we have an effect on those we meet as well, specifically those who look up to us for guidance and support. The knowledge that we can help someone new in their career, do something which is altruistic and respectable, certainly gives a person a sense of personal gratification.

To be a mentor is an honour.

How can I be a mentor?

Talk to your coordinator and familiarize yourself with your school's policies regarding student-teachers in the classroom. Work together with your coordinator to contact local TESL programs. TESL programs usually place students with teachers, and in some

programs, student-teachers are required to find their own placements. Regardless, getting in touch with TESL-programs will be your best link to finding a placement student for your classroom.

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Bio

Rina Levy holds a post-graduate TESL certificate from Humber College and an M.Ed. from York University, focusing her research on the relationship between learning disabilities and second language acquisition. Over the last twelve years, she has taught pre-literacy through CLB 8 students in numerous colleges and schools, and she currently teaches in the LINC program at the Afghan Women's Organization.

REFLECTING EFFECTIVELY

Encouraging realistic and effective student reflections using technology

Sheri Henderson and Virginia Robson

Reflective practice encourages the analysis and evaluation of both the process and product of learning, with the aim of developing realistic appreciation of one's own achievement. Many teachers ask students to reflect on their work, but students may be unsure how to effectively reflect on their work, and may initially assess themselves inappropriately or inadequately. If students treat a reflection as merely an additional, boring task to complete, they may miss out on a valuable learning opportunity. This article highlights strategies for encouraging reflective practice among learners of all ages with the use of technology.

Reflective practice is crucial for improved performance and understanding in life, not just in one's academic efforts, but in the real world. "We do not learn from doing, we learn from thinking about what we do" (Northwest Service Academy, n.d.). Reflecting aids us in examining *why* we do things. However, in our opinion, so many learners focus only on the final outcome, the product, and once complete, give very little thought to how to take the results and examine them with a critical eye in order to consolidate what they have learned to improve their future performance. Learning is a lifelong process; learning to reflect realistically on past learning can help to improve future learning. Students in particular need training in the skill of reflection to develop their critical thinking skills. Close examination of what they have achieved, in order to understand what might be done in future is an activity which can boost a student's sense of accomplishment and foster learner confidence. For everyone, reflection involves acceptance of past efforts, acknowledgement of skills mastered, and recognition of those which need more practice. Reflecting effectively can become a beneficial habit for students as they continue in their studies and as they move into the workplace or community.

Our Setting

We have introduced reflective practice to students studying at English medium, federally-funded higher education in the United Arab Emirates as well as secondary school students in Egypt. The observations noted here constitute the ongoing experiences of the authors in their assignments teaching gender-segregated and/or co-educational classes of native speakers of Arabic. Our reflective activities took place in a variety of language and content classes, ranging from beginning English Language Learners to Bachelor level Ecology and

Nutrition, Research Methods, Cultural Diversity and Communications courses such as Public Speaking, Academic Reading, Writing, and Professional Communications.

Our observations over time indicated that many students were simply focusing on the end result of a task or assignment. In informal discussions with students about their work, it was clear that making connections between courses was rare; students tend to compartmentalize their learning and do not regularly apply the skills they learn in one course to their work in another subject (Viker et al, 2013). For example, students learn how to do APA referencing in initial academic writing classes, yet many forget how to use these skills in subsequent content classes, or even the next writing or research class. At the beginning of a new semester, we began to encourage students to recall *what* they had learned in a class, and to try to *predict* which of those skills and experiences they believed they might need in the new course. These reflective activities eventually led to the introduction of spoken reflective tasks in the Public Speaking course and the use of written reflections being expanded to courses such as Ecology, Nutrition and Research Methods.

A “Bring Your Own Device” policy opened up the opportunity for students and teachers to use various Web 2.0 tools for course work, facilitating mobile course delivery and completion. Our Learning Management System (LMS) Blackboard Learn 9.1 included a Journal tool. This secure, private space lets students complete written reflective tasks and allows instructors to provide timely, personal feedback to students anywhere, anytime, on various devices.

Teach the Skill

First and foremost, reflecting is a skill that can be learned and, like any skill, reflection needs frequent practice. Regular practice is the best way for students to become reflective learners. Reflecting on individual course assignments, but also on the entire course or curriculum, can assist them to see the connections between the classroom, the college and the wider community in which they live. Course reflections can occur opportunistically, at regular intervals as the semester progresses, at midterm, or as a final task. Appendix A shows an example of a final course reflection.

For students to become competent and confident at reflecting on their work, they need to examine their work with a critical eye. Many students may be unsure how to effectively reflect on their work and may struggle to assess themselves adequately, and unless taught *how* to reflect, they may miss out valuable learning. Providing a clear structure for the reflection, such as asking students to identify what worked, what didn't work, and what steps they could take to improve next time, helps learners begin to examine their efforts. Guidelines, meaningful prompts, and a grading rubric if necessary can help, and while some may argue that grading a reflection is counterproductive, sometimes it has to happen. It is also vital that students know that a reflective entry is private communication between themselves and the instructor, rather than a public sharing of thoughts. This “security” may

boost student willingness to critically examine their achievement with an eye to improving any flaws.

Welch (1999) notes that just saying to students “Do a reflection” can easily end up with students producing a “Dear Diary” type of reflection, in which they superficially comment on their learning process and product with remarks such as “I worked in a group” or “I wrote a paragraph.” Certainly, part of the reflective task includes the *what*, but a more thorough analysis asks learners to examine both *what* they did, and *how well* they did it. Students need training in exactly *what* constitutes appropriate reflection, and the use of reflective prompts can facilitate the process. It is imperative that teachers define the purpose of the reflection and provide clear expectations for student success. Above all, students need to know that in reflecting, “honesty is the best policy.” It is difficult for many learners to comprehend that reflection asks them to write what *they* think, rather than write down what they think *the teacher* wants to hear. Our most difficult task is convincing students that *their responses are of value*. The personal observations students eventually make about their own learning are what excite us about training students to reflect.

Successful reflections also depend on teachers giving students feedback. Guiding students through the process of reflection takes time, and teachers can help facilitate this process by providing timely feedback and gentle clues to encourage learners to more deeply analyze their work, rather than just make superficial or trivial comments. Teaching students the skill is why feedback is so important. Providing cues for students to consider when composing their reflective comments can help them to develop an objective, analytical eye when it comes to self-critiquing their learning process and product. Examples of cues are found later in the paper.

The Written Reflection

Reflective learning logs have been used to record both the process and product of student learning in classrooms as well as in teacher training programs in Canada and the United States for decades. At McMaster University’s Centre for Leadership in Learning, students are encouraged to record reflections privately via a personal learning journal, or publicly via a reflection blog in order to track learning over time (Allard, 2013). For us, a key component of both traditional and electronic coursework portfolios has been the learners’ critical analysis and reflection of their work, included in the portfolio in the form of a reflective essay or passage. Often, written reflections were composed on paper, carried in notebooks, and updated on the go, as required, for commenting on both learning process activities and the summative task’s overall success. Drawbacks of the notebook learning log were that sometimes the log got misplaced or lost, meaning that all records of one’s musings on learning were gone. Paper reflections had privacy issues as well. If students made honest comments on their work in the journal, the issue of a lost journal being found—and read—by a stranger, could be potentially problematic. The best reflections are created when the author feels a sense of ownership, which also includes the ability to determine who reads

these critical self-analyses. Even more problematic is the potential loss of student work by a teacher, which, while an infrequent occurrence, could possibly still happen.

Within Blackboard Learn 9.1, the Journal tool provides an effective way to let students become reflective learners in a private environment where only the author and the teacher can access the journal. Blackboard Help (2013) cites the University of Worcester, which claims that reflective learners are more motivated, more engaged, and more likely to “develop their learning and thinking by building on the critical evaluation of their previous learning experiences.” Using Blackboard, students can reflect anywhere they have an internet connection, anytime, and via multiple devices. Students work when *they* have time, when ideas come to them. We have observed that many of the best responses seem to be created long after we instructors have retired to bed. For us, around the clock learner activity is good proof of learner engagement.

Many students, not only second language learners, are anxious about their writing accuracy. Using technology to write reflections lets those students check the spelling and grammar of their entries. Students can copy and paste their reflection from a word processor, or they can compose directly in Blackboard. They may format text creatively, add pictures or hyperlinks to make the entry ‘reflect’ their personality. When the student is satisfied with the entry, s/he clicks ‘Post Entry’ and the entry appears in a ‘digital notebook’ which the teacher can comment on. Allowing students to edit or delete entries transfers ownership of the Reflection Journal to the student, as would be the case in a paper-based response journal. A consideration, however, is that in some institutions, once the course ends, so does student access to Blackboard courses; consequently, Journal entries become inaccessible. Using open resources such as Dropbox or Edmodo to share journals between teachers and students may be preferable, but using Journals in Blackboard is an effective way to introduce the concept and train students in a safe and private digital learning environment.

The Spoken Reflection

Students who struggle with writing may find it easier to reflect on their work by speaking and recording their response. Oral reflections allow students to reflect, while not getting tripped up by the spelling and grammar issues associated with writing. Another advantage to the spoken reflections is students have the ability to use voice stress and intonation to emphasize important details. Similar to writing drafts, students have the possibility to listen to themselves and make changes or additions before submitting the final version. The ubiquity of smartphones and tablets makes recording reflections and sharing them easier than ever.

As with written reflections, a successful oral reflection needs to have clear guidelines and expectations. This includes having prompts that both guide the student as to what to discuss, but also not restrict the creativity of the student’s response. A good prompt will allow for specific details from the student, but at the same time offer the freedom for the

student to reflect without hesitation. The safety of the reflection—that the student is secure in the knowledge that the response is only with the teacher and will not be shared with anyone—also applies. A time limit should also be given (analogous to a word count), so students have a clear idea how long their response should be. See Appendix B for a sample of an oral reflection task prompt which includes guidelines for student preparation of their recording.

Absolutely essential to this oral reflection process is to set up a clear formatting system for students to follow. This will save teachers time and frustration when being sent a large number of sound files. The formatting system should cover how to save the file, including the name, file format, etc. (e.g. *Save your file as an .avi or .mp3 using your name and topic: Maryam Ahmed reflection on ecological footprint*). Students should know how to send the file: by email, to Dropbox, as an assignment in Blackboard Learn or on Edmodo or Showbie, and should understand what to do if the teacher's preferred method does not work for them. It is helpful for students to follow a script at the beginning of each recording such as, "My name is ... ID number... and this is my reflection on..." (See Appendix B). This gives teachers another way to identify a recording in case the student forgets to save it with the proper name. Finally, students need to check the sound level of their recordings, to ensure the volume and quality of the recording is acceptable. Making recordings engages learners, and demands that they check that the recording has been successful. Students should be trained, but then held responsible for following these formatting guidelines like every other academic task. Here again, the grading rubric can be used by students to self-assess their product prior to submission, providing the first opportunity for student self-reflection on the task. Teachers are responsible for giving students meaningful feedback on their oral reflections, which can be done either on paper, online, or as a recorded response sent back to the student.

Conclusion

Reflective practice encourages the analysis and evaluation of both the process and product of learning, with the aim of developing realistic appreciation of one's achievement. Training learners to reflect on their learning takes time, but our experiences indicate that almost all students will benefit from learning how to reflect and critically analyse their work. The rewards for students are developing their thinking skills and building their confidence, and for teachers, the reward is gaining insight into how our students think and feel, the occasional compliment, and the knowledge that what we do in the classroom will have a lasting effect on students. Using reflection in class requires students to become active learners, engaged in their own success. Reflecting empowers students to cope with academic challenges, and be prepared for the needs of life after graduation. When students can look back at their work, recognize what went well, and understand what could be improved, and commit to making the changes necessary to improve, then we see reflection in action.

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Appendix A: Day-one Writing

Write your thoughts on the following:

- Introduce yourself with the relevant personal information
- Describe what you learned last year, especially what was interesting, difficult, and new for you
- Describe what you expect to do this year at the college academically and socially
- Describe how you think this year will be different than last year

[The teacher should collect and keep these, returning them at the end of the semester to do the following reflection.]

Final Writing Reflection

Look at what you wrote on Day 1 and write a reflection on your writing for this semester. Your reflection should be an essay and answer the following questions:

1. How have you improved your writing this semester? What can you do now that you couldn't at the beginning of the semester?
2. How can you continue to improve your writing?
3. Look at what you wrote about what you expected you would do this year at the college academically and socially and how this year would be different from last year. Did what you thought would happen come true? How? If not, why not?

Reflection after presentation (individual)

After you have given your presentation, you must write or record a short reflection answering these questions. It is due the day after your presentation.

1. What was your presentation about?

2. How did you feel before, during, and after your presentation?
3. What did you do well in your presentation?
4. What could you have improved?
5. How would you evaluate your presentation today?
6. Look at and think about the feedback you got from your classmates and teacher (given immediately after the presentation). Do you agree or disagree with their comments? What do you think about what they said?

Appendix B: Sample Oral Reflection Prompt

Ecology: The Story of Stuff – Ecological Footprint Oral Reflection

After watching “The Story of Stuff,” reading about/discussing the UAE’s ecological footprint, and finding out your own footprint, I want you to reflect on what these mean to you.

You will use the questions I give you below and record your answers in a sound file. Save it and send it to me as an email attachment. Save your reflection in this format: NameIDstuffreflection (e.g. AishahID841964stuffreflection).

At the beginning of your sound file you should say the following:

“My name is _____ ID number _____. This is my reflection on the Story of Stuff and ecological footprint...”

These are the questions to help you prepare your reflection:

1. What do you think about Annie Leonard’s message about “stuff”? What do you think about the UAE’s ecological footprint?
2. How do this video and the reading relate to ecology class?
3. Go to myfootprint.org and calculate your ecological footprint. What is your number and how does this information make you feel?
4. Has watching the video/doing the reading on ecological footprint made you think about your own “stuff” and consumption habits? Explain your answers with details of what you plan/don’t plan to change in your life.

Your reflection should be between 4–5 minutes long.

Bios



Sheri Henderson holds a MSc in Educational Management in TESOL from Aston University in the UK. Her use of reflections began during her teacher training program at Queen’s University, Canada, where she earned an Honours BA in German as well as a B.Ed. degree. Sheri has guided students in K-12 and higher education settings on four continents to become reflective learners.



Virginia Robson has an MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Pittsburgh, USA. She’s worked in China, Germany, the USA, and the UAE. She has students reflect on their coursework and performance in both the English and content classes she teaches.

ENHANCE YOUR SKILLS WITH 1-ON-1 ESL TUTORING

By Carolyn Flores

Teaching ESL has been a tremendously enjoyable and rewarding experience. However, with more and more teachers entering the field, increased reporting and accountability required, and program reductions in certain areas, there's no doubt that it's also an increasingly competitive and challenging profession, especially if you're just getting started. In order to stay ahead of the game, it's more important than ever to continue developing skills and growing as a professional. While participating in annual Professional Development and reading various articles posted on blogs and social network sites on a regular basis has been very helpful, one thing I've found that has really made me a better teacher is 1-on-1 ESL tutoring. Not only has 1-on-1 tutoring helped me strengthen and enhance my teaching skills, it has also helped me gain a better understanding of the unique challenges ESL learners face and has provided me with a steady stream of supplemental income along the way.

Enhancing & Expanding Key Skills

Many of the key skills we use in the classroom are directly transferrable to the tutoring process and I've found that the extra practice I get using them while tutoring has made me even better at using them in the classroom. As a tutor, I'm still conducting an initial assessment, providing on-going feedback and support, and periodically evaluating my clients' progress. I'm also still focusing on the same content and using many of the same teaching techniques I would in the classroom. Interpersonal skills, however, become that much more important when working 1-on-1. As a tutor, active listening and being patient, flexible, understanding and supportive is very important. I need to ensure that my students feel comfortable enough to make mistakes and keep pushing forward despite sometimes feeling frustrated, confused and even embarrassed. In the classroom, learners often receive encouragement, understanding and support from their peers but with 1-on-1 tutoring, they're relying on me, so I really get to focus on and further develop these skills. I also get a lot of practice with lesson planning and adapting on the fly. When I create lesson plans for my classroom, not only am I trying to engage and stimulate, I'm also trying to ensure a comfortable pace for the group as a whole. Usually, this means a slower, more consistent pace with few, if any, deviations from the lesson plan. When creating a lesson plan for tutoring, whether face-to-face or online, I have to allow for a more variable pace based on the unique needs and abilities of the individual I'm working with. Tutoring clients also

tend to feel more comfortable suggesting themes or topics than do students in a classroom, and it's often much easier to tell what is and is not working while tutoring. As a result, I've gained a lot of experience with adapting and improvising which has made me better able to manage a more diverse classroom (i.e., one with a wide range of skill levels).

In addition to strengthening my existing skills, 1-on-1 tutoring has also helped me to expand my skill set by focusing more on competencies I wasn't able to focus on as much in the classroom. Focusing on conversation is one example. A little over a year ago, I was focusing a lot of my classroom time on reading and writing with a strong emphasis on grammar and vocabulary. It's how I was taught growing up (even as a native speaker), and initially what I was taught to focus on as an ESL teacher. Not surprisingly, these were the areas I was most experienced at teaching and generally most comfortable with. Then, I took on a client whose primary focus was learning to speak English more fluently so that he could interact more effectively and more confidently at work. We started focusing on conversation using topics from his work place, from the news and from seasonal or cultural themes. I also created a mix of both open- and closed-ended questions centered on grammar points, key vocabulary words and phrasal verbs. The result was impressive. His fluency and confidence improved dramatically and we even went from there to reading and writing. Since then, I've made student-centered conversation an important part of my classroom lesson plans and have seen similar results with those students too (see my January 2015 [post on the TESL Ontario blog](#) for more about adding this to your classroom).

Because of my strength at teaching reading and writing, I've also been able to gain experience at helping to prepare newcomers for educational and employment tests such as the ITELS and TOEFL exams. For those with specialized education and training from their home country, receiving a little 1-on-1 support with the technical language needed for these exams can make a big difference. Even though this is not something that I now focus on directly in my classroom, having had this experience does allow me to provide a little extra guidance and direction to those students who are preparing independently for these exams. The other way that tutoring has helped me expand my "skills toolkit" is by giving me the opportunity to try out new resources. As you know, there is a wealth of on-line resources available today but the classroom isn't always the best place to explore these new resources. However, given the variety of tutoring clients I see and the immediate feedback I get when introducing a new on-line tool, I've actually been able to leverage these sessions to identify which tools are more worthwhile than others. Those that are, often find their way into my classroom lesson plans.

Gaining a Better Understanding of ESL Learners

1-on-1 tutoring has also helped me gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by ESL learners and has allowed me to really improve the way I address learning style differences. This has helped me create a more comfortable classroom environment

and has made it easier for me to accommodate individual needs despite the group setting. As someone with more of an extroverted personality and someone who has lived and worked abroad, I naturally tend to speak with my students about their backgrounds and experiences. However, the reality is that, in the classroom, students can be far more reluctant to share personal stories and, unfortunately, I can't afford to spend the time learning about each student the way I can through 1-on-1 tutoring. While it may not necessarily influence my lesson planning, knowing more about where they've come from, what their cultural sensitivities are and what challenges they face in learning English makes me more empathetic and better able to relate to them. It also helps me better manage group dynamics and makes for a more comfortable classroom environment which increases sharing, participation and ultimately, student progress.

Given the lack of evidence behind the relationship between learning styles (visual, auditory or tactile) and overall academic success (Pashler et al., 2009), it's interesting that some of the teaching strategies I used with my ESL students positively impacted performance. A few years ago, I was working with a client from Columbia who was struggling with reading and having a difficult time comprehending written material (typically assigned as homework). It wasn't until our third session that I started thinking about whether or not her difficulties could be learning-style related. So, I had her complete a quiz and it turned out that she had a heavy bias towards auditory learning. We then started spending more time reading out loud (first me, then her) and talking through lessons. We also experimented with online listening material and news clips. The results, which were almost immediate, had a significant impact on her progress. Around the same time, I had another client who was much more of a visual learner. With him, using charts, graphics and other visual aids had the greatest impact. I also made sure to keep my talking to a minimum, so as not to distract him as he absorbed the material, and made sure he was speaking 80% of the time. His progress also improved significantly once we made this shift. Recently, one of my colleagues had the opportunity to work with someone whose dominant learning style was tactile. For him, we focused more on written assignments and "hands on" experiences such as getting out in the community and practicing cultural gestures. As expected, his learning accelerated. Based on these experiences, I now have all my students complete a learning style quiz (I'm currently using a free site, learningrx.com, which has a 20 question self-assessment) at the same time as they complete their goals and needs assessment forms. With this information, I'm better able to tailor my lesson plans to more effectively meet my students' needs.

Taking the Pressure off with Supplemental Income

In addition to helping me become a better teacher by improving and expanding my skills and broadening my knowledge base, 1-on-1 tutoring has helped me remain fully engaged by providing a supplemental revenue stream. I know this might seem like a curious statement

to some, but the fact is that most ESL teachers are part-time or contract employees and having a secondary income stream makes pursuing our passion for teaching ESL that much easier. There's also no shortage of opportunity; particularly around major urban centers and online. Despite the fact that there are a number of options for learning English in a group or in a classroom setting, for many people, receiving 1-on-1 instruction from a qualified and experienced teacher is their preferred option for learning English. As for rates, while it varies depending on where you are and who your client is, a certified ESL teacher should feel comfortable charging anywhere from \$35 to \$50 an hour. So, depending on how much time you have to devote to 1-on-1 tutoring, there's an excellent opportunity to augment your income.

Getting Started with Your Own Business

The key in establishing a structured process for setting up your own tutoring business is being well organized. There are several things that you will need to consider when it comes to marketing, intake, evaluating, reporting, billing, and collecting. The first steps of course are finding clients and making some decisions on marketing tools/materials and advertising tactics. Of course these decisions will be influenced by your budget and the type of tutoring business you're looking to develop based on your skills and background.

There are plenty of marketing materials and tools you could use to get your name and tutoring service out there such as business cards, a simple 1–3 page website/blog, online local ads, and flyers. Advertising through word-of-mouth, social networking, ads online or in your local newspaper are proven and effective ways in promoting and marketing yourself. Once you have your first few clients, having a structured process in place for evaluating, reporting, billing and collecting demonstrates professionalism and success. It's part of the reason why I've been able to do this successfully for over 10 years.

There's no doubt that teaching ESL is a very dynamic and intrinsically rewarding profession. However, it's also an increasingly competitive and demanding one. So, if you're passionate about teaching ESL and are committed to continually striving to be the best teacher you can be, you might want to try your hand at 1-on-1 tutoring. It's a great way to further develop your skills, better understand your students and generate some additional income, all at the same time. Just be sure to put the time in upfront to get focused and organized; it will make the whole process that much easier and that much more enjoyable!

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Bio



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GRIT: IT'S ROLE IN STUDENT SUCCESS IN ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES (EAP)

By Patrice Palmer

Attaining the level of English required for post-secondary studies requires language learners to invest a significant amount of time and effort over a lengthy period. Second language acquisition (SLA) theories describe how people learn language and the factors that help or hinder one's language learning. Research in the area of SLA suggests that it takes between three to seven years to reach a level of language competency in order to study at a post-secondary level (Collier, 1987). In Canada, students can enroll in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to develop their language skills for post-secondary studies. EAP is a term that broadly describes courses that teach students academically-related language and subject matter (Brown, 2007). Despite the length of time required for EAP learners to develop their academic language proficiency, entering post-secondary study is possible. A non-cognitive trait known as "grit" can contribute to student motivation and lead to attaining language learning goals, achievement and success. In the field of positive psychology, GRIT is defined as "perseverance and passion for long term goals" (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007, p. 1087). Having grit means "working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress" (Duckworth et al., p. 1087). Research in the area of grit suggests that IQ is not necessarily a predictor of academic success however grit is (Duckworth et al., 2007). Duckworth and colleagues argue that "there is observed association between grit and education as evidence that sticking with long-range goals over time makes possible completion of high levels of education" (p. 1092). Grit is an essential non-cognitive trait that can be developed in second language learners and promoted by language instructors to assist students in achieving their goals of attaining language level proficiency needed in higher education.

Research in the area of SLA indicates that some second language learners may require many years of study. Research conducted by Hakuta, Butler, and Witt (2000) reports estimates of up to 10 years before students are fully proficient in English. If language learners are to be successful in attaining the level of English required for post-secondary studies, they may have to sustain their efforts over a significant number of years, through an EAP program and beyond. Grit can help students to set goals and persevere as it is a daunting task for non-native English students to acquire oral and academic English (Hakuta et al., 2000). Furthermore, unless motivation is maintained during the lengthy process of second language learning, the tendency is often for learners to lose sight of their

goal, which could result in a decrease in their initial motivation (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Snow, 2014). Factors that can contribute to student success such as motivation and beliefs in one's ability are important and should not be underestimated in SLA.

Given the length of time needed to acquire academic language skills, how do language learners in EAP programs persevere during extended periods of learning? Having grit is key. Gritty students “deliberately set for themselves extremely long-term objectives and do not swerve from them...” (Duckworth et al., p. 1087). Students with grit are highly motivated which is the driving force that enables learners to expend continuous sustained effort (Moskovsky, Alrabai, Paolini, & Ratcheva, 2013). Researchers suggest that language instructors can play a significant role in providing an environment that sustains students' motivation (Moskovsky et al., 2013). Research conducted by Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) defines two categories of motivational strategies in second language acquisition: instructional interventions applied by the teacher and self-regulating strategies used by learners to manage their own motivation. Grit, as a trait, is neither of these, but by learning self-regulating strategies, students may be better able to build their abilities to hold on to motivation, in effect becoming grittier.

How to Develop Grit

The research on how to best to develop grit is still ongoing but the most promising evidence supports adopting a growth mindset. For the past twenty years, Dweck and colleagues at Stanford University have been conducting research in the area of student success related to their beliefs regarding intelligence. Their research explores how these beliefs can strongly influence learning success (Mangels, Butterfield, Lamb, Good, & Dweck, 2006). Dweck's research demonstrates how instructors can introduce and encourage learners to develop a growth mindset so that they view their failures as opportunities to learn rather than a reflection of their lack of ability (Duckworth & Eskreis-Winkler, 2013). In the language acquisition domain, Mercer & Ryan (2009) suggest, “the belief that certain individuals are naturally gifted language learners, or are simply good at languages, is one regularly encountered among language learners, teachers, and researchers” (p. 436). The positive news for both language instructors and second language learners is that Dweck's malleable theory of intelligence (implicit theory or mindsets) suggests that because the brain develops like a muscle, it can be developed (Renaud-Dubé, Guay, Talbot, Taylor, & Koestner, 2015). This means student success is based on effort rather than talent or aptitude for language learning. Language learners who believe this may be in a better position to persevere and sustain their interest despite setbacks; they may have more grit. Although research in implicit theories has not specifically investigated SLA, the concept of developing a growth mindset can be adapted by language instructors and language learners.

The importance of language instructors in learner achievement is a crucial factor. Students' ability to persevere could be affected depending on their mindset so language instructors should explicitly teach the theory of growth mindset. In a study conducted by Moskovsky

et al. (2013) on the effects of teachers' motivational strategies, participants ranked ten strategies: vary learning tasks; demonstrate care about students' progress and their well-being; recognize students' effort and achievement; respond to students' academic needs; increase the amount of English used; add humour; remind students' of the importance of learning English; relate the content to their everyday experiences, and consistently encourage them by believing in their effort to learn and succeed. The two strategies that are consistent with a growth mindset are recognizing students' efforts and achievements and consistently encouraging them by believing in their effort to learn and succeed. Dweck (2007) claims that "a growth mindset creates motivation and resilience" and that "the growth mindset message appeared to unleash students' motivation" (p. 3).

After studying Dweck's work, and having observed a lack of grit in some of my students, I decided to introduce the theory of growth mindset. Although the examples are anecdotal, these language learners were able to express how the attitude of the instructor, including the belief in their abilities and praise of their effort and hard work, encouraged them to persevere and work hard to improve their language skills. One student told me, "I have a positive attitude to learning. I love to gain new experiences and knowledge and a growth mindset" (personal communication, December 2014). The student went on to say that "I learnt through this that, although do many attempts, but never give up as tiredness at the final end stage" (personal communication, November 28, 2014). Another reported, "It's been always your words which motivates me to work hard. I will try to work hard and continue to put more effort to improve my writing skills" (personal communication, December 4, 2014). Finally, a third said, "the biggest thing I realized on each step is efforts = result. I am thankful to you for motivating and encouraging me" (personal communication, March 16, 2015). There are numerous examples from other students related to the importance of instructor motivation, growth mindset, and their continued passion for long term goals. The feedback from these language learners has resulted in reflecting as a teacher and understanding the crucial role that all language instructors can play in helping learners persevere to achieve their long-term academic goals of post-secondary study.

Research on grit and growth mindset does not only have an impact on language learners, but also on language instructors. Because of these findings, and my positive experience in introducing a growth mindset to language learners, I would like to engage in action research. This will help me to further my understanding to assist language learners to pursue and sustain their passion for their long term academic goals. Given the number of years needed for language learners to develop the required language skills for post-secondary studies, it is likely important for language instructors to implement strategies to develop learners' grit and growth mindset. Applying positive psychology to second language acquisition is an exciting possibility that requires further inquiry.

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Bio



Patrice Palmer has 20 years' experience as a teacher trainer, ESL/EAP instructor and curriculum developer in Canada and Hong Kong. Patrice has a M. Ed. in Teaching, Learning and Development from Brock University and a M.A. from OISE of the University of Toronto. Patrice is also TESL Ontario certified and is accredited as a TESL Trainer for Methodology and Theory, Practicum Supervisor and Academic Coordinator. Patrice's goal is to re-locate to Costa Rica in the next year.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

By Paul Nation, Victoria University of Wellington

I have changed my mind on many things about language teaching, or perhaps it is better to say I have had to change my mind, because a lot of the new ideas were those researched by my PhD students, who like most good PhD students, proved me wrong. These ideas included the following: There are probably less than a hundred true non-compositional idioms in English (we thought there were thousands). Technical vocabulary makes up a very large proportion (20% or more) of the running words in a technical text (I had said it was only around 5% of the running words). Text coverage by vocabulary is a very imprecise indicator of text difficulty (I had thought it was more precise). Different ways of learning vocabulary result in similar kinds of knowledge (I had said that different ways resulted in different aspects of knowledge being learned). The good thing about being wrong and having to change is that it makes you aware of your own fallibility and more skeptical about what you advocate.

The most important change however is one that I actively pursued myself. At two or three times in my career I have experienced frustration at knowing a lot about something but not truly being able to integrate my knowledge and see a way forward. The first time was just after I finished writing my first book, *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary*. I had read over two thousand articles about vocabulary and yet after having used the results of that reading and my teaching experience to write the book, I still could not see the important research areas to focus on in future research. Another time I had been reading some articles about language teaching and realized that, in spite of years in the field, I could not tell anyone who asked what was really important in teaching and learning a language. The result of thinking about this was my rather, simple idea of the four strands, namely that a well-balanced language course has roughly equal amounts of opportunities of learning from input, learning from output, deliberate language-focused learning, and fluency development across the four skills (see the references below for more detail on this). This insight led me to change my mind about the role of the language teacher. Instead of the language teacher being a teacher, there are four other more important roles in addition to that one. Primarily a language teacher needs to be a planner who makes sure that the learners are focusing on what needs to be learned, and have opportunities to learn across the four strands (teaching makes up only a proportion of one of these strands). Second, a language teacher needs to be an organizer who makes sure that within each strand, the activities are putting the best conditions for learning into practice. Third, the teacher needs to be a

trainer who helps learners develop the strategies and skills they need to be good language learners. Fourth, the teacher needs to be an assessor who measures and evaluates learning so that learners are aware of their progress and they are working at right level of language knowledge. Finally, the teacher needs to teach. Teaching involves deliberate learning and is a part of the language-focused learning strand. The research on deliberate learning as a result of teaching vocabulary is not encouraging, less than 50% of what is taught is likely to be learned. But teaching does have a role to play in highlighting important knowledge, starting off learning, and strengthening incidental learning.

This change of mind about balancing learning opportunities through the four strands and about the role of the teacher is for me the biggest and most important change of mind I have had about language learning.

It is worth briefly concluding with some things that I have not changed my mind about. These can either be seen as some of the certainties of language learning, or beliefs whose time for change has not yet arrived.

I still think that large quantities of comprehensible input through extensive listening and extensive reading are essential parts of a good language course. These fit into the meaning-focused input strand of a course.

I still think that, for foreign language learners, deliberate learning through the use of bilingual word cards is a highly efficient and effective way of learning and recent research on implicit knowledge has supported this.

I still think that it is important for a course to include focused fluency practice across the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

A theme that ran through the collection of contributions, *What have you Changed your Mind about?*, that inspired this issue of the journal was don't trust experts. I am in agreement with this. But, I think that you should listen to the experts, consider and perhaps try what they say and then make an informed judgement. I hope you will do that with the four strands.

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Bio



Paul Nation is Emeritus Professor of Applied Linguistics in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. His books on vocabulary include *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary* (1990) and *Researching and Analysing Vocabulary* (2011) (with Stuart Webb) both from Heinle Cengage Learning. His latest book on vocabulary is *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language* (second edition 2013) published by Cambridge University Press. Two books strongly directed towards teachers appeared in 2013 from Compass Media in Seoul – *What should every ESL Teacher Know?* (available free from www.compasspub.com/ESLTK) and *What should every EFL Teacher Know?* He is also co-author of Nation, P. and Malarcher, C. (2007) *Reading for Speed and Fluency. Books 1-4*. Seoul: Compass Publishing. He can be contacted at Paul.Nation@victoria.ac.nz

BECAUSE GRAMMAR (AND CATS)¹

By Tyson Seburn, University of Toronto

Are we resisters to language adaptations?

Are we out of the language loop?

Are we getting old?

I wouldn't have thought so: I think I'm very open-minded about this sort of thing; I am normally at least aware, yet more often a user, of new vocabulary (I take my fair share of *selfies*), shifts in genre-accepted grammar (go ahead, start written sentences with *but*), and styles of expressing oneself (e.g. personal pronouns in academic writing are OK). These transitions don't take long for me to adopt, provided I see evidence of their use in written texts, oral production, etc. In fact, this adaptation often spills over into my teaching, depending on the context students are allowed to experiment with unconventional language use. *BUT*, there's one such piece of language creativity—one grammatical ugly duckling, one tawdry harlot of misuse—that took me completely by surprise, and though I've now seen it pop up in the most random places (note the tote above), my early adoption tendencies have failed to kick in. Cringes have failed to subside when it sneers at me from the page. Why? *Because beliefs*.

Did you raise an eyebrow just now also? Trust me, a small shudder trembled through my core as I wrote it. It seems as though, unbeknownst to me, this *because + noun* construction (not to mention *because + adjective*) has mounted enough use to make the American Dialect Society's Word of the Year for 2013. What? How did I not notice this? I'm well read. I spend an abnormal amount of time on social media. I have a teenage niece and nephews.

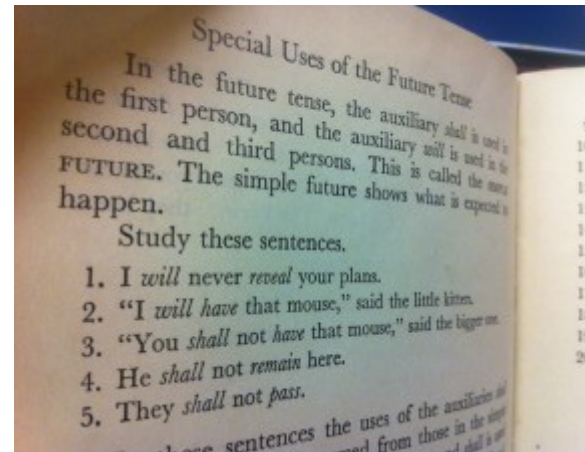


1. This article has been adapted from a post originally on 4CinELT (<http://fourc.ca>).

My apparent ignorance aside, I have begun to reconsider whether or not I fall into the same unquestioning traditionalism as of a previous generation who clings to placing those pesky prepositions anywhere but at the end of a sentence. Thinking of my linguistic flexibility fossilising raises the hair on my neck. Thankfully, my language teaching powers have also begun to equalise this knee-jerk spasm of hate, causing me to consider how to handle my existential concerns and attempt to rationalise my distaste.

Not long before a collegial conversation about this “because business” triggered everything, I was leafing through my collection of old textbooks that sit, collecting dust on my office shelf, to see what of value I could learn from them. *Because old* and *because grammar*, one that caught my eye was *Grammar is Important: A Basic Course for Canadian Schools*, a textbook written for elementary students in Canada just after World War II. Most of it contains the usual: parts of speech, sentence structure, simple explanations, and of course identification exercises. Then I turned to an intriguing section: “Special Uses of the Future Tense”, which, beyond its mildly surprising content, had a nod to guided discovery.

The opening paragraph explains how to use *shall* and *will* with particular pronouns for simple future use, but the sentence examples themselves do the opposite. Sure, it doesn’t guide much with the unclear instruction, “study these sentences”, but hey, it was 1949. What gave me the most pause, however, was not its approach to language learning, but the language use itself. For example, *shall* has long been reduced to a few key movie phrases during my Canadian lifetime (“Shall we dance?” comes to mind), and thus, by the time I was in elementary school, the distinction between the two by my grammar teachers included something like this: “Sometimes *shall* indicates more of a promise than *will*.” But that’s it. No mention of coordinating either with different pronouns for meaning, let alone reversing this coordination for a different meaning (see image). Obviously language use had changed enough for my teachers to deem explaining this construction a thoroughly unnecessary and perhaps even harmful endeavour.



How is this relevant to my issues with *because + noun/adjective*? If these outdated grammatical constructions that I'm not aware of—and more that I am aware of—exist and have consciously been determined obsolete, am I resisting this recent construction irrationally? Maybe there's no reason logically to object.

It reminds me of a typical conversation I used to have when I was younger with my mom:

Mom: Go play outside.

Me: I don't want to.

Mom: Why not?

Me: Because.

Mom: Because what?

The fact that the last retort ends in *what* suggests that what follows very well could have been a simple noun (though it never did that I remember). Traditional grammar rules indicated that what follows *because* is not a noun alone, but a full clause (e.g. *I don't want to because TV is more fun.*) or *of + noun* (e.g. *I don't want to because of my TV show.*). Why didn't we ever think to simply say “because TV”? Drilled into me was the “proper” construction.

When reasons like *because science*, *because Internet*, and *because sleep*, first cropped up in online texts, I thought the *of* had simply dropped due to laziness or social media-dictated concision, but in fact, the dominant explanation is a shift in grammatical function. *Because* has transitioned from a conjunction to preposition, a perspective first noted to me by a language teacher in Korea, Michael Griffin. The gist is that *because* is the new *of* instead of the conjunction beginning clauses answering *why*. Regardless of the current dialogue about it, it raises the question of how it began. I'd venture to say it had to be from some popularised celebrity phrase or maybe as pointed out by Stan Carey, an Irish “swivel-chair linguist,” it's *because Twitter*.

So where does this lead in teaching, I wonder. If we correct it, do we do a disservice to students who, perhaps accidentally, use this construction in class? Do we start introducing it as a legitimate *because* grammatical construction? Do we wait for it to appear in class and do the usual warning:

“well, you’ll see this sometimes in certain contexts, but be careful when you use it...”? Once again, it may come down to frequency of use. We can confidently argue it is frequent enough already to become a word of the year.

My guess, however, is that where adaptations (adoptions?) like this are more easily forgiven in oral production, it won’t gain legs anytime soon in formal genres of writing. Of course, I can guarantee that every time I see it in a piece of student writing, I will think twice about correcting it *because awareness*.

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Bio



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FINDING THE BACKBONE OF A TEXT

By Maria Glass, George Brown College

My career as an English language instructor started in Brazil in the early 80s, and I can say that my teaching now has very little resemblance with my practice at the beginning of my career. That is so because throughout the years I have enthusiastically embraced new ideas, which eventually proved not to live up to their expectations and ended up replaced by others that seemed more promising. Among the many ideas I changed my mind about, the way I teach grammar and writing underwent the deepest revisions.

As an EFL instructor in Brazil, I worked in language schools that embraced the communicative approach as it was regarded in the 70s and early 80s, meaning that grammar was not taught or, at best, was taught just implicitly. After moving to Canada and becoming an ESL/EAP teacher at the college level and having students from all over the world, I felt the need to teach grammar more explicitly. Aside from explaining grammatical points both in isolation and in context, I offered lots of controlled and semi-controlled practice to my students. I can confidently say that my students did learn how to complete grammar exercises and tests quite well, but that rarely translated into more accurate speaking or writing.

Fifteen years later I see no point in grilling students on grammar, or even testing them on their knowledge of grammar. Instead, my approach to grammar now consists of teaching the point and immediately jumping to application-type activities, skipping the controlled and semi-controlled exercises all together. My goal is to both have the students see the grammar points in use in authentic reading and listening pieces and use these points in their speaking and writing. For that, I give students a variety of grammar-mining activities (both reading and listening) in which they see the application of the recently learned grammatical points and lots of speaking and writing activities in which they need to *use* the grammatical points. If my students feel the need to complete grammar exercises, they can do that on their own time (a good grammar book with answers or online exercises will do the trick).

The way I teach grammar nowadays is closely related with the way I now think writing should be taught. Until not long ago, I taught writing by first explaining the structure of a paragraph or an essay, offering my students many opportunities to practise, and providing lots of feedback and allowing the students to rewrite. While I still think practice and feedback are important for any writing classes, I now believe that for learners to improve their

writing skills our focus in class should be on improving their *reading* skills. It's important to observe that I'm not talking about reading for the main idea(s) and supporting details, genre, author's intention, etc. I mean a step further: reading for the *backbone* of the text.

To read for the backbone, one needs to appreciate the interconnections among the elements (words, sentences, paragraphs) interwoven both cohesively and coherently in the text. In my experience, very few learners are able to do so without instruction. Those who can are usually speakers of a language that is not so very different from English in term of structure (e.g. Portuguese, Spanish, etc.). Learners whose first language has no resemblance with English (e.g. Mandarin, Arabic, Farsi, etc.) usually require instruction to be able to read for the backbone. At the sentence level, these learners need to see how the words cohesively and logically relate to each other forming a tight structure. At a paragraph level, students need to *feel* the connection between the topic sentence and the concluding sentence and how the supporting details develop the topic sentence; they need to see how each supporting detail coherently and logically connects with the next and with the concluding sentence. I believe now that without being able to read for the backbone, most language learners cannot improve their writing skills. It is only by reading for the backbone that they learn to edit their writing at both the sentence and paragraph levels and wind up with intelligible pieces of writing.

I cannot honestly say that because of the way I now teach grammar and writing, my students invariably produce more accurate speaking or better pieces of writing. I can say, however, that my students now take more ownership of their language use and that, in itself, is a gain.

Bio



Maria Glass is a full-time professor with George Brown College in Toronto. She holds a TESL certificate, a Ph.D. in Linguistics and a Master's in Applied Linguistics. Her research interests include Pragmatics, Interpersonal and Intercultural Communication, and Second Language Acquisition.

MASTERING THE SKILL OF L2 WRITING?

Alister Cumming, OISE, University of Toronto

I used to think of *second-language writing as a skill to teach students to master*. Although some aspects of that notion remain true in my mind, I have come to reconsider and doubt certain aspects of its dogma over several decades of teaching, researching, and learning second-language (L2) writing.

Writing is not one skill; rather, it involves a multifaceted set of complex, interrelated subskills. The longstanding convention of organizing language curricula and tests through the broad categories of writing, reading, speaking, and listening—and calling these “the four skills”—can mislead teachers, learners, and users of test results into thinking that these abilities are simpler and more discrete than they really are. The ability to write consists of acquiring control over and integrating numerous production skills (e.g., spelling, punctuation, and keyboarding or handwriting), language skills (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, register), and discourse skills (e.g., conventions of genres, rhetoric, and social relations). Moreover, L2 writing involves making appropriate use of certain abilities (e.g., to plan, compose, or evaluate) that a person may (or may not) already have acquired in a dominant language as well as adopting a unique personal identity and position of membership within a particular cultural community. Three implications follow from these principles, each giving rise to my doubts.

One implication is that individuals develop L2 writing abilities uniquely depending on their prior education and writing experiences, personal intentions, and language and cultural backgrounds. L2 writing is highly variable. Students of L2 writing all start from, practice, and develop different abilities, especially in culturally diverse contexts like Canada. Research has demonstrated clearly that the same scores from standardized tests of English writing represent varied acquisition of production, language, and rhetorical skills (Friginal, Li & Weigle, 2014; Jarvis, Grant, Bikowski & Ferris, 2003). That is, good writing appears in different ways and results from different skills. There is no uniform progression of acquisition of L2 writing to expect learners to follow or to try to teach (cf. Hulstijn, Ellis & Eskildsen, 2015). In turn, the rating scales conventionally used to evaluate English writing are necessarily broad, multifaceted, and imprecise so that trained raters can interpret and judge the combined qualities that make for more or less effective L2 writing (Cumming, Kantor & Powers, 2002). Likewise, experienced teachers and established curricula around the world focus their students on a range of different aspects of L2 writing in English

(Cumming, 2003). L2 writing students do not need to be taught the same things in the same ways nor do they need to learn all aspects of English or writing from scratch.

A second implication is that not every learner needs to master L2 writing. A certain proficiency in English writing is required for academic studies, to be sure, so that students can write exams or assignments for academic courses without undue disadvantages (Cumming, 2007). But not everyone has to master English writing fully to be able to study or work in English. Full mastery of English writing may only be a reasonable or achievable goal for people who wish to become so acculturated into a certain cultural group that their identity is not marked by the fidelity of their written expression. My doubt here is that many teachers, assessors, and researchers are overly concerned about the correctness and accuracy of the subskills of English writing rather than the effectiveness of written communication overall, appreciating students' motivations and career trajectories, and acting on realistic pedagogical goals. Indeed, the more I write myself, the more I realize I can never fully master this ability in English. Further, when using my L2 French I realize that I am satisfied with having developed the proficiency to comprehend while reading, talking, or listening almost anything I might wish, but I have never invested the effort and time, nor felt the need, to master the grammar of French in a way that would not mark my writing as visibly distinguishable from a fully-fledged member of French society.

The third implication, and realization that I (and many others) have come to over past decades, is that L2 writing is as integrally a social interaction as it is an individual ability. While formal tests assert the importance of individual performance in writing, the conditions needed to learn L2 writing are fundamentally social, interactive, and multi-modal. People learn L2 writing from reading to gain knowledge, communicating purposefully with others, and striving to situate their written expression appropriately within specific discourse communities. Indeed, significant improvements in English writing abilities may only emerge through the experiences and opportunities for writing to and with English-dominant instructors and others (Sasaki, 2007). Effective teaching of literacy involves modeling, scaffolding, and evaluating writing in collaboration among classroom peers and other relevant communities (Cumming, 2012; Storch, 2013). Several recent theses at OISE have convinced me that even the most personal quality of writing, idealized as “voice”, is culturally constructed, reproduced, and conveyed through specific, teachable features of texts (Altidor-Brooks, 2014; Fogal, 2015; Kohls, 2015). For these reasons, L2 writing needs to be taught, learned, and assessed in relation to other media of communication, relevant cultural practices, and component subskills rather than be considered simply as the individual mastery of a single, independent skill (Cumming, 2014).

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Bio



Alister Cumming is professor in the Centre for Educational Research on Languages and Literacies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. His research and teaching focus on writing in second languages, language assessment, language program evaluation and policies, and research methods. Alister's most recent book is *Agendas for Language Learning Research* (with Lourdes Ortega and Nick Ellis, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013)

PRONUNCIATION INSTRUCTION

By Ron Thomson, Brock University

When I first taught ESL, I believed that if I correctly described and modeled English vowels and consonants, and gave lots of feedback on production, adult learners would quickly improve their pronunciation. I was wrong.

In hindsight, I see that in many areas of language teaching, I have often happily followed what I have heard from others, especially at conferences, without first considering whether there is any empirical evidence to support the efficacy of particular practices.

During my initial foray into pronunciation teaching, I encountered a new group of students every four weeks. I had a lot of content to cover, a lot of sounds to describe. I didn't ever stop long enough to assess how effective my teaching really was. I simply believed that if I got through the curriculum, the rest would take care of itself. I also believed that when I heard students parrot me during classroom practice, those learners had just demonstrated mastery of the target sound.

One of the first indications that I was wrong came when I was met at school one morning by a cacophony of Japanese voices excitedly shouting "Lon", "Lon", "Lon". Through my diligent instruction, I had heard several of these same students successfully approximate my name, Ron, during pronunciation class. This disconnect between what I had taught and what was learned (or not learned in this case) caused me to reconsider if the improvement I had observed in the classroom constituted pronunciation development at all.

Nearly two decades later, I've discovered that most teachers and researchers assess pronunciation improvement without much if any reference to learners' ability to pronounce sounds accurately during spontaneous speech (Thomson & Derwing, 2015). Instead, learners are typically asked to imitate the teacher, read a list of words, read a sentence, or read a paragraph, and any improvement in how they imitate and read written words is then taken as evidence of learning. Unfortunately, none of these activities reflect what learners are likely to do in the real world, raising questions about the validity of such assessment. In fact, faulty assessment can lead to false claims of progress, and countless hours being wasted on pronunciation instruction that may not actually work. Without proper assessment, we cannot know if what we teach has any lasting impact.

I had another epiphany in the context of an applied phonetics class I teach at Brock University. Many of the students in this class are preparing to teach ESL, and the overwhelming majority are native English speakers. One of the course objectives is for students to learn how to describe English vowels and consonants in terms of their place and

manner of articulation, using descriptions that are very similar to those found in English pronunciation texts. I have recently begun asking these prospective ESL instructors to put themselves in the position of English learners. So, rather than telling them, “This is how you describe sound X,” I instead tell them, “I will read a description of an English sound from the textbook, and then, on the count of three, you are to produce, in unison, the sound I have just described.” I discovered that when a sound’s identity is not given before its description, resulting productions can be anything but harmonious, particularly when it comes to English vowels. If native speakers who already know English sounds are unable to accurately produce a sound based on its conventional phonetic description, what should we expect of English learners? Now I don’t mean to imply that describing sounds is an entirely fruitless enterprise, because I still believe that drawing learners’ attention to how sounds are produced physically will help them develop and use this habit to self-monitor sounds they are beginning to perceive. But an overemphasis on describing how sounds are produced is perhaps misguided. And in fact, there is growing evidence that if learners focus on developing the ability to perceive sounds, this might be time better spent (e.g., Thomson, 2011).

Knowledge that accurate perception of English sounds is strongly related to accurate pronunciation led me to develop a free English pronunciation training website, www.englishaccentcoach.com. Tracking users of this site has given me additional insight into how adult second language pronunciation develops. For example, I now understand that learners acquire second language sounds more quickly when they are exposed to the same sounds produced by a variety of voices, rather than hearing those sounds produced by only a single voice. I’ve also learned that training someone to perceive a particular sound in one word (e.g., the vowel in the word *sit*) doesn’t automatically lead to their ability to perceive and produce the same sound in another word (e.g., the vowel in the words *bit* and *fit*). This contradicts the common assumption that if we teach learners to perceive the difference between *sit* and *seat* that they will then be able to perceive the difference between *fit* and *feet*. In fact, my own research demonstrates that this is not the case (Thomson & Issacs, 2009). Instead, at least early on, it seems that new sounds need to be learned word-by-word.

On a positive note, I have recently found preliminary evidence suggesting an advantage for learners who first engage in low level phonetic training (i.e., learning sounds in isolation from words), before learning the pronunciation of specific words in which those sounds occur.

Ultimately, as pronunciation teachers, we have a responsibility to test everything we are told against existing research and valid classroom evidence. While I have learned that there currently exists no shortcut to better English pronunciation, when using an evidence-based approach, long-term improvement is possible.

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Bio



Ron Thomson is an Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics at Brock University and President of TESL Canada. He conducts research investigating the development of second language oral fluency and pronunciation. Having previously taught English in Asia, the Middle East, and Canada, he has a special interest in making his research both accessible and applicable to language teachers.

FINDING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

By Lois Francis, Humber College

What ideas and attitudes of mine have been turned on their heads in seven years of teaching EAP? The length of the list is humbling. I'd have to say the biggest revolution/revelation in my thinking is a deepening understanding of what I call "the hidden curriculum." It's the impact of cultural paradigms on education—particularly, my own.

Like most of you, I studied second language learning theory in my TESL training program, particularly as it related to the adult learner. I was convinced by Krashen's *i + 1* theory. I felt fairly confident in my emotional intelligence and ability to connect with people. I honestly felt that crossing cultural divides wasn't going to be that big of a deal.

It wasn't until reflecting on situations that didn't go so well that I began to see the big gap in my approach: though I'd studied the challenges second-language learners face, I hadn't sufficiently examined my own assumptions about learning.

I was surprised how difficult it was for me to shed the tenacious notion that my approach to learning is neutral, if not (I'm ashamed to say it) superior. After all, I thought it worked fine for me - that is, until I would find myself frustrated by certain student behaviours. Here are samplings from some of my intermediate level classes:

Example A: A recent class was given an assignment based on activities we had been practising. They were given the assignment handout the night before as reading homework and asked to come prepared with questions. We covered the instructions carefully in class, where I gave them further examples and opportunities for questions. After class, a student who had remained silent throughout approached me, handout in hand, and asked if I would please tell him again about the whole assignment.

Example B: A student failed a test. He asked if I could change the mark or let him re-write the test. I explained that, in fairness to the other students, I couldn't. The student respectfully continued to try to negotiate - for a *very* long time.

Example C: The focus of the day's lesson was an introduction to fact versus opinion. We had covered examples demonstrating that "facts" are ideas about which there is a lot of agreement; with facts, there is usually evidence that is highly credible, reproducible and supported with data. A very able student disputed this, saying that if an expert said something (using opinion-type language or not), they must certainly know better than the rest of us would.

My inner sense of frustration in each case was a trigger that one of my personal educational assumptions had been violated.

In earlier days, I would feel compelled to correct the student's thinking, since he or she was "wrong." Over time though, my internal viewpoint and tone of response has shifted in several significant ways:

#1: Our unconscious views about learning predate higher-level cognitive thinking – for all of us. We can't undo the foundations of our original learning experiences. It frames how each of us learns, and because we teach a roomful of international students, the effect of this ongoing dynamic, without a thoughtful response, can seriously hinder our ability to connect with students. I understood this theoretically, but appreciate it far more now than I did as a younger teacher. The more knowledge and awareness I have here, the better.

#2: It **is** my job to bridge the education culture gap. The more I understand the underpinnings of student attitudes and behaviours in a learning environment and recognize that, in their first culture, some of these strategies worked for them, the better I'm able to help (and the better my own attitude and delivery become).

#3: It's **not** my job to change people's minds about "the best way" to learn. Hopefully, I can challenge them to think there might be additional and/or alternative approaches that will help make them more successful in learning English.

For instance, in example A, I might now incorporate assignment instructions into a word cloze or other listening and note-taking activity to keep students focused. With the student in example B, it was a revelation to see that he wasn't trying to annoy me; he simply came from a culture where "no means no" represents an early stage of a negotiation process. If I had realized that sooner, I probably could have wrapped things up more calmly and expeditiously.

In example C, the student and I ended up having a healthy exchange of ideas about critical thinking and our basis for trusting sources of information. What impressed me was her final comment about how people from different cultures use different ways of evaluating ideas. I agreed. In that moment, we each were standing outside of our own culture and seeing it more clearly through the other's eyes.

These "cringe" moments have become my best teachers. They're teaching me to stand back, take a deep breath, and reflect before engaging or attempting to correct. It feels much more collaborative and far more respectful of the cultural differences. Hopefully, it's also empowering the students to see how much room there is for them to bring their ideas to the table in this business of learning.

PASS THE CULTURAL HOT POTATO PART 2

Every Wave Has a Silver Lining

By Eufemia Fantetti

At the café across the street from my apartment, there is a black T-shirt on the wall that has the following written in white:

I'M NOT YELLING

I'M ITALIAN

THIS IS HOW WE TALK

It cracks me up every time. My whole life has been a blend of navigating a Canadian upbringing and Italian ancestry. I have much too appreciate from both cultures; I'm grateful to be a hyphenated Canadian. It wasn't always this way. I have been known to throw up my arms in frustration at dealing with Canadian reserve, the tendency to think of me as dramatic or emotional when I'm simply expressing an opinion. And I've often shaken my head in silence at my Italian relatives.

I was asked once if I had a preference between the two and I don't. Plus, it's not as though I've got to worry about an Italy versus Canada game at the Winter Olympics, or the possibility of a World Cup Canuck team.

This dual nature made me appreciate the classes on various styles of communication during my TESL training all the more. I loved reflecting on the number of times I had to employ my diplomacy skills in previous jobs or between friends when—looking back armed with new information—I can see it all coming down to different modes of expressing one's needs. Combine the complications that can arise from any effort to connect with the fact that many of us aren't that great at listening, and we have all the makings of a communication brouhaha.

Which brings me back to a second classroom incident where another student commented on my weight. (Id like to take a moment here to note that there was a Tim Hortons near the school and I'm a fan of the steeped tea, double double—but I was also going up and down five flights of stairs several times a day. My pants were fitting better though this may not have been obvious to the casual observer. The student sat at the front of the room and constantly squinted at the chalkboard so she could hardly be expected to notice a few pounds slipping off, I think.)

Let me set the scene: I was complimenting Nancy on her health. She had just run down two flights of stairs searching for students still on coffee break. I pointed out that Nancy looked like her pulse hadn't even skipped a beat, as if her resting heart rate was fine with a quick jog on a staircase. Because it was a literacy-level class, I used all my pantomime skills from grade 10 drama class (while I haven't yet been able to incorporate the movements and gestures I got tested on back then, the "Look at me, I'm climbing an invisible ladder," "Oh what a lovely view now that I've raised the blinds," or "Help! I'm trapped in a box," those brief weeks learning to communicate without language have stood me in good stead.) I acted out Nancy's run without breaking a sweat and then I did me: panting, pink-faced, and gasping for breath.

"Yes," said Nancy. "Because teacher you... You..." she broke off to confer with two other students in Chinese. They looked over at me and nodded vigorously.

Nancy, spurred on by the collective agreement and confident in her translation skills, said, "Because teacher, you little bit fat."

And just like with Julio, I laughed.

I also decided two things in that moment:

- 1) I would hide my consumption of maple-glazed donuts from the students
- 2) My students appeared to be concerned with my health.

That's my version and I'm sticking with it.

Let me also say here that I'm not thick-skinned (is it too late to argue being big boned?) On a different day, both Nancy or Julio's comments could have sent me running to No Frills to visit Dr. Haagen Das for comfort and support. Had it continued, I would have planned a lesson on cultural sensitivity, but it didn't. And it's not because I lost weight. (Though I did. Five flights. Up and down. Several times a day. A few pounds went vamoose. I know, the double double has got to go go.) I'm sure it's because they said what they wanted to say, I listened without prejudice and then class went on. If only all my classes could be that smooth.

My father likes to remind me to look for the good in people, to assume the best of every one, emphasizing their strengths instead of going on at length about their weaknesses. Not bad advice. After all, the confusion may just come down to a simple cultural misunderstanding.

TESOL ONTARIO 2015 CONFERENCE



Registration brochure posted online: September 22

Online Registration open: October 13 to November 12

www.teslontario.net/conference

MESSAGE FROM THE CONFERENCE CHAIR:

As summer winds down and the new school year begins for many the work of the conference committee ramps up. Planning for this year's conference on November 12 and 13 at the Sheraton Centre Toronto, began immediately following the 2014 event. We've made some changes but in doing so, we are confident that attendees will benefit from a wide range of professional development opportunities. Presenters and panelists are being finalized for our 43rd annual conference "Expanding Horizons: Drawing on Experience and Knowledge".

The 2-day format reflects the lower number of attendees on Saturdays but; we promise to fill Thursday and Friday with plenty of inspiring ideas and information to satisfy your quest to learn more about your ESL profession. The Welcome Reception will be on Thursday as usual and will be an opportunity to recognize the great work being done by ESL colleagues in Ontario. Of course it will be wonderful to be back at Sheraton Centre, a most convenient location for exploring the city.

More details will follow, but if you haven't already done so, please be sure to mark your calendars for November 12th and 13th!

Barb Krukowski
Conference Chair

KEYNOTES:

The Social Side of an L2 Accent

Dr. Tracey Derwing, University of Alberta



Second language accents can have a profound effect on communication, particularly when they interfere with intelligibility, but accents can evoke other reactions, both positive and negative, in listeners. In this presentation, I will review many common attitudes towards second language accents, and will examine research that has focused on enhancing willingness to communicate from the standpoint of both the L2 speaker and the L1 listener. Topics such as accent stereotyping and discrimination, accent as 'vampire,' accent reduction, accent and identity, the role of context, and the role of the interlocutor will be explored. Finally, pedagogical implications for ESL teachers and students will be surveyed.

Tracey Derwing is a Professor Emeritus in the TESL program (Department of Educational Psychology) at the University of Alberta and an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Linguistics at Simon Fraser University. Her research interests include pronunciation and pragmatics for ESL learners, as well as immigration issues affecting integration.

The Teacher's Role in Vocabulary Learning

Dr. Stuart Webb, University of Western Ontario



Understanding English language newspapers and novels requires learning the most frequent 8,000-9,000 word families. Achieving this level of lexical development represents a considerable challenge for second language learners. In the language learning classroom, words are taught regularly to students. However, classroom time is limited, and it may only be possible to teach a relatively small proportion of the words that advanced learners may eventually know. There are many things that teachers can do apart from teaching vocabulary that help students to make meaningful progress in their lexical development. A large part of the teachers' role in vocabulary learning involves preparation and planning. There is a great deal to be learned about each word, and without a principled approach to teaching vocabulary, many words are likely to be learned to a small degree and then forgotten. In this talk I will describe the different components that are necessary in classroom vocabulary learning and discuss how teachers can help students to effectively and efficiently learn words.

Stuart Webb is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario. His research interests include vocabulary, second language acquisition, and extensive reading and listening. His articles have been published in journals such as *Applied Linguistics*, *TESOL Quarterly*, and *Language Learning*.

EXHIBITORS/SPONSORS:

TESL Ontario's Annual Conference is widely anticipated as the place to learn about the latest research in the field, attend informative workshops and of course, network. Your product or service will be centre stage - with an audience of over 750 ESL professionals from across Canada, all of whom are interested in discovering and purchasing new materials to increase their effectiveness.

WHY PARTICIPATE?

- Personal interaction with direct influencers, key decision makers, potential buyers and end-users from the English language teaching field
- Showcase your products or services to the right audience; gather information for product/service development
- Network, recruit and build relationships with current and future customers
- Chance to better understand your clients' marketplace opportunities as a result of face-to-face conversations
- Increase your company visibility by positioning your brand with national exposure to 12 local affiliates in one environment
- Partnership with TESL Ontario and support of the ESL profession

This conference provides the ability to interact with and promote your company's brand directly to ESL educators in a variety of capacities. The role of the educator is not only to instruct their students in gaining language skills, but also to act as a trusted advisor and mentor. Educators are relied upon for providing direction and guidance with many day-to-day needs, while students navigate through a tremendous life transition. Having the opportunity to educate this key group of influencers and make them champions regarding your products, specialized programs and services can result in a large impact on the growth of your business in this sector.

Sponsorship and Exhibitor Opportunities brochure - <http://www.teslontario.net/conference/exhibitors>

ESL WEEK – November 8-14, 2015

ESL Week Activities

TESL Ontario members and English Language learners are invited to share inspirational moments from their experiences as language training professionals and language learners. The shared moments will be posted on a special section of the TESL Ontario Blog, and can be submitted in either written or video format.

This new activity will focus on the rewards and significant impact of this proud profession. The inspirational moments will serve to highlight the successful efforts and dedication of language training professionals, as well as how language learning opportunities make a difference in the lives of English language learners across Ontario.

Share your stories and moments of inspiration and join your community of peers in shining a spotlight on the value and importance of your efforts in your local communities and in the lives of English Language Learners in Ontario.

All individuals involved with learning, teaching and organizing ESL in Ontario are invited to participate in our ESL week contests. Guidelines and entry forms can be found online at <http://www.teslontario.net/esl-week>.

TESL Ontario 2015 Program Flow

	Thursday, November 12			Friday, November 13							
8:00											
15	REGISTRATION OPEN	EXHIBITS/POSTERS OPEN	AGM	Registration (Coffee in Exhibit Hall)		REGISTRATION OPEN	EXHIBITS/POSTERS OPEN	Registration (Coffee in Exhibit Hall)			
30				Concurrent Sessions				Concurrent Sessions			
45											
9:00											
15				Coffee Break				Panel		Coffee Break	
30											
45											
10:00			Concurrent Sessions		Concurrent Sessions						
15			Lunch Break		Lunch Break						
30											
45											
11:00			Concurrent Sessions		Concurrent Sessions						
15			Keynote Speaker	RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM	Concurrent Sessions		Keynote Speaker	RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM	Concurrent Sessions		
30					Coffee Break				Coffee Break		
45					Concurrent Sessions				Concurrent Sessions		
2:00					Concurrent Sessions				Concurrent Sessions		
15											
30											
3:00	Concurrent Sessions		Concurrent Sessions								
45	Concurrent Sessions		Concurrent Sessions								
4:00											
15											
30	Concurrent Sessions		Concurrent Sessions								
45	Welcome Reception		Welcome Reception								
5:00											
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30	Welcome Reception		Welcome Reception								
45											
6:00											
15	Welcome Reception		Welcome Reception								
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