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## Speaking and Thinking in the L2 Classroom: An Introduction to a Sociocultural Theory Perspective

Jill Cummings and Huamei Han

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) offers educators an explanation of the role of speaking or verbalization as a mediational tool that shapes the process of thinking and learning (Donato, 2001; Lantolf, 2001). The following brief paper introduces implications and applications of speaking activities -- collaborative dialogue and discussion (social talk), private speech and repetition (self-talk) and reading and thinking aloud — according to an SCT perspective, and, in contrast to mainstream theories of second language learning.

## Table of Contents

# From the Editor

This issue starts another school year with a variety of offerings including academic papers as well as reflections by two teachers.

Jill Cummings and Huamei Han introduce us to Sociocultural Theory in Speaking and Thinking in the L2 Classroom — part of their presentation at last year's November conference.

Karen Bond shares her perspective on doing a distance M.A. and gives advice for those considering the same. In the second reflection, ESL instructor, Judy Pollard Smith shares her experiences setting up a book club with her adult learners.

In addition to the usual fall content, (our 2004-05 Board Candidates and Annual Financial Report), Bob Courchene explains, in a paper based on his speech at last year's TESL Canada conference, the journey to becoming a multicultural/anti-racism teacher.

As you can see, this on-line publication is a work in progress. We welcome your feedback in terms of content, format and readability. Please send your comments to the Editor, teslontario@telus.net.

Brigid Kelso

*Speaking and Thinking in the L2 Classroom (cont'd from pg. 1)*

We first provide, as background, a brief overview of SCT explanations of learning and then discuss specific explanations of the role of speaking according to SCT approaches in the second-language classroom.

This paper is intended to introduce SCT perspectives on speaking and thinking in the L2 classroom. It is a summary of an initial paper on SCT, "Speaking and Thinking in the L2 Classroom," presented at the 2003 TESL Ontario conference. SCT approaches will be further examined at this year's conference with a second presentation, where participants will have the chance to discuss and use SCT approaches to learning. The aim of this series of presentations and discussions is to bridge theory and practice through dialogue among teachers, researchers and theorists.

According to SCT, learning proceeds from the interpsychological to the intrapsychological plane of thinking — that is, from the social to the individual. Sociocultural views of learning are based on the Vygotskian school of the development of thinking and mind (Vygotsky, 1986), which explains learning as a process of interaction developing from the intermental to the intramental, (Lantolf, 2001) — learning as interactive as well as a socioculturally constructed and

distributed process.  In contrast, traditional or mainstream perspectives on SLA examine abilities for learning as innate within the individual, awaiting the transmission of content from one person to another.  SCT studies learning as a process that happens through dialogue between learners and teachers, dialogue with others, or even through  dialogue with "the self" through reflection and writing*.  Thus, this social view of learning and SCT, the implications of interaction and collaboration through dialogue and other forms of social and self talk discussed below are significant.

The metaphor of the growth process — the development from seed to seedling to fruit tree to fruit — illustrates the differences in perspectives on SLA.  Whereas traditional  SLA theorists focus on the final production or "the fruit" of activity,  sociocultural theorists urge teachers to watch and tend "the whole growth process".  The seeds of learning are planted in the social interaction among students, context and teacher(s) and continue to develop in and through interaction with other people, texts and existing knowledge.  Thought and mind are seen to be constructed in the process of dialogue – either with others (social talk and collaborative dialogue) or through self-talk (repetition, thinking out loud and reflection).

**Some Applications of SCT for the L2 Classroom**

*Self-Talk - Repetition and Private Speech*

From an SCT perspective, teachers are encouraged to reconsider learning as "dialogic".  In other words, thinking, and, thus, learning, develop in dialogue with others through collaborative dialogue (social talk) and/or self talk.

Self talk, awareness and thinking in a second language, may be developed through the conscious use of repetition and private speech.  In mainstream approaches to SLA, repetition may have been discouraged as it is perceived as merely rote learning.  However, according to Sociocultural approaches, repetition and the private "murmurings" or private speech that an individual uses to talk his/her way through a problem, are important mediational tools for cognitive development.  The impact of repetition for L2 learning has been demonstrated in such studies as Anton and DiCamilla (1997), which show that repetition is used by learners to scaffold or assist themselves in becoming more aware of word meaning and form, to hold their place in a conversation and to help focus attention on difficulties to draw attention and assistance from their partner(s).

*Reading and thinking aloud* (Janzen, 1996; 2001) is another such dialogic or reflective technique that draws on an SCT approach to language learning.  In reading and thinking aloud, the student reads and then " thinks her/his thoughts aloud", reflecting on strategies that they use such as figuring out meaning from context, using grammar clues, or predicting.  Reading and thinking aloud thus promotes metacognitive awareness of reading strategies.  In this technique the teacher first models how to read and think aloud, after which students

take turns reading passages aloud, pausing to "think aloud" their thoughts and strategies as they figure out new vocabulary or whole passages.  After each student reads and thinks out loud, the teacher and students note and talk about the strategies employed, thereby becoming further aware of strategy use through talk and reflection.

**Closing Thoughts on SCT Approaches to Speaking**

We encourage second-language educators to reconsider the role of social talk and self-talk for language learning.  It is in the "talking through" during such activities as reading and thinking aloud, repetition and collaborative dialogue and discussion that thought and language develop through speaking.  Speaking is integral to thinking and learning in the L2 classroom.

 *Note: Writing, similar  to speaking, is another mediational tool that facilitates the process of thinking and learning.

Jill Cummings and Huamei Han are experienced teachers interested in SCT research and teaching and teacher education and development.  They both are completing their doctoral research in SLE at OISE/UT.

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## The Distance Master's Degree: A Personal Reflection

## by Karen Bond, M.A.

As a British teacher of English as a Foreign Language, I never had a problem finding work abroad with my Cambridge TEFL Certificate. In Brazil, with my experience and certificate to back me up, I was promoted to academic coordinator, and enjoyed training teachers, giving oral exams for the Cambridge exams, and generally establishing myself as a well-qualified and experienced teacher. Then I moved to Canada. Little did I know that the majority of international students coming to Canada had never heard of the Cambridge suite of exams. And don't even ask the ESL students in Quebec! My TEFL certificate was no longer necessarily the ticket to a good job, and I soon realized that the Canadian ESL teacher often did not enjoy the same status as in other countries that I had worked in. Suddenly I discovered that if I wanted to be taken seriously in the field of ESL in North America, and if I wanted to get a decent salary, I would need a Master's degree. But, unable to attend a full-time course due to personal circumstances, and reluctant to enter an educational system with which I was not familiar, I decided to seek out a distance-learning course based in Britain that I could do without leaving my adopted country.

In fact, there are not many Master's degrees in TESOL or Applied Linguistics that one can do solely by distance. The majority seem to offer mostly distance-learning courses over a three to five year period, with an intensive summer program on campus each year. These kinds of courses, while beneficial to the isolated distance-learning student, are not practical for a mother like me, or for someone with a full-time job or with other commitments. It is also a costly pursuit to travel to and live in another country, province or city for several weeks each year.

After much research, I was able to find a British university that offered a purely distance-learning Master's degree course in Applied Linguistics and TESOL. And so, just over three years ago, I embarked on the academic adventure of my lifetime.

Questions to ask yourself before committing to a course:

- Why do I want to do a Master's degree?

- How will it help me both personally and professionally?

- Can I afford it?

- Will I be able to find enough time to do the work?

- Will my family be understanding when I am intensively involved in my studies?  Am I willing to make sacrifices?

- Does the course offer the kind of topics that interest me, or will be useful to me in my career?

Will I be motivated and disciplined enough in this isolated mode of study?

My main concern was if I would be intellectually up to studying at this level of education.  It had been years since I had done any academic writing, and I had forgotten not only how to cite references properly, but also how to give critical opinions using published literature to back me up.  I was overwhelmed.

The first module of my course dealt with that.  It was basically a revision for those students who were, in fact, experienced EFL/ESL teachers, with much reading on the nature and history of language learning, the four skills, vocabulary, teaching grammar and testing.  While I found the content easy to digest, what was a challenge for me was the preparation of my portfolio.  It took me a long time to be able to produce something more critically reflective than factual, and I was often unsure that what I was writing was up to standard. Fortunately, I had the support of a tutor from the university who, while never giving the answers to the activities or assignments, guided me through the process and gave advice and constructive criticism.  There were also detailed explanations in the package on how to write academically, and I was able to follow the examples.  At the end of the module, I received an Advanced Certificate in TESOL, which was something that I could add to my resume, and convinced me that I was, in fact, capable of studying and writing at a postgraduate level.

The other modules were much more of a challenge, covering topics that I had never studied before, like sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, phonetics and phonology, syllabus design, and so on.  While some of the material was admittedly dry (oh, how I struggled through the discourse analysis module!), it felt good at the end of each module to finally be able to understand areas of applied linguistics that had previously eluded me.

By the end of this Master's degree, not only did I know how to produce phonetic transcriptions, but also how to draw up a plan for a training programme for teachers, how to undertake exploratory studies, how to critically analyse ESL/EFL literature, and how to write a 20,000-word dissertation.

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Questions to ask before embarking on such a course:

- How long does the course normally take?  How many modules?  How long does each module take?
- Can I take a break from the course?  What are the consequences?
- Will I have my own tutor?  How will we have contact?  How often will I be able to contact her/him?
- Will I get help with academic writing?
- Is there a forum for the students to discuss the course together?
- Will any of the activities be done online?
- Will I have access to the university's library?  Can I request photocopies?
- Are there online resources available such as journals, articles, and administrative information?
- What happens if I need more time to finish an assignment?
- What is the pass rate?

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Some advice:

A Master's degree does not come cheap, especially if you are living in a foreign country and paying for it in, for example, pounds sterling.  You should be able to pay for your course in installments, which helps a lot, of course, but prepare for all eventualities, like losing your job, being ill, or having family commitments that involve money.  You do not want to pay an arm and a leg for half of the course, and then have to quit because you cannot afford to continue.

If you want to do a stress-free Master's degree, it is vital that you manage your time carefully.  As soon as I received a module package, I would open it up and skim through the lot, making note of all of the activities and assignments that I would have to do, to give me an idea of the kind of workload that I would have.  I would then begin the first section immediately, and right away be thinking about what I might do for my assignment (Oh, how I wish I had been that organized all those years ago at university!).  I usually did about eight hours a week, divided up over four days, and when I was researching and writing my assignments, I would spend an additional whole day on it at the weekend for a few weeks.  The dissertation was more intense, and became my full-time job for a while. Thankfully, my husband was very understanding at that time, and my son was only a peanut in my belly.

The university's library may be able to take copies of a limited number of articles for you at no cost.  If

Starting an Adult ESL Book Club
Judy Pollard Smith

Challenges and rationale for starting a club
Although I had always wanted to start a Book Club for my Adult ESL learners, I wasn't sure how to go about it. The more I though about it, the more I imagined that it couldn't possible work. Where would I get material for my Level 3/4 class that was stimulating enough to generate worthwhile discussion without compromising the writing style that the author had intended?

I could have used simplified versions of the classics, but I wanted something true to itself, authentic -- something that didn't compromise the integrity of the original writing, yet could generate new vocabulary and new insight into North American culture.

I thought of using children's literature, but quickly dismissed the idea, thinking that it would be insulting to a class of highly professional adults. Then I decided to different approach. "How would you like it", I asked the physician, the engineer, the business man, the actress, the homemaker etc., "if we read some books for kids? That way I can show you what your school-aged-children or your grandchildren might be reading."

They agreed with enthusiasm. My rationale was this:
1 . The repetition in childrens' books would offer a degree of reading success that couldn't be matched in adult fiction.
2. Colourful photos would provide word clues and clarify new vocabulary.
3. North American concepts could be opened for discussion. (i.e., How do North American children respond to given situations? How do their parents respond? Their teachers?)
4. A re-read of the books at home at night would reinforce my students reading skills, provide a pleasant ending to the day and introduce children to the books as well as reinforce English Language usage in the home.

Methodology
The outcomes of an Adult ESL Book Club could be used as a measure of success using Howard Gardner's concept of Multiple Intelligences. Gardner espouses various types of intelligence including logical-mathematical, linguistic, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal. (See Educational Psychology, Canadian Edition, by Woolfolk, Winne, Perry, Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 2000, Page 109, figure 4.1.) I figured the club could highlight my students' hidden talents, particularly in those who were frustrated at being were unable to practise their profession in Ontario.

I invited the Level 1/2 teacher in the next classroom to join us even though our two groups were very different. While almost all of my group were university-educated and nearly fluent, most of her students had little formal education even in the first language, and two suffered organically-based disabilities that affect learning.

I gathered a list of books (see end), at about a grade three/four reading level. I chose ones that reflected people from the same cultural groups as we were teaching.
Public libraries (for their reserves) and dollar stores became my favourite new haunts. I used such inexpensive items as a 'diamond ring', a paper crown, a magic wand and hockey pucks just as one would with children to bring the stories to life.

I wanted to make the atmosphere on Wednesdays, the day I chose for the book club, different from other mornings of the week.  Students were invited to help themselves to tea, coffee, or hot chocolate before class.

Before reading the actual story, I would 'tell' it using coloured markers and cartoons on my whiteboard to illustrate new vocabulary -- writing the story in simplified language so that the students could read it aloud ahead of time.  This pre-telling proved especially helpful for the Level 1 / 2 learners.

I also proposed on the board a series of questions to introduce the book. For example, when we read 'The Cat In the Hat', I first asked my students what they like to do on rainy days. They appreciated this opportunity to talk about their lives back home (e.g. describing monsoon weather).

After I introduced the storyline, copies of the book were handed out to each student, who followed along. After the reading, we discussed vocabulary and re-read the book aloud together; at times the students took turns reading pages around the table.

After a break, we played Concentration or Bingo we had made ahead to reinforce new words from the books.  My teaching partner and I read word definitions and the students pointed them out on the whiteboard.  We also wrote poems on the board together using key words from the story and encouraged the students to use words from their first languages.  Then they had the chance to tell us similar stories from back home.

Our students took home the books at night to read to their children or grandchildren before bed.
After a story about friendship, my teaching partner played Carol King's "You've Got a Friend" on her trumpet and then we listened to the CD as the students followed along on photocopies of the song.

Results
As I had predicted, my students demonstrated the following types of intelligence, which contributed to the success of the book club.

| | |
|---|---|
| Sensitivity to pitch and rhythm | Musical Intelligence |
| Moving to the music | Kinesthetic intelligence |
| Responding with each other re: the story | Interpersonal intelligence |
| Sharing the ability to act and sing and share their feelings during the story | Intrapersonal Intelligence all bear witness |
| to the success of this project. | |

Gardner also found in his work with stroke patients that brain damage often does not affect functioning in other areas.' (ibid, page 108). Although one of the Level 1 / 2 students suffers from a neurological disease that inhibits recall of new language, he responded well to the musical aspects of the Book Club and enjoyed showing us a dance from his country. He also often sang in class.

As we read aloud, I noticed that several students were tapping out the rhythm with various parts of their body (hands, feet, head and shoulders). Then I had each choose a page and do whatever they liked with it.

One man pulled his cuffs down over his hands and read in a hip-hop style, including hand movements. A woman sang her page in the style of Korean Opera. A Punjabi student who had only been in the class for six days, stood up and danced around the room, Bhangra style, reading from his copy with the lilting rhythm he uses while he chants from the Sikh holy book, the Grantha. The actress read her page in Shakespearean language.

We found the same responses with all the stories we used. Even the students with only basic English in Level I / 2 group were comfortable taking the risk of reading a page or two aloud every week. Students from both classes asked to take the books home to read to family members and then reported how family members responded.

One little boy screamed, "It's my book! It's my book!" when his grandfather packed it up to bring it back to class. New friendships were formed between the classes too. We became so comfortable with the Wednesday morning relaxed atmosphere that now each morning we invite our students to bring tea or coffee into class.

There is also a new cultural awareness. They are taking good care of one another. While reading a story about Mother's Day, I explained that Canadian parents like to use the concept of 'roots and wings' in childrearing. A Sudanese woman confessed that this concept causes a great deal of pain in her community, where children are expected to stay with their parents until they die.

That same discussion informed the lessons the following day, as the students discussed their own child-rearing problems and proposed solutions.

We also found that our students:

1.    Increased their reading and listening skills.

2.    Exhibited a newfound respect for each other through sharing their talents. (One student told me that she had never met an African before and that she was happy to get to know someone from another culture in this way. She has since made a good friend outside the classroom).

3.    Attended more regularly on Wednesday mornings.

The Book Club was an excellent vehicle for drawing out shy students too. After reading a book about tamales, a withdrawn student made some and brought them for the class. The students also wrote letters in their first language to children's author, Robert Munsch who kindly responded by sending us three books, one of them a Korean translation of "Love You Forever", which we presented as a good-bye gift to a Korean student who had loved the English version we read.

Overall, the book club was the perfect panacea for a program I felt needed a lift. It was a recipe for success and I hope to repeat it every year.

## Books and Themes

1.  Dumpling Soup (Korean New Years' theme)
2.

2. The Kissing Hand, by Audrey Penn (fears, hope)

3. The Hockey Sweater by Roch Carrier (heroism, peer pressure)

4. Too Many Tamales ("Honesty is the best policy")

5. The Cat in The Hat by Dr. Seuss (rainy days)

6. Green Eggs And Ham by Dr. Seuss (taking risks)

7. The Lotus Seed, by Sherry Garland (What connects you to your birth country?)

8. The Hair Book, by Dr. Seuss (hairstyles, new vocabulary)

9. Red Parka Mary (Canadian content)

10. Sitti's Secret, by Naomi Shihab Nye (Arabic words, middle-eastern theme)

11. The Giving Tree, by Shel Silverstein (giving and receiving)

12. The Tiny Kite of Eddie Wing, by Maxine Trottier (using imagination, symbol of freedom)

13. Robert Munsch: David's Father (adoption, "Can't tell a book by its cover " idiom), Love you Forever ( parental love), Paper Bag Princess (what is real love?), Ribbon Rescue (Canadian content), From Far Away (brotherly love), Thomas' Snowsuit ( stubbornness, teacher-student relationship), Stephanie's Ponytail (peer pressure), and Something Good (grocery shopping)

14. Cinderella (what counts in relationships?)

## Students' comments about the book club at year-end:

"The books helped my vocabulary a lot. I have small children so the stories helped me understand Canadian thinking."
" It helped me with Grammar."
" It was good for new vocabulary. I understand better how Canadians think."
"The first time we read it I didn't understand it. The second time, when we read it by ourselves, I understood it a bit. I read it at home to my daughter in Grade One and then I understood it all. Then my daughter read it too."
" Maybe we could write Book Reviews next year to help us with our writing skills."

*Judy Pollard Smith is an ESL Instructor with the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.*

# TESL Ontario Board Candidates 2004-05

Kevin O'Brien has worked in education for more than 35 years. During the '80s, he began working in literacy and ESL. He has worked as a teacher, curriculum courseware developer, project manager, software reviewer and staff trainer. His work with technology began in the late 70's and after completing courses in programming from the University of Waterloo he began writing programs for his special education students.

Kevin continued using technology and was instrumental in designing and setting up The Learning Centre which was the first Adult Literacy Centre designed to use computers to assist learners with basic literacy skills. He continued to use his technical skills to design computer materials for all levels of ESL learners and to train other teachers in the use of computers. Kevin has presented to teachers several times over the past few years at the TESL Ontario Conference. He has been TESL Ontario's Webmaster for the past 4 years.

Namita Aggarwal is a Program Manager in Continuing Education at the Toronto District School Board. Her first position was ESL Manager for the West Region. Through restructuring, she is now responsible for the budget including Ministry Funding submissions for all Continuing Education programs.

Namita began her career in ESL with the Etobicoke Board of Education in 1990. She has taught a variety of levels including computer and employment skills. As a Lead Teacher, Namita actively participated on Action Teams including Professionalism and Hiring and was chair of the Accountability Committee. She co-authored documents in the areas of placement testing, quality standards, statistical data collection, instructor self-evaluation, volunteer training and was a member of the writing team that critiqued the first draft the Canadian Language Benchmarks. She is a member of the CESBA Conference Planning Committee and has presented at both the CESBA and CLBA-Mini ESL conferences in the areas of Ministry Funding and accountability. Namita's roots are in ESL and she appreciates being able to contribute through participation in TESL Ontario.

Sophie Beare began her ESL teaching career at the age of 22. She taught ESL to elementary, high school, and adult learners. Since 1983, Sophie has been an active TESL Ontario member. In the 80's she served as TESL Ottawa President for two terms and TESL Ontario Affiliate Director for three years.

Then, in 1998 she was elected TESL Ottawa President and a year later TESL Ontario Affiliate Director — a position she occupied until spring 2002.  Since 1988, Sophie has been involved in TESL training. She teaches and is coordinator and  founder of the TES/FL program at Algonquin College in Ottawa.  One of Sophie's goals is to help ESL teachers gain full recognition of their professional qualifications in both the ministry of education and in educational institutions.
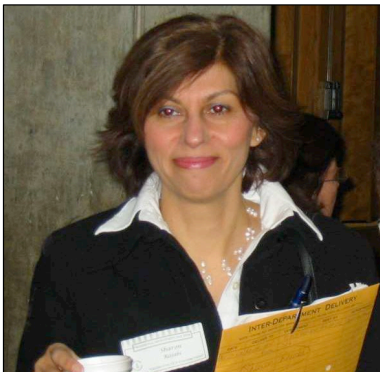
Sharon Rajabi has been in the field of ESL/EFL as instructor, trainer, curriculum developer, and administrator for more than 20 years. She currently works for the Toronto Catholic District School Board as a Program Consultant. Sharon has served as Research and Technology Chair on the TESL Ontario Executive Board for the past four years and as Technology Fair Chair since 1999.  She has also held

the positions of Conference Chair as well as Research Symposia Co-Chair at TESL Ontario Conferences.

Robert Courchêne is an ESL teacher/teacher trainer with the Second Language Institute at the University of Ottawa. He served for a number of years on the TESL Ontario board and was instrumental in setting up the Research Symposium that has become an annual event at the TESL Conference. His research interests include culture, multicultural and antiracism education and teacher training. For the past three years he has been working on the Standards linguistiques canadiens project for CLIC programmes (French equivalent of the Benchmarks for LINC programmes) as well as serving on the SLC Committee for the CCLB/CNCLC. From 1998-2002 he was Director of the university's Second Language Institute.
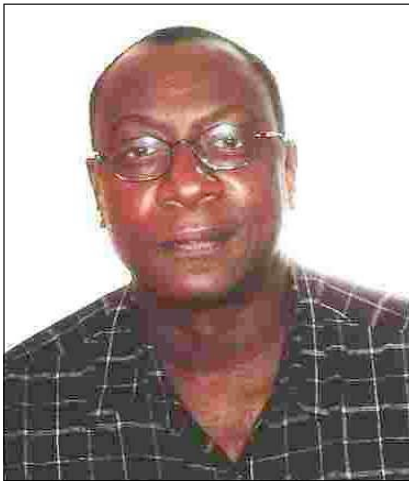
Abai Coker works with the Ottawa Carleton Catholic School Board. He is the Site Administrator of the Outreach Adult ESL program. Abai has been working with immigrants for over 20 years. During this time he has provided cross-cultural, anti-racism training. For the last 10 years he has been working in the adult ESL field and has been a presenter at local, provincial, national and international ESL conferences. He has served as a member of the TESL Ontario Board since 2002.

## Through My Eyes, Through Your Eyes: Through Our Eyes

Robert Courchêne

 I chose the above title because I would like to explore the journey to becoming a multicultural (MC) or anti-racism (AR) teacher  from both a personal as well as a professional point of view and how we as TESL members view our collective responsibility towards our learners and those who interact with them.


### Through my eyes

For me, the journey to becoming an MC and AR teacher begins with a personal journey.  One cannot wake up one morning and become an MC teacher.  It is kind of a like a vocation – a way of thinking as a result of deep reflection.  Instead, it requires a refocusing of how we look at ourselves and the world around us.  Pierre Nora (1984),  in his five-volume work on French culture, says that there are three important elements of cultural experience: history, memory and experience. These three factors not only play a critical role in our understanding of our own culture but also in attempts to understand and build bridges between our culture and that of our students and friends. He also points out that we can see culture as being dynamic, as always "in-the-process-of-becoming" or as static, culture as museum, unchanging, readily reproducible, captured and frozen in time.

Nora's three elements of cultural experience were brought to life for me when I visited Point Pleasant Park in Halifax.  For those who lived through Hurricane Juan – the uprooting of trees, loss of power, impassable streets and  interruption in services -- Juan will become part of Haligonians' memory and shared experience and a benchmark against which future storms are measured. And, like the ice storm in Ottawa  and Montreal a few winters back, it will also be recalled as a "where were you when…" in years to come, shared by all of those, no matter where they are now, who experienced it first-hand.

If I had not seen Point Pleasant Park, I might be able to appreciate what happened, thanks to my ice-storm experience -- the downing of trees, presence of the army, lack of services and closing of schools.  I could say that I had a common-shared experience (albeit a negative one).

Similarly, Canadians whose Irish ancestors arrived D.O.A. in Canada via 'Coffin Ships' or were quarantined at Grosse Île, may, in some way, appreciate what the Vietnamese 'boat' people (many of whom died) experienced escaping in boats to Canada.

To find these similarities in experiences, we need to embark on the personal journey – first learning about our history and then using it to build bridges between our own experiences and those of our students.

Going back to Nora's history, experience and memory are the forces that have shaped who we are and how we view that world. They have created for each of us our own personal, "Through my own eyes". In his book, *Cultural software: A theory of ideology*, Balkin (2000) sees culture as both a limiting and a liberating force. We are shaped not only by our own personal experiences but by those of our culture that are passed on to us through multiple sources -- education, media, family, historical sites, cultural artifacts, museums and contact with other cultural and ethnic groups. For example, the small town where I was born and raised in Saskatchewan was 70% Ukrainian, about 1 5% German and Hungarian and had a half dozen Anglo-Saxon and French/Métis families.

Surrounding the village were surrounded three (which, at that time, were known as Indian) reservations and, to this day, there still exist, as when I was growing up, (though they now are more subtle), racist attitudes against the First Nations people.

As children and teenagers, our jokes targeted the French, Polish and Chinese. These negative attitudes towards people from different cultures exemplify the limiting aspect of culture, and such attitudes certainly made it more difficult to be open to other racial and ethnic groups. The negative stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples that were passed on to me through my community and history books, as well as the sources mentioned above, have certainly made it more difficult for me to be as understanding and accepting of this culture as I am of other cultures with which I have had only positive experiences. Through my work with the Atikimek Nation living near Reservoir Gouin, the Inuit at the Kativik School Board in Northern Quebec and contacts at the University of Ottawa, I have been able to see that my negative perception of members of these groups does not represent reality.

Not surprisingly, this realization has been a struggle. If we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that we are not as accepting of all cultures. This prejudice is part of our flawed human nature, yet we must recognize this and treat our students (regardless of their culture) equally.

The journey is a bottom-up process resulting from a close examination of how we came to be and how our own history, memory and experience have shaped us. We must ask ourselves critical questions for which there may not be immediate answers. In terms of culture, Schein (see Figure 1 below) point out that the most important cultural forces in our lives are not often available even through personal introspection. According to Schein, we are frequently unable to articulate many of our values and beliefs. And if this is the case, teaching or relating our experience, history and memory of these values and beliefs to our students becomes a big challenge. In fact, many long-established Canadians are unable to explain these cultural beliefs (e.g. the concept that '13' is unlucky or the practice of throwing salt over one's left shoulder) because they are unaware of their origins.

**Figure 1**

**Schein's Model of Cultural Awareness**

**Figure 1**

**Schein's Model of Cultural Awareness**

1.  **Artifacts and creations**                    Visible but not decipherable

    Technology

    Art

    Visible and audible behaviour patterns

⬆   ⬇

2.  **Values**                                          ⬆

    Testable in the physical environment

    Testable only by social consensus          Greater level of awareness

⬆   ⬇

3.  **Basic assumptions**                              ⬆

    Relationship to environment

    Nature of reality, time and space

    Nature of human nature

    Nature of human relationships              Taken for granted, invisible

                                              preconscious

A culture's values are also inextricable from its laws and social taboos. Which Canadian values:

1) prohibited Chinese labourers brought to work on the railroad to marry whites?

2) took aboriginal children from their families and raised them in residential schools?

3) refused asylum to a boat load of Jews fleeing persecution during WWII?

4) ensured that Black and White schools be segregated in Nova Scotia until 1964?

If we do not know who we are as individuals and as a people, it is difficult to show new Canadians that we have commonalities. It is also more difficult for us to empathize with their perspective because the perspective through "their" eyes has been shaped by a different history and series of events.

To determine who we are, we must ask

1) "Who am I?"

2) "What are my values and beliefs?

3) Where did these values and beliefs come from?

4) Am I part of Canada's 'settler' society, or what Jim Cummins, a prominent Canadian researcher on bilingualism and multiculturalism, calls the "culture of power," and finally

5) Are my values and beliefs those most commonly expressed by mainstream culture or do I belong to one of the so called "minority cultures?"

Those who think they are 'normal' often see little justification for self-critique. This is because they either do not realize or fail to admit that they hold privileged positions in society. More importantly, they have established a standard that most new Canadians can never meet. And, in doing so, they set up an "us" and a "them" that prevent certain groups from gaining legitimacy, and, therefore, access to power.

While many Asians and Arabs are considered to have 'white' skin, this is not enough to ensure membership in the dominant group. That's because their phenotypical characteristics (stature, colour and texture of hair and shape of their eyes and noses) exclude them from the category of "white European." In addition, members of the dominant group must also be Anglo-Saxon. And by upholding this unwritten criteria for membership, the dominant group ensures that the "others", or the "them" will never have access to the dominant group or become part of the culture of power (while I am not asking whites to apologize for or be ashamed of the colour of their skin, I am asking that we recognize that skin colour does matter and that being white opens more doors and affords one more benefits and privileges than any other colour in Canada).

This journey to becoming an MC teacher may at times be painful because we must confront our own beliefs. As George Dei (1996) so aptly points out, "There is a strong desire to remain in our comfort zones/spaces and to hold steadfast to a most dangerous delusion: that one's own reality is the only reality worth talking about" or that one's own reality is the lens through which all should be captured and evaluated.

To illustrate Dei's position, I refer to an exchange I had with a student in the "Teaching and Learning in the Multicultural Classroom" course I teach. This student, and a number of others in the class, strongly believe that their parents belonged to the last 'racist' generation and just because they have grown up in a multicultural Canada and have contact with other cultures, they automatically are tolerant, accept those cultures and lack any racist tendencies. This student also felt that while racism might actually exist elsewhere, it was not a problem for him.

It is only through recognizing that we view everything through our own cultural 'lenses' that we can accept that there are other ways of looking at things. We must realize that our current way of thinking may limit or make it initially impossible for us to accept certain cultural concepts and practices outside our own. However, once we are aware of our own cultural operating framework, we can make more conscious decisions, and we come to realize that, in addition to our own, there exist other legitimate views of reality. Arriving at this realization, which ordinarily would lead us to being more tolerant of other cultural groups, does not mean that we have to approve of all other groups' cultural practices. Being tolerant, does not mean, as some have mistakenly assumed, that we have to approve of, and accept, all elements of another culture. According to Oberdiek (2001),

> Full tolerance, therefore, involves a deep respect for the individuals and communities whose life projects are different from one's own even where one disapproves of elements in it or even thinks it is an inferior way of life. Full tolerance is not acceptance. The fully tolerant recognize that it is usually difficult to remove objectionable elements from a system without destroying the whole. They will be acutely aware of what I call the 'Sweater Principle': We sometimes pull off a bit of offending thread marring our sweater only to find a shapeless heap of yarn at our feet. (32-33).

In this way, accepting and valuing Muslim culture does not mean that we have to accept the Taliban's interpretation of the Koran and Sharia. Likewise, many Canadians neither approve of nor support same-sex marriage, yet they do not reject all of the beliefs and values that make up the Canadian fabric because of this one element. Tolerance is not the equivalent of cultural relativism.

In her recent book, *What is Wrong with Islam*, Irshad Munji harshly criticizes Islam's treatment of women. To many westerners, the *hijab* or veil is a sign of women's inferior status in Islam. Through our cultural lens, that is certainly a possible interpretation. But what if the choice to wear the *hijab* is a protest against the western media's objectification of women? Therefore, part of our journey is to learn how to view people, places and things through a different lens. And while we do not have to abandon our own beliefs and culture, we do need to become more conscious of how our cultural lens affects our reading of reality – ours and that of others. According to Delpit (1995):

We really do not see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs. To put our beliefs on hold is to cease to exist as ourselves for a moment--and that is not easy. It is painful as well, because (you are) turning yourself inside out, giving up your own sense of who you are, and being willing to see yourself in the unflattering light of another's gaze. It is not easy, but is the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue.

(46-47)

Being open to other points of view, being accepting of difference, becoming aware of our own cultural operating system, of our own culture-- history, beliefs, values, myths, traditions and norms, is the first and most important step in creating paths to diversity in ESL and in creating a multicultural pedagogy. To do this, we need to decentre, turn ourselves inside out and see ourselves in the gaze of the other.

Through my eyes: Our students.

An equally important component in teaching MC is our ESL students. In the same sense in which our past was and continues to be shaped by history, memory and experience, this is also the case for them. They bring to the classroom a culture that is familiar to them, a culture that has enabled them to "make sense of the world in which they lived," a culture that is as familiar and comfortable as our favourite pair of slippers. They also come having to face new and painful realities.

> In their culture, they were able to predict how people would react in different situations, the schema for a variety of events (Eid-el-Fitr, Divali, weddings) and norms of behaviour in various contexts. Arriving in a new country and in your classrooms, they are no longer certain of the rules of the game or what is culturally acceptable. They know neither how to behave in various situations nor with their teachers.

> For many adults, this may be the first time ever, or in a number of years, that they find themselves in a classroom. They are often uncomfortable and embarrassed at having to begin again.

> Many left or were forced to leave prestigious and high-paying professions to find themselves in low-paying and/or entry-level jobs. The respect they once could rely on from their children to get them through these difficult times is now absent because of a child-parent role-reversal.  Tension is created in the household because parents depend on their children, who learn the language and assimilate so much quicker, and children are forced into positions of authority in the family as interpreters and breadwinners -- roles they neither are ready for nor willing to assume.

> They discover that the values so integral to their culture (family, care of the elderly, religion) are not important in the new one. Because parents see their children adopting the new cultural values in an attempt to fit in and reduce the difference they so strongly feel, additional tension is created in the family. Researchers have pointed out that people are most protective of their cultural values (such as forbidding their children from participating in co-ed activities and dating) when these values are threatened.

> Students bring to our classrooms expertise and experience they would be willing to share but are often prevented from doing so because they lack language proficiency and/or they have a teacher who does not recognize "where they stand" on issues, and therefore denies them the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way.

> It is important to remember that some students have been victims of torture, and, as a result, they may continue to suffer nightmares, depression, low self-esteem, fear of authority and threatening noises and spatial phobias.

One of the most frequent and serious consequences of the above clash of cultures is the loss of self-esteem and self-respect and onset of feelings of shame and uselessness. In *Rock my Soul,* bell hooks (2003), a renowned black feminist, claims that this loss of self-respect explains how Afro-Americans perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others. It also accounts for their difficulties in trying to overcome the negative stereotypes others have of them.

> Self-esteem, fully realized, is the experience that we appropriate to life and to the requirements of life…self-esteem is confidence in our ability to think, confidence in our ability to cope with the basic challenges of life, and confidence in our right to be successful and happy. (42-43)

Following Nathaniel Brandon, she identifies the six pillars of self-esteem: personal dignity, self-acceptance, self-responsibility, self-assertion, living consciously and living purposefully. hooks claims, as a result of years of teaching, community involvement and research, that one of the most important challenges faced by teachers of new immigrants or indigenous groups is building and sustaining their self-esteem.

This lack of self-esteem is prevalent among foreign-trained professionals new to Canada. Despite the province's dire shortage of doctors, nurses and tradespeople, regulatory bodies continue to set the bar to certification so high that they are forced to accept dead-end positions or give up their careers entirely. Likewise, in the book *No Crystal Stair,* Mairuth Sarsfield (1997) describes the over-representation of black train workers in Montreal's Little Burgundy in the 1940' and 50's. She notes that blacks were hired to work on the trains because they were well-educated, and, therefore, could interact with all classes of people. Unfortunately, skin colour prevented them from attaining higher-level positions. Such barriers, combined with the empty promises of jobs in Canada, result in loss of self-respect, depression and, in some cases, even suicide.

While we cannot be expected to find jobs for all of our students, teachers need to create conditions in our classrooms that will foster student self-esteem. And, in creating and nurturing bonds among our students, we must dignify difference and accept and value it for what it is -- not for how we would like it to be. We must create inclusive classrooms where all students can see their cultures reflected and valued in the curriculum to re-affirm their identity. As mentioned above, in many cases, learners suffer from identity crisis; their old identity has been devalued,and they need to find a new one to help them survive in their new home.

Often, when our students first come into contact with the dominant culture in our class-rooms, it creates tension and conflict. On the one hand, as they see the increasing threat and devaluation of their own culture, there is a tendency to affirm and strengthen it; on the other hand is the growing realization that to succeed in their new country, they must adapt, learn new ways of being and doing, and construct a new identity. For this to successfully happen, we must be compassionate and understanding of our students' culture, education and experience, as well as their perceptions of learning and teaching.

As we all know, language is inextricably linked to culture and identity. In fact, it is through language that we express our identity. By refusing to let them speak their mother tongue, we are cutting our students off from their sense of self.

When students first arrive in our classrooms, they seek out others with whom to communicate. Among their own, they find security and support. In her bestseller, *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*?, Beverly Tatum (1997) explains why Blacks, Latinos and Asians -- victims of discrimination and racism, sit together. Their egos are fragile; their identities are threatened. With their own, they find the strength to cope. In carving out their personal space, they are saying to people around them, "this is our turf, and on it, we rule." Such behaviour is not radically different from what I encountered in China, where ex-pats often got together at western hotels, embassy parties, clubs and restaurants because of their need for familiarity, predictability and a shared language.

When our students first arrive, they also need this familiarity and security. Certainly, the devastating effect that denying Aboriginal students in Residential Schools their native language had should be lesson enough to prevent us from implementing such practices ever again. According to Dei (1996),

> Inclusive schooling refers to educational practices that make for genuine inclusion of all students by addressing equality issues and promoting successful learning outcomes, particularly for students of ethnic and racial minority backgrounds (Dei and Razack, 1995). Inclusive schooling is making excellence "accessible" to all students. Of equal significance, the idea of equal schooling seeks to develop schools into "working communities" and to bring the notions of "community" and "social responsibility" into the centre of public schooling in Euro-Canadian/American contexts. (78).

Recognizing our social, economic, cultural and sexuality differences is the key to inclusive schooling and education. To many anti-racist educators, such as Dei (1996), the notion of inclusiveness in the school system means:

Ensuring equity foremost: that is, dealing with the qualitative value of justice.

Addressing the question of representation: that is, including multiple perspectives as part of academic discourse and texts.

Making school instructional practices respond to the challenges of diversity: that is, responding to the social construction and structure of difference (e.g., issues of class, race, gender, sexual orientation, age and ability) within the school system and wider society.

While space does not permit describing in detail what this inclusive classroom would look like, I would at least like to provide some concrete examples of what we can do  (Certainly they are already being implemented).

One of the ways we can affirm our students' identity is to celebrate their language and culture in the classroom. In addition to putting up signs in their languages, we can also create an 'international' alphabet through an activity called, "We all fit in". The activity begins with a puzzle that is blown up and separated into its constituent parts. All students are given a piece of the puzzle on which they write their name and country. They then come together to assemble the puzzle. When completed, each student sees that, while being different, (s)he contributes to the whole. In addition, they learn valuable information about each other. Putting a map of the world beside the puzzle also enables students to identify their country, provinces and cities of origin.

Another important way of building an inclusive classroom is to consider our students' ability and experience in English. For example, we should encourage fluency and participation and avoid pointing out grammatical errors in order that our students gain confidence using their new language. We must also support their need to use their L1 to ensure understanding.

Likewise, we should recognize that students have different learning styles. Not all classrooms around the world emphasize active participation including the singling out of students, small group work, autonomous learning, risk-taking, guessing meaning from context and reading-writing based literacies. We all have our preferred learning style but we cannot and should not assume that our students have the same.

One of the most important ways to build an inclusive classroom and rebuild students' self esteem is by involving them in the teaching learning process or 'students as curriculum.' Students of all ages, but especially adults, come to the classroom with various areas of expertise; being able to both demonstrate and share this expertise validates who they are; it also adds a new dimension to the classroom -- students as experts -- and relieves the teacher of the eternal question, "what am I going to teach?"

Finally, teachers must never tolerate any form of discrimination or prejudice inside or outside of the classroom. If students believe that it is acceptable to mock any culture or other right protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code, they will engage in this type of behaviour. If our classes hear us refer to any group or individual in a negative light, they will infer that some people are superior to others, and a "We/They" environment will be created. Students of all ages are quick to identify difference and use it to their advantage. A book I read recently quashed a number of my former beliefs concerning children and difference. In *The First R:  How Children Learn Race and Racism,* Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001) report on a year-long study conducted in a New York kindergarten that prided itself on having built its classrooms around an anti-biased curriculum. For a year, Van Ausdale was a fly on the wall in the classroom, observing and recording the students' behaviour, frequently acting as a comfort-pillow but never engaging in any actual teaching. If one can believe her account, and I see no reason not to, she succeeded (as the students seemed to take no notice of her). The book opens with the following incident:

> Carla, a three-year old child, is preparing herself for resting time. She picks up her cot and starts to move to the other side of the classroom. A teacher asks her what she is doing. "I need to move this," explains Carla. "Why?" asks the teacher. "Because I can't sleep next to a nigger," says Carla pointing to Nicole, a four-year-old black child on a cot nearby. "Niggers are stinky. I can't sleep next to one." Stunned, the teacher, who is white, tells Carla to move her cot back and not use

In some ways, I was disturbed and depressed to learn that pre-school children are keenly aware of difference and use it to include, pre-judge and exclude those unlike them. How does it happen that children at this age already have such views on difference, especially skin colour and facial features? For answers, we need to look to the home, the school, the community and the media. All of these play an important role in shaping attitudes and in highlighting the importance and meaning of difference. In *Rock My Soul*, hooks (2003) discusses the importance of skin colour for Afro-Americans:

> The identifiable dark skin was considered by white Christians the mark of shame that singled out these groups as subordinated, to serve the superior "white" bodies. This is a vital observation, as it allows us to remember that even before there was contact between the races there were negative assumptions made and stereotypes formed in the minds and imaginations of white folks…The most obvious internalization of shame that impacted on the self-esteem of black folks historically continues to the present day -- the shame (associated with) appearance, skin color, body shape, and hair texture. Had white colonizers chosen to exploit and oppress black people without stigmatizing appearance, the psychological trauma endured by the slaves would not continue to re-enact itself in similar forms today … Significantly biblical metaphors of color that likened darkness to evil and fairness to good were a prime source of brainwashing and legitimizing color caste. Religious teachings, preferential treatment given fair-skinned black folks, the ease with which one could comb and attend to straightened hair over kinky hair, were all factors that together induced passive acceptance of a color caste hierarchy… Shaming on the basis of skin color is one racially based trauma retention that has been passed on from generation to generation.

(pp. 35, 37, 38)

The importance of looking white has had a profound influence on Afro-Americans both in terms of their self-image and self-esteem. In her book, hooks points out that almost all female black movie stars and singers who have been successful have straightened their hair. Difference cannot be ignored; while it is important to celebrate it, it must be done with the purpose of enhancing our students' self-image and self-esteem -- never to be used as a weapon to demean or denigrate another human being. Consequently, one of our important roles as teachers is to recognize and affirm the students' experience and make it clear that being 'different' does not mean 'inferior.' Difference must be celebrated for what it is and not for what we would like it to be.

**Through My Eyes: The Parents**

Much has been written about the relationship of schools, teacher and parents (laureau, 2003; Boethel, 2003; Saunders et al. 1999; The Canadian Home and School Federation, 2002). I have often heard that New Canadians are not concerned about their children's schooling because they are not actively involved in the school (organizations, volunteering, fundraising, parent-teacher meetings, school trips) or helping their children at home (supervising homework, reading, visiting libraries, museums and farms or creating other learning environments). Similar criticism is lev-

*No matter their race, ethnicity, culture, or income, most families have high aspirations and concerns for their children's success. However, there are limited findings as to whether minority and low-income families' high aspirations for their children have a positive impact on students' school achievement.*

*Families from racial, ethnic and cultural minorities are involved in their children's schooling although their involvement may differ somewhat from those of White "mainstream" U.S. families. The extent and type of involvement among low-income families may be linked to poverty and economic stressors.*

*Family and school staff reports on the extent of family involvement and school outreach tend to be inconsistent with differences increasing in schools with large minority populations. The reasons for these inconsistencies are unclear.*

*Research studies have identified barriers to minority and low-income family involvement in their children's schooling-- barriers that schools often can help overcome. These barriers include contextual factors (particularly time constraints, child care needs, and transportation problems), language deficiencies, cultural beliefs about the role of families in their child's schooling, families' lack of knowledge and understanding of U.S. educational processes and exclusion and discrimination issues.*

*Research findings are limited and inconsistent regarding the extent to which increased family involvement is linked to academic improvement among minority and low-income populations. Findings specifically addressing the effectiveness of family involvement programs in boosting student achievement are also inconsistent. Although some research findings are encouraging, too little high-quality research has been conducted to support a firm conclusion.*

*The research base is thin but some intervention strategies appear to be promising in strengthening family-community-school connections among minority and low-income student populations.*

*Some studies suggest that, in seeking to close the achievement gap, it is necessary to address the complex interactions among families, communities and schools. Focusing on only one of these factors is not enough.*

(pp. v-vi)

While the above research findings are not conclusive, it is possible to isolate some important factors that explain the varying roles middle- and upper-class parents (as opposed to those who are poor and working-class) play in their childrens' academic life. In her12 in-depth observations of these two groups, laureau (2003) outlines the differences in the child-rearing approaches of middle/upper class and working class/poor families. She labelled these two approaches: *Concerted Cultivation* and *Accomplishment of Natural Growth* (See Table 1 below).

Table 1

Typology of Differences in Child Rearing

Child-Rearing Approach

_____

_____

|  | Concerted Cultivation | Accomplishment of Natural Growth |
|---|---|---|
| Key elements | Parents actively foster and and assess child's talents, opinions and skills | Parents care for child and allows child to grow |
| Organization of daily life | Multiple child leisure activities orchestrated by adults | "Hanging out" particularly with kin |
| Language use | Reasoning/directives; Child contestation of adult statements; Extended negotiations between parents and child | Directives; Rare questioning or challenging of adults by child; General acceptance by child of directives |
| Interventions in Institutions | Criticisms and interventions on behalf of the child; Training of the child to take this role | Dependence on institutions; Sense of powerlessness and frustration; Conflict between child-rearing practices at home and school |
| Consequences | Emerging sense of entitlement on the part of the child | Emerging sense of constraint on the part of the child |

_____

(p. 31)

According to laureau (2003), these two sets of cultural repertoires prepare students in unequal ways to function within the school system. The cultural repertoire found in middle-class homes is much closer to the school's culture than that found in working/poor class homes. The level of education of middle-class parents and their wealth and social status enables them to transmit this system of values to their children, and, in doing so, prepare them to succeed at school and in the community at large. Working/poor parents, who, in general, have less education, wealth and social status, have to concentrate their efforts on providing comfort, food, shelter, clothing and other basic needs. All their efforts go towards sustaining their children's natural growth. According to laureau, the result of these two cultural repertoires is the '*transmission of differential advantages.*' (p. 5)

One of the most interesting findings of laureau's research was the behaviour of the parents in middle/upper class vs. working class/poor. While the middle-/upper-class parents intervened both at home (e.g., organizing trips and activities) and at school, working-class/poor parents were only willing to intervene in their childrens' lives at home (although to a lesser extent than that of middle-class parents) but were much less involved at school. While a working-class mother would think nothing of criticizing the janitor or a trade worker in her apartment building for something that was not, in her opinion, done properly, at school she bowed to the authority of the teacher-- she accepted the teacher's evaluation of her son or daughter's academic ability. In reflecting on these differences, laureau says:

> Thus in looking for the source of Ms. Driver's (working-class mother) deference toward educators, the answers don't seem to lie in her having either a shy personality or underdeveloped mothering skills. To understand why Wendy's mother (Ms. Diver) is accepting whereas Stacey Marshall's or Melanie Handlon's mothers (both middle-class) would be aggressive, it is more useful to focus on social class position, both in terms of how class shapes world views and how class affects economic and educational resources. Ms. Driver understands her role in her daughter's education as involving a different set of responsibilities from those perceived by middle-class mothers. She responds to contacts from the school -- such as invitations to the two annual parent-teacher conferences -- but does not initiate them. She views Wendy's school life as a separate realm and one in which she, as a parent, is only an infrequent visitor. She does not challenge the school's authority (or) consult with other parents about day-to-day experiences in the classroom. Nor does she call the school or come to discuss homework assignments. (214-215)

Ms. Driver, however, sees herself as being involved in her child's schooling by helping her at home, by making certain that her homework is done and by responding to the school's requests. The school, given its cultural repertoire, does not see this as being involved or demonstrating interest in her child's education.

If our experience, history and memory, as teachers, has affirmed and confirmed middle-class beliefs about the observable measures of parental involvement in schools, we will also believe that minority/working-class/poor parents are not concerned about their children's schooling. How can this be changed? As a first step, we (teachers, administrators and school boards) must re-examine our beliefs and make known our concerns about minority parents. Epstein and her colleagues (1995, 1997) identified six areas in which parents, teachers, schools and communities can become involved in children's schooling (reported in Michigan 2001):

1. Parenting: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students;

2. Communicating: Design effective forms of school-to-home communication about school programs and students' progress;

3. Volunteering: Recruit and organize parent help and support;

4. Learning at home: Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning;

5. Decision making: Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives;

Collaborating with community: Identify and integrate resources from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices as well as student learning and development.

Action in these six areas can take a number of concrete forms (see among others, The Canadian Home and School Association, 2002, Michigan, 2001, National PTA, Starr, 2003; Baker & Soden, 1998; The State of Texas Education, 1999; San Diego Office of Education, 1997, Molnar, 1999; Mansfield, 1995). Suggestions from these sources are:

Arrange home visits at transition points to pre-school, elementary, middle school and high school.

Offer family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition and other services.

Provide a quiet, well-lit place with basic school supplies for studying/homework.

Train teachers to work with parents and view them as partners in the education of their children.

Establish a home/school coordinator to develop programs and liaise between teachers and families.

Establish programs to show parents how they can help their children with their homework, studying and exams.

Recognize, respect and address families' needs, as well as class and cultural differences.

Provide parents with information on how the school functions, including expectations regarding organization of classes, streaming, homework, exams and promotion.

Rely less on experts and more on parents to determine the goals and programs and to rate the success of programs.

Identify specific barriers such as travel, weather and hours of operation. Consider public transportation routes and times to parents' participation. Organize carpools. Offer baby-sitting services with student volunteers (during parents' visits to the school for parent-teacher meetings, activities and volunteering).

Mansfield (1995), in his study for the Canadian Home and School Association, identified a number of barriers for parents and educators in parent involvement programs (for a complete list, see Mansfield's study).

**Barriers for Parents**

Inconvenience of time commitment required,

Prohibitive transportation and baby-sitting costs,

Negative past experiences in or attitudes toward schools,

Communication from schools usually problem-focussed.

**Barriers for Educators**

Minimal commitment to parent participation,

Doubts about their abilities to work with at-risk parents,

Lack of time and funding for school-parent communications,

Concern that teacher-authority will be undermined

To conclude, we teachers, parents, administrators and educators all must ensure that we facilitate matters with parents by initiating contact and trying to understand their culture (many see education as a school responsibility and the classroom as a place where parents must not interfere because teachers are the experts).  At the same time, in order to get them involved in their children's schooling, we must respect these beliefs.


**Through my eyes: Curriculum**

James Banks (1997) and Elizabeth Coehlo have designed four levels of curricula for the multicultural/antiracist classroom.   See next page.

**Table 2**

**Models of Multicultural Education**

**Elizabeth Coelho** (2002)

Multicultural Education ←----------------------------------------→ Antiracist Education

| Heroes and Holidays | Multiculturalism as a Subject | Multiple Perspectives | Social Action |
|---|---|---|---|
| School concerts, multicultural feasts; Special displays for Chinese New Year | Stand-alone units on Black inventions; Multicultural Canada | Diverse perspectives; Multicultural content integrated into all units in a natural way | Curriculum deals directly with bias, prejudice and discrimination; Students learn how to challenge equity |

**James Banks** (1997)

| Contributions | Cultural Additions | Transformational | Social Action |
|---|---|---|---|
| Heroes and holidays | Unit on Black history; the Ukrainians | Champlain's role in Canadian history as seen from his diaries, Aboriginal records, historians, etc. | Use of current events to explore problems, responses, solutions; Review of school policy on labelling, visual representation |
| Curriculum unaffected; Issues of bias avoided; Attraction easy | Multicultural content is an add-on to mainstream curriculum; Mainstream perspectives may dominate | Basic assumptions and pedagogy of the curriculum reviewed; Space created for different voices; Members of the dominant group may feel threatened; Lack of resources | Student involvement in social and civic actions help create a more just society; Curriculum design to help students make moral personal judgments; Student involvement in social and civic actions help create a more just society; Curriculum design to help students make moral personal judgments |

The first level most often takes the form of multicultural potlucks or multicultural days, what is frequently called the "saris, samosas and steel-band syndrome" (Donald and Rattansi, 1992:2). While some may see this as a superficial celebration of difference, it is an important step toward a more inclusive curriculum instead of an add-on or option. At the next level, we build units around various groups or themes. Such units are constructed and viewed through our lens and not that of the students. At the third level, we approach events from multiple perspectives, giving voice to all those in the class. Below, Isaiah Berlin (2002) in Jonathan Sachs' (2002) excellent book, *The Dignity of Difference,* explains the danger of interpreting events from a single perspective:

> Few things have done more harm than the belief on the part of individuals and groups (or tribes or states or nations or churches) that he or she or they are in *sole* possession of the truth… It is a terrible and dangerous arrogance to believe that you are right: have a magical eye which sees *the* truth: and that others cannot be right if they disagree. This makes one certain that there is one goal and only one goal for one's nation or church or the whole of humanity, and that it is worth any amount of suffering (particularly on the part of other people) if only the goal is attained – 'through an ocean of blood to the Kingdom of Love' said Robespierre: and Hitler, Lenin, Stalin and I daresay leaders in the religious wars of Christian vs. Muslim, or Catholics vs. Protestants sincerely believed this: the belief that there is only one true answer to the central questions that have agonized mankind and that one has it oneself – or one's Leader has it – was responsible for oceans of blood; but no Kingdom of Love sprang from it or could… (p.345)

As long as one group believes it represents 'the' truth, the 'whole' truth will never be told. At the fourth or 'Social Action' level, the goal is to seek out and combat racism, discrimination and prejudice.

At the beginning of this paper, I compared becoming an MC-AR teacher to beginning a journey within; to be most successful, it should be paralleled by adopting curricula that begins with Heroes and Holidays and ends with Social Action. If we are not convinced of the importance of multicultural education and developing an inclusive pedagogy, we will not be serious in our attempts to develop materials at levels three and four. If we believe we should not have to make any concessions -- that new Canadians should adopt our cultural values -- and that assimilation is the best policy, then implementing a multicultural curriculum will remain an impossible dream.

While space prohibits including concrete examples of curricula at the four levels proposed by Banks and Coelhho, examples can be found in (among others, Courchêne, 2002, 2004; Coelho, 1998, 2002; Kewzer, 1995; Fantini, 1995: Meyers: 1993; York, 1991, 1992).

**Conclusion**

I would like to conclude "Through my eyes -- through your eyes: through our eyes" by arguing what I have proposed in this paper. Many Canadians believe that becoming a Canadian involves accommodation (when in fact, it is impossible to import a culture from one context to another without modifying it). They see newcomers' refusal to change a threat to their beliefs and values, and, for this, they blame the country's multiculturalism policy as well as its mandate to attract immigrants by telling them that if they come to Canada, they can keep their language and culture.

I believe that somewhere between the Federal government's enactment of our Multiculturalism Policy (1971) and its passing of the Multiculturalism Act (1981), this debate has gotten sidetracked. Some say that to accommodate the cultural values of new Canadians, Canadians ("A Canadian is an immigrant with seniority," reads a testimonial on the wall at the Pier 21 Museum in Halifax) must sacrifice their own values. We are no longer supposed to wish others a "Merry Christmas" but, instead, "Happy Holidays", no longer talk about "Santa Claus," have Hallowe'en parties or Christmas concerts. If we allow Sikh RCMPs to wear turbans, Muslims to wear the *hijab* and Jews to wear *yarmulkes*, why should we be prohibited from celebrating, without imposing, the holidays and traditions that have shaped existing Canadian culture?

Many schools celebrate Eid-el-fitr at the end of Ramadan and the Chinese New Year, but not Christmas. In the same vein, should one cultural or religious group impose its dietary restrictions on non-members? For example, a number of religious groups are prohibited from drinking alcohol, coffee and tea; while I believe we should offer members of such groups acceptable options, I do not believe that non-members should be prohibited from having such beverages. I strongly feel that by not talking about or celebrating in an inclusive manner, our traditions, rituals and history, we are excluding new Canadians from the "culture of power" and keeping them marginalized. To learn about Santa Claus, Hallowe'en and Remembrance Day does not mean that new Canadians have to adopt these traditions any more than Canadians belonging to other ethnic groups and traditions learning about Ramadan, Diwali, Kwanza have to adopt these traditions and beliefs.

While I have focused in this paper on the challenges we face as individuals and as a profession, I do not want to sound "down" on our profession". We have made encouraging progress over the last four decades. Using the 'Sweater Principle' mentioned earlier as a metaphor, what I am proposing is that we focus on our weaknesses, identify our problems and enact concrete measures to correct them without destroying the whole sweater or the fabric of our profession.

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# TESL CANADA FEDERATION

**Here's an exciting opportunity to sit on a TESL Canada Committee and contribute to your profession.**

**TESL Canada Certification Committee**

TESL Canada is looking for volunteers to sit on this very important committee.

The committee will perform such duties as:

- assisting the Professional Certification Adjudicator in evaluating criteria for certification;

- recommending policy;

- receiving and replying to feedback from the membership;

- collaborating with the Teacher Training Program Advisory Committee.

The criteria for membership on the Professional Certification Committee is:

- Undergraduate or advanced degree in TESL or related field

- Five years teaching or supervisory experience in an adult ESL program

- TESL credential from a TESL Canada recognized teacher training program or equivalent

- An interest in TESL professional standards

- An active member of a professional community with a proven ability to interact with a diverse range of ESL educators

- Two letters of support.

- Member in good standing of TESL Canada

If you are interested in being on this committee please contact the TESL Canada office at admin@tesl.ca or 1-800-393-9199 for further details or send us a letter including your resume to TESL Canada Certification Committee, P.O. Box 44105, Burnaby, B.C. V5B 4Y2

# Book Review

***The Genius of Language:*** *Fifteen writers reflect on their mother* tongues, ed.
Lesser, Wendy, New York: Pantheon Books, 2004, 241 pages.

*Jill Cummings*

Second-language educators and learners will enjoy the personal stories by published
ESL writers in ***The Genius of Language:*** a collection of fifteen writers' reflections
on their mother tongues.' Its personal and often humourous accounts are a comple-
ment to the second-language learning theory books on your shelves.

Chinese-American author, Amy Tan recalls the culture clash when her parents ad-
monished her as a child in Chinese to not answer with a question:

> "Amy-ah!" they'd call to  me.
>
> "What?"  I'd mumble back.
>
> "Do not question us when we call," they scolded me in Chinese.
>
>  "It is not respectful."
>
>   "What do you mean?"
>
>   "Ai!  Didn't we just tell you not to question?"   (pp. 28-9)

Ha-yun Jung wonders whether to use the first-person singular in English:

> In Korean, the first-person singular is an elusive voice.  The simple
> English sentence "I want an apple" sounds awkward when
> translated, word for word, into Korean.  A Korean person is much
> more likely to say something [like]:  " It would be nice to have an
> apple."  Omitting "I" is never a grammatical defect; on the
> contrary the sentence sounds more polished without it.  (p. 145)

Gary Shteyngart recounts how he feels every time he returns to Moscow:

> When I return to Russia, my birth place, I cannot sleep for days.
> The Russian language swaddles me… Every old woman cooing to
> her grandson is my dead grandmother.  Every glum and
> purposeful man picking up his wife from work in a dusty
> Volga sedan is my father.  (p. 176)

I highly recommend these first-person stories about language learning and identity
by published authors.  Not only are they excellent reading for any language teacher
or learner, teacher educators might also consider them for their student teachers as
an excellent way to get inside the skin of writers/learners' language experiences in a
number of tongues.  The writers put such "meat on the bones" of SLA, including
how we learn languages, contrastive rhetoric, identity in a bilingual world, and
thinking and writing styles, which truly makes *The Genius of Language* pure genius.

*Jill Cummings is a Ph.D.  candidate in Second Language Education.  Her interests
 include second-language writing and teacher education.*

<u>TESL ONTARIO FINANCIAL REPORT</u>

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT MARCH 31, 2004

(with comparative figures as at March 31, 2003)

<u>ASSETS</u>

|  | <u>2004</u> | <u>2003</u> |
|---|---|---|
| Current |  |  |
| Cash on hand and in bank | $118,121 | 57,599 |
| Term deposits-including accrued interest | 259,095 | 280,178 |
| Accounts receivable | 37,896 | 35,692 |
| Prepaid expenses | 5,000 | 4,000 |
| Total assets | $ 420,112 | 377,469 |

<u>LIABILITIES</u>

|  | 2004 | 2003 |
|---|---|---|
| Current |  |  |
| Accounts payable and accrued charges | $ 45,101 | $ 54,588 |

<u>NET ASSETS</u>

|  | 2004 | 2003 |
|---|---|---|
|  | 375,011 | 322,881 |
|  | $ 420,112 | $ 377,469 |

you live abroad, this could be a time-consuming pursuit, and it may be worth enrolling at your local university's library.  You may also be able to access online academic journals, with a password given to you by the university.  But I found that particular activity very confusing, and was never quite able to download a complete article.

However much you try to avoid it, you will spend a lot of money on books.  I found the second-hand online bookstore, www.powells.com, particularly useful, although it will not always ship outside of the USA.

Try to establish contact other students working on the same module as you, preferably living in the same province or city as you.  You could even get together from time to time to discuss the material, and to give each other support.  It can be a very lonely and disheartening experience if the only contact you have throughout the entire course is the occasional email from your tutor.

While not the perfect method of study, a distance-learning Master's degree can not only help the ESL/ EFL teacher to grow professionally by taking on more responsibilities, gaining a promotion or getting a pay raise, but also by giving you the confidence with your increased knowledge of applied linguistics and academic writing to express your views to others in the field.  I personally found it very satisfying, and was not too bothered about having only limited contact with my fellow students, especially as my tutor would respond to my emails within twenty-four hours.  It suited my lifestyle perfectly.  I grew a lot over those three years, gaining the confidence to set up my own website on applied linguistics and TESOL (http://www3.telus.net/ linguisticsissues/), and to getting several articles published in magazines, journals and newspapers.   My current dream is to believe in myself enough to speak at a TESL conference.  Wish me luck!

<div style="border:1px solid">

Karen Bond has been an English language teacher for over a decade, and has taught in Brazil, Hungary and at the University of British Columbia.  She is currently living in Montreal, and has been working as an online teacher for the past four years.

</div>

## STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS AND NET ASSETS

## FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2004

(with comparative figures for the year ended March 31, 2003)

| | 2004 | 2003 |
|---|---|---|
| **Revenue —** | | |
| Contributions | | |
| Projects | $ 340,041 | $ 364,963 |
| Membership fees | 239,047 | 198,475 |
| Certification fees (net) | 17,133 | 31,774 |
| Others | 4,535 | 14,014 |
| Affiliates' mini conferences | 38,970 | 39,994 |
| Interest | 11,956 | 10,218 |
| Total revenue | $ 651,682 | $ 659,438 |
| **Expenses —** | | |
| Annual TESL Ontario Conference | $ 158,756 | $ 142,599 |
| Affiliates' mini-conferences | 49,570 | 47,555 |
| Certification costs | 9,662 | 6,188 |
| Other project expenses | 67,068 | 79,174 |
| Salaries and employee benefits | 140,264 | 134,926 |
| Rent, telephone and utilities | 24,709 | 23,372 |
| Memberships and affiliation expenses | 58,205 | 55,173 |
| Contact newsletter | 8,462 | 43,217 |
| Meeting expenses | 20,138 | 19,144 |
| Computer and equipment purchase/rental | 9,793 | 31,641 |
| Stationery, supplies, postage and couriers | 13,204 | 19,540 |
| Website maintenance | 12,457 | 10,560 |
| Office and general | 27,264 | 35,362 |
| Total expenses | $ 599,552 | $ 648,451 |
| Excess of revenue over expenses for the year | $ 52,130 | $ 10,987 |
| Net assets - opening balance | 322,881 | 311,894 |
| - closing balance | $ 375,011 | $ 322,881 |

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

MARCH 31, 2004

1.  TESL Association of Ontario was established in 1972 as a not-for-profit organization serving the needs of teachers of English as a Second Language. In its commitment to professional development and advocacy, TESL Association of Ontario addresses the range of competencies, experiences and issues which influence the success of immigrants, refugees, visa students and others who learn English.

2.a. Significant accounting policies:

   TESL Association of Ontario uses the deferral method of accounting for contributions. Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue when received or receivable. Interest income is recognized as earned, based on the accrual method.

  b. Capital assets are expensed as purchased.

3.  These financial statements include the revenues and expenses of the following Affiliates:

| | |
|---|---|
| Durham | Hamilton-Wentworth |
| Kingston | London |
| Niagara | North York-York Region |
| Ottawa | Peel/Halton/Etobicoke |
| Sudbury | Waterloo-Wellington |
| Toronto | Windsor |

4.  No statement of cash flows is presented as it would not add to the disclosure of these financial statements.

5.  TESL Association of Ontario is exempt from income taxes due to its not-for-profit status under the Income Tax Act.

6.  TESL Association of Ontario is a month to month tenant, paying a basic annual rent of $ 17,760 plus occupancy cost.

7.  The operations of TESL Association of Ontario is dependent on the income generated by the project revenues as provided by various Government agencies as well as on membership and certification fees.