TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE OF ONTARIO

Super Mario: He Came, Saw and Conquered

Inside this issue:

Super Mario: He Came, Saw and Conquered	1
From the Editor	2
Contact Us	2
Executive Board Candidates	5
What's in a Name — and What Names are In?	7
Lives Lived: We Remember Brenda Reble	20
Q& A: Communication Disorders in ESL Students	23
Cooperative Learning and Teaching	27
BOOK REVIEWS: *Teacher Man* by Frank McCourt	34
Bad Language by Edwin Batistella	38
How to Make People Like You in 90 Seconds or Less by Nicholas Boothman	42
Jangles Report on LINC Literacy	47
Working with Japanese Learners	50
ADDENDUM: Financial statement	

ISSN 0227-2938

Mario Rinvolucri (right) in conversation with Nicole Graham of The English Centre and ESL consultant/teacher Ken Lackman in Toronto's historic Distillery District

The imminent arrival of a guest is always accompanied by a certain frisson of excitement and curiosity. So it was in Toronto recently, as hundreds of ESL teachers anticipated meeting and learning from the noted British educator and writer, Mario Rinvolucri. Known by teachers around the world for his many books – the best-selling *Grammar Games*, for example – he must be counted as one of the most prolific and influential leaders in ESL methodology today. His 40-year career has taken Rinvolucri around the world many times, sharing with teachers everywhere a lifetime of experience, experimentation and learning.

Rinvolucri's one-week sojourn in Canada began on a balmy Thanksgiving Day when the temperature hit 33 degrees. Relaxing over a hearty beer in the historic Distillery District shortly after disembarking from the plane, he looked forward to his twenty-five sessions with teachers over the next five

(Continued on page 4)

From the Editor

One theme that emerges from the content in this issue of *Contact* is that of the learner as informant. In every ESL classroom, it seems, those whom we seek to teach invariably end up teaching us – if we allow them to do so. Sometimes the best thing we can do as teachers is to get things going, then stand aside and observe the learning happen. This insight certainly guides the work of noted teacher trainer and author **Mario Rinvolucri**, who spent a week in Toronto this fall, meeting teachers and animating his professional development workshops with examples of reflective teaching at its best.

We pause for a moment of appreciation and reflection as we remember the life and career of a dedicated ESL teacher and activist, **Brenda Reble**, who was taken from us too soon. In her teaching and in her life she exemplified the qualities of love and respect for others that characterize the best teachers everywhere.

Rob McConkey of Seneca College was curious about the westernized names that many of his international students adopted when they came to Canada, so he initiated his own action research project. This led him to a broader study of the subject of names, their cultural significance, and their connection to identity. The fact that he had just recently become a father and needed to select names for his two new sons served to further his curiosity.

In an interview, **Fern Westernoff**, a speech-language pathologist with the Toronto District School Board, sheds light on when ESL teachers should consider referring a student for professional medical help. She provides contact information and points to useful resources for understanding speech and language disorders.

Ray Kanrar reviews some recent classroom research on cooperative learning and discusses how fur-

(Continued on page 3)

Contact us

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

Contributors should include their full name, title and affiliation. Text should be e-mailed to: **editor@teslontario.org** or mailed on CD to:

Editor, TESL Association of Ontario,
27 Carlton Street, Suite 405,
Toronto, Ontario, M5B 1L2

Deadlines are January 30, April 30 and June 30.

TESL Ontario's phone numbers are: (416) 593-4243, Fax (416) 593- 0164. The website is at: **http://www.teslontario.org**

Inquiries regarding membership or change of address should be addressed to the TESL Ontario Membership Coordinator at **teslmembership@telus.net**

Inquiries regarding advertising rates and reservation of advertising space should be addressed to the Office Coordinator at **teslontario@telus.net.**

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

Acceptance of advertising does not constitute endorsement by TESL Ontario nor guarantee accuracy of information therein. ◊

From the Editor

(Continued from page 2)

ther consideration and attention by ESL teachers may be needed to make cooperative learning activities work effectively for our students.

Three books are reviewed by TESL Ontario members in this issue. In the first, **Jeannie Haller** shares her enjoyment of *Teacher Man*, a recent autobiography by Pulitzer Prize-winning Irish-American writer **Frank McCourt**. McCourt taught for thirty years in the inner city schools of New York City. Among his teaching assignments were ESL classes for tenth graders and ESL adults in a college in Brooklyn.

Marg Heidebrecht was looking for some easy answers to the perennial questions: What do the terms 'good' language and 'bad' language really mean? And who decides which is which? Furthermore, on what basis do we decide? **Edwin Battistella** provided only some of the answers in his recent book, *Bad Language – Are some Words Better than Others*?

The author is Dean of Arts and Letters and Professor of English at Southern Oregon University. It is tempting but wrong, he says, to think of slang, dialects and non-standard grammar as simply breaking the rules of good English. Instead, we need to view language as made up of alternative forms of orderliness adopted by speakers depending on their communicative purposes.

Communications professional **Christine Kuch-Hailstone** reviews *How to Make People Like You in 90 Seconds or Less,* a popular book by Nicholas Boothman on how to improve our communications skills. Boothman identifies techniques that everyone can use to win the trust of others so that they receive the real messages we want to send. The skills he describes are basic to effective communication, whether inside the classroom or out. And these skills can be perfected by anyone, including ESL students.

The recent so-called "**Jangles Report**" done for Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Ontario Region LINC Advisory Committee (ORLAC) makes important recommendations for dealing with the increasing presence of literacy learners in LINC programs. The goal is to enhance the delivery of effective literacy training by sharing best practices for both instruction and assessment of literacy learners. The report was prepared by Jill Cummings, Mark Jacot and Adriana Parau.

Teachers who have adult Japanese learners in their classes will find that some of the simplest teaching strategies can be very effective when it comes to helping learners deal with elements of English that are not present in Japanese, says **Shweta Gupta**. In a sidebar, we review the book, *Learner Language – a teacher's guide to interference and other problems*, a 'must-have' resource for all ESL teachers.

As ever, the wise counsel and feedback of Laura Stoutenburg and Bob Courchene make the production of *Contact* a pleasant task. Happy reading. ◊

Clayton Graves

Editor

"…those whom we seek to teach invariably end up teaching us ."

Super Mario

(continued from Page 1)

(Continued from page 1)

days, culminating in two workshops and a keynote address at TESL Toronto's Fall Conference.

This 67-year-old whirlwind author and trainer lives to teach and teaches to live. Though he had visited Halifax and Vancouver in the past, this was his first trip to Toronto and he was curious about the state of ESL in Canada and in Ontario. His questions ranged from how teachers were trained here, what ongoing professional development they had access to, and how they used and adapted materials and technology in the classroom.

The visit of Rinvolucri was organized and co-sponsored by Nicole Graham of The English Centre, educational consultant Ken Lackman and TESL Toronto. Giving as many as six one-hour workshop sessions a day, he shared not only practical solutions to teaching everything from grammar to drama, but a larger vision of the complex human processes involved in teaching and learning a language.

Since the 1970s Rinvolucri's perspective on teaching English as a Second and Foreign Language has been informed by the principles of neuro-linguistic programming. Among other influences in the development of his philosophy and practice of pedagogy have been the works of Sylvia Ashton Warner (especially her 1963 groundbreaking book on education titled *Teacher*), the writings of psychotherapist Carl Rogers, and Earl Stevick, an early exponent of humanistic approaches to language teaching.

He describes the effect of NLP as similar to "discovering a new framework through which to explore and develop change, learning and communication… I found ways of developing and deepening rapport with others, of valuing other people's beliefs and values… It has given new shape and depths to the way I teach."

At the most practical levels, the principles of NLP have also helped him develop new ways of observing people – especially students – more accurately and more deeply. In addition, he has learned new ways of cooperating with 'difficult' colleagues and learners.

In fact, he confesses, NLP has become his richest single resource for devising classroom activities that get students speaking and writing spontaneously.

Perhaps this helps to explain the affinity that classroom teachers feel when they begin to draw upon the rich resources of classroom activities in his books. Indeed, many of these activities were devised by classroom instructors who, to their surprise and delight, submitted them for consideration and had them published.

Though Rinvolucri is now known widely as a leader in the field of ESL, he is still, and always will be, a teacher first. Jokingly, he has announced his plan to retire somewhere around 2030, when he has reached his middle age. ◊

"This 67-year-old whirlwind author and trainer lives to teach and teaches to live."

Executive Board Candidates 2007-2008

We are pleased to present to you the slate of candidates for TESL Ontario's Board positions for the year 2007-08.

President: Sheila Carson

Sheila Carson is Adult ESL/ LINC Coordinator for the Thames Valley District School Board in London, Ontario. She has been involved in the field of ESL since 1992, for many years in the classroom and later as Lead ESL/LINC Instructor, prior to accepting the administrative position.

She has chaired numerous committees, been involved in curriculum development, CALL delivery, Canadian Language Benchmark implementation, TESL training and served as President of OSSTF District 11 Instructor Bargaining Unit. Sheila has been on the executive of TESL London as Adult and LINC representatives, Membership Secretary, President and Affiliate Director. She has given several workshops at both the local and provincial levels.

Membership Secretary: Joanne Hincks

Joanne Hincks has been working in education in Canada and abroad for more than 20 years and in the field of ESL for the past 14 years. She currently works for the Toronto Catholic District School Board's Continuing Education Department as a Program Consultant.

She is a member of TESL Toronto's Executive Board and sits on the TESL Ontario Board as an Affiliate Director.

Treasurer: Namita Aggarwal

Namita Aggarwal currently works as Program Manager of Budget and Administrative Services for Continuing Education at the Toronto District School Board. She is responsible for budget, ministry reporting and statistics. Prior to this position, she was an Adult ESL Program Manager for the West Region of TDSB.

She is also an active member of CESBA as a member of the conference planning committee and as a presenter. Namita began her career in ESL with the former Etobicoke Board of Education as an instructor. She taught a variety of levels including computers and employment skills.

As a Lead Teacher, she participated on Action Teams dealing with issues such as Professionalism and Accountability. She valued the opportunity to co-author documents on placement testing and quality standards and was a member of the writing team that critiqued the first draft of the Canadian Language Benchmarks.

(Continued on page 6)

Executive Board Candidates

(Continued from page 5)

Namita's roots are in ESL and she appreciates the opportunity to contribute through participation in TESL Ontario.

Conference Chair:

Barb Krukowski

Barb Krukowski is Senior Manager of Languages at The Centre for Skills Development & Training, Halton District School Board. She has been working in the field of LINC/ESL for 19 years and has been active in TESL Ontario for several years.

Certification Chair:

Elaine Armstrong

Elaine Armstrong has been working in English as a Second Language Education for over 20 years. She worked for many years in the arctic of northern Canada teaching, administrating and doing administrative training. In the late 1990s she returned to southern Canada to teach in the ESL classroom, and to work in program development and teacher education.

In the early 2000s she was the Director of the Modern Languages Centre at the University of New Brunswick, Saint John. She returned to Kingston in 2003 to run a private consulting business specializing in teacher training, program development, curriculum development and administrative support for ESL programs, in addition to instructing online courses for Queen's University Faculty of Education, teaching onsite courses in Methodology, Language and Culture and Practice in a TESL Certification Program for Algonquin College and teaching onsite EAP courses to international students at Queen's University School of English.

Currently, Ms. Armstrong is Director of the School of English at Queen's University in Kingston, where she leads her staff in the development and delivery of EAP programs, International TESL programs and tailored programs for English for Special Purposes and English for Professional Purposes. ◊

TESL Ontario

35th Annual Conference

"Making Connections"

Nov. 22 - 24, 2007

- Plenary Sessions
- Workshops
- Research Symposia
- Panel Discussion
- Technology Fair
- Book and materials display

Holiday Inn ON KING

370 King St. West
Toronto

What's in a Name – and What Names Are In?

By Rob McConkey

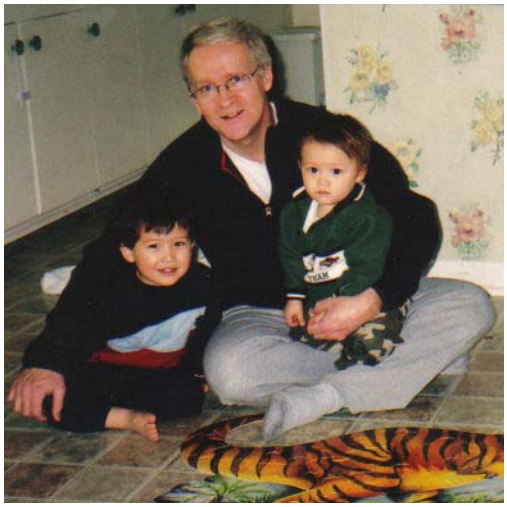
"When someone loves you, they say your name differently. And you know your name will be safe in their mouth."

That observation comes from a little girl about six years old — or at least, I think it does. I first heard it from someone who had found the quotation on the Internet, which means, of course, it may have been apocryphal. But to my mind, it doesn't really matter who said it or made it up.

The first line might strike some people as a bit too saccharine, with its faint echo of Hallmark greeting cards. But in the second line, I submit, something very serious is being said, which has nothing to do with sentimentality.

For what does it really mean to suggest that your name could be safe — or unsafe, for that matter — when used by others? This notion hints at the possibility of real danger, implying that names have a certain fragility, and can be somehow damaged or bastardized or lost. So other people have to be careful with them.

I think this notion of safety also clearly demonstrates that our names have real value, which is the essence of my message. After all, we don't feel the need to safeguard those things that we consider worthless. It is only when we hold something precious that we worry about other people messing with it, or taking it away from us, and maybe claiming it for their own. So, our names matter — at least to us. Otherwise, we wouldn't even bother with the question of whom to entrust with their care and use.



Rob McConkey and his two sons, Max (Young-Jo) and Martin (Genius).

The universal importance of names is something that anthropologists have long recognized, of course, however much one culture might vary from another in terms of the basis on which such names are chosen and the way in which they are given. In his article "Names and Personal Identity," H. Edward Deluzzain (1996) puts the matter in context by focusing first on preliterate peoples, among most of whom, he writes, names are determined:

> "according to very definite and specific rules. Generally, in cultures with a keen sense of ancestry, children get their names from the totems and family trees of their parents. In some cultures, names are taken from events which happen during the pregnancy of the mother or shortly after the birth of the child, and in others names are divined through magic and incantation. In some cases, the

(Continued on page 8)

"...the adoption of a new English name might be thought of as a way of tricking some people... "

(Continued from page 7)

> name given at birth is only the first of several names a person will bear throughout life. When this happens, the new names are given either to mark important milestones in life or to ward off evil spirits by tricking them into thinking that the person with the old name has disappeared."

For some of my international students, the adoption of a new English name might be thought of as a way of tricking some people (including themselves) in a similar fashion. But I don't wish to get ahead of myself here. In any case, Deluzzain goes on to note some intriguing parallels that exist between the preliterate naming rituals referred to above and certain elements in the baptismal ceremony of the Catholic Church:

> "Although in the eyes of the Church the rite of baptism is not primarily a naming ceremony, the giving of the baptismal, or Christian, name is certainly a part of it. Modern Christian theologians speak of baptism as a sacrament of initiation into the church and, in this sense, it serves basically the same purpose as naming ceremonies in preliterate societies. In Christian thought, baptism is a cleansing or reclaiming of the soul of the child, and this takes place under the name the child receives in the ceremony. According to Charles (1951), among preliterate peoples, the act of naming is a bestowal of a soul on the one who receives the name. In either case, though, the effect is the same: the person who receives a name thereby receives an identity and a place within the society."

"For most of my students, their new English name is something that they have decided to bestow on themselves..."

For most of my students, their new English name is something that they have decided to bestow on themselves — for a whole host of reasons that will be examined later in this paper. Whether these self-christened individuals are in some sense "born again" as a result, or whether they have sold their souls by doing so, are just two of the questions that need to be held in abeyance for the time being.

My particular interest is in the so-called "English" names that so many of our international students come up with, and that we use every day when teaching them. For instance, when I look down the attendance sheet for my current class, most of whom come from China, I see Catherine and Susan and Brian and Victor, but also a young lady named Echo and a young man named Evo, who began the term as Fish but then changed his mind. (A case of onomastic bait and switch, as it were.)

In its simplest terms, I'm just asking: What is going on here? What are the personal and cultural implications of nickname choice? When a foreign student suddenly becomes "Sean" or "Britney," does this constitute a sell-out or repudiation of their own culture? Is it proof of self-hatred or western cultural imperialism? Does it make them wimps or wannabes? Or could it be seen in a kinder light, as a basic, pragmatic gesture meant only to facilitate social acceptance? Or even as a noble attempt at reinventing oneself? In short, what can we make of this whole business of nicknames? More to the point, perhaps: What do our students make of it? At first, I was stumped by all this, but then I came up with a radical idea: Why not ask them? So I did, in the form of a

(Continued on page 9)

The Queen's family changed their last name from Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to "Windsor" in 1917 when anti-German sentiment was high in Britain.

"…students either think it's a very big deal, and need to sleep on it before making a decision, or else they don't really care about it at all."

(Continued from page 8)

brief questionnaire, and I'll be presenting some of my findings in what follows.

I've also spent some time recently reconsidering another phenomenon, one that seems to offer several instructive parallels: the whole baby-naming process. This is something that had a particular urgency in our household only recently, but I had already forgotten many of the concerns that were raised at that time, the various criteria for name selection —covering both style and substance —that my wife and I went over — and over — as we waited for the arrival of our first, Max.

In reviewing that material now, I have found what I think are a few lessons that might be applicable in the very different context of student nicknames. Not that our students should be babied, much less infantilized by the naming process. But I'm getting ahead of myself here.

Let me first back up a bit and define my terms: For our students, what is an "English" name, anyway? Webster defines nickname as "an additional or substitute name given to a person… usually descriptive and given in fun, affection or derision."

To be honest, in designing the questionnaire, my methodology may have been somewhat flawed: I fear I confused the issue merely by using the word "nickname," which a few people took to mean some kind of joke name. This confusion resulted in a number of less-than-serious responses: for example, one student said he chose the name

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

"Lucifer" for himself because "I like the demon." Well, I hope he was kidding. But luckily, not too many students were thrown off in this way; those who followed Lucifer's lead were not legion.

But, to be clear: For our purposes "English nickname" simply means any non-legal name that is adopted by a visa student — for whatever reason or reasons, and for however short or long a period of time — and actually used by him or her in school.

It is not, I hasten to add, necessarily an Anglo-Saxon name. Interestingly, though, one recent study done in the U.S. revealed that there is still a definite preference among foreign students for what might be thought typically Anglo names. And this is true even in those states with a considerable Hispanic population — California and Texas, for instance — where, according to the most recent birth records, the "ethnic" version has become the more frequently chosen name for the youngest Americans. That is to say, in places where the baby Josés now outnumber the baby Josephs. However, the arithmetic is different in the ESL classrooms.

"Canadians don't pronounce my name well."

And speaking of numbers, here are some of the ones generated by my simple questionnaire. I made it clear to our students at the outset that their participation was purely voluntary. Approximately 350 students were invited to answer ten questions, and almost 270 did so. Of those who did the questionnaire — 225 students — 86 per cent said that, Yes, they did have an English nickname.

Of those with a nickname, 61 per cent said they had chosen it themselves.

They were then asked about how much time — and thought — had gone into the selection of a new name (whoever had made that choice). And here the numbers came out a bit strange. The top answer was "about five minutes" with 40 per cent, which would seem to reflect a very casual attitude to the name game. But a strong second place went to "several days or longer" with 36 per cent, which seems to mean that quite a few students took it very seriously indeed.

Hong Kong actor Vivien Yeo changed the characters of her Chinese name Sau Wai to avoid ambiguity with other Chinese names. Since the characters can have multiple interpretations her name is also Yeo Siew Hui and Yang Xiu Hui. '"Vivien' seems so much easier to English speakers," she says.

It seems the attitudes about this issue of naming are quite polarized: students either think it's a very big deal,

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

and need to sleep on it before making a decision, or else they don't really care about it at all and don't want to waste any time on it. For what it's worth, I personally incline toward the former view, because I feel this whole naming process raises such fundamental issues as identity and individuality, tradition and community, ethnicity and prejudice, power-sharing and gender equality, as well as class envy and career ambition, status anxiety and personal style. As such, I think it matters a hell of a lot what we choose to call ourselves.

So does journalist Barbara Kay (2004), who reminded us in a recent column that "Naming the animals was Adam's first task, so we know that the act of naming is a grave responsibility." Besides, she asks, "How often in life do you have the opportunity to choose a new name for yourself?" (p. A-18) How often indeed. Question five asked them if they ever use their nickname when they are not in school, and a full 75 per cent said Yes, they do.

Question six asked if they ever thought about changing their nickname, and 77 per cent said No. They wanted to keep the one they had.

Questions seven and eight asked them what other names they liked, and didn't like, and why. But their answers here are better appreciated qualitatively than quantitatively, so I'll come back to this.

Question nine asked them whether they thought it was "very important" to have a good nickname, and why. Sixty-seven percent said Yes it was. But again, I'll leave their reasons till later.

And, finally, Question 10 invited the students with nicknames (86 per cent, you will recall) to speculate as to why some of their classmates chose not to have one, and also gave the other 14 per cent a chance to explain their personal decision to opt out.

So much for the raw numbers. Let's see what the students had to say about why they chose (or were given) their particular names. In many cases, it was pretty straightforward: Anna, who hails from Korea, chose Anna "for convenience" — her expression — and because her Korean name is virtually the same. Likewise, Sam (another Korean) stuck with that because the pronunciation is very similar to the Korean name he shares with disgraced former president Kim Young Sam.

Much the same reasoning was offered by many of our students from China: "Veef" goes by "Veef" because he says it "sounds like" his Chinese name, and "Sean" picked that one because his Chinese name is "Shang-wu-chen."

One student in our department, a young man named John who I suspect is Vietnamese, chose this name because he says it sounds like his real name, Trong, although it doesn't … the way I say it. Speaking of which, another student who doesn't have a nickname — yet — is thinking of getting one because "Canadians don't pronounce my name well." It's a fairly common complaint.

Another popular explanation for nickname choice had to do, not with its sound but its meaning, and again this was often closely tied to their original name. Thus, Eleanor supposedly means "brilliant rays" and the woman who chose it has a Chinese name that means the Sun. Likewise, one young lady employs the nickname Swallow because, she says, her Chinese name means swallow, as in the bird, not the activity.

This method of meaning-based name selection is of course a direct reflection of Chinese culture. In a paper titled "Names: The Mirror of Society," Yu-Zhen Liu (2001, 2) of Tianjin Normal

(Continued on page 12)

"The meaning of nicknames was also important to some students who consulted a dictionary of English names…"

(Continued from page 11)

University, explains the rules of the game in China:

> "The names of nearly all objects around them can be the chosen terms. They might be chosen from the names for creatures…plants…natural phenomena…or the names of places or professions. In selecting names, they usually concentrate on the semantic sense. …For example, they choose tiger for the connotation of power, turtle for long life, happiness for good luck, and treasure for making money."

"If you always change your name, how can … people remember you?"

The meaning of nicknames was also important to some students who consulted a dictionary of English names. Roger picked his name because he read somewhere that it meant "famous." I checked in my Oxford Dictionary of First Names, and sure enough, it does mean something like that. But even though Roger is technically correct here, there is a problem that needs to be addressed, and the Oxford editors explain it very nicely:

> In some cultures, the relationship between names and vocabulary words is generally transparent; that is, the names are just special uses of ordinary words. In such cultures, a name can be chosen on account of its meaning. This is not the case with English, nor with most of the languages of Western Europe. English names are mostly opaque; that is, the 'meaning' of almost all of them is to be sought in languages other than modern English, often ancient languages no longer spoken and only studied by specialists.

This obscurity factor makes quite a difference, and the editors go on to explain why:

> "Because of this, among English speakers…there can rarely be any question of choosing a name for a child on the basis of its meaning. A name is chosen either on ornamental grounds — 'because it sounds nice' — or in honour of some close relative. These are private reasons for choice."

Let's consider a few more of the so-called private reasons that students were willing to divulge.

Chris chose the name of the hero in a novel he was reading three years ago, and Vivian is a character in one young woman's favourite Chinese work of fiction.

Eric also turned to a book for help, but in a less orthodox way. He writes: "I close[d] my eyes and open [ed] an English name book and I chose this name." Ida may be less bookish than her friends. She simply gave her mother a short list of names, and then mom finally settled on the one that meant lucky, diligent, and happy.

Tiffany got her name from an American friend on the Internet who told her that if he ever had a daughter, he would name her Tiffany. Sunny actually preferred the name Summer until he found out that it was considered a girl's name. Kevin — like several other young guys — picked a name of an NBA basketball star. Tommy went with the label on his designer clothes. Carrie's

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

choice was inspired by the role played by Sissy Spacek in that old Stephen King movie. Meanwhile, our student called Sissi chose this name for a less frightening reason: it is her favourite brand of jelly. One young woman said that she had a nickname but didn't want to use it anymore, or reveal it, because it had been given to her by her ex-boyfriend. And Paris made that choice because, she says, "I like Paris Hilton." Who are we to argue?

Candy chose this name for the simplest of reasons — "because I like candy" — but she admits that "sometimes when the teacher says [my name] my classmates look at me." YoYo blames her sister for this nickname, and says that even as a child she was ridiculed for it. Cher didn't give a reason for her choice, but said she doesn't even like the singer named Cher. About his name, Thunder says, somewhat coyly, "I don't know why, but the girls like it." Evo (the student formerly known as Fish) picked his new name because his favourite car is the Evolution-8. Lesley knows she shares her name with a major street in Toronto, but it wasn't clear from her answer whether she saw this as a good thing or not.

Some students had an overtly political reason for their choice: ROC (R-O-C) can also mean Taiwan, and this student declared: "I am a patriot." SAR (S-A-R: not SARS then, but a bit too close for comfort) liked the name because "it's short and peculiar." And Barbie picked it because — why else? — "I like the doll."

Question five, you may recall, asked: Do you ever use your nickname when you're not in school? Among the 75 per cent of respondents who said yes, more than one student told me he used it "Everywhere, every time" but several others said they only used it with foreigners. Other answers included: in my home, at the fitness club, on the Internet, and when talking to my church officer.

Question six, "Have you ever thought about changing your nickname?" got that 77 per cent No response, but most of the students just said that they liked it, and left it at that. One chose to editorialize a bit, though, and asked: "If you always change your name, how can…people remember you?" A good point. On the Yes side, however, I got a few intriguing replies from potential name changers. One young woman said she felt her name (Stella) was better suited to a "mature lady." Marco was also open to the idea of change, and had an upbeat rationale for this: "Maybe there is a better one waiting for me." And Nick also thought about changing his name sometimes, but declined to say exactly why. "It's complicated" was all he wrote.

As for those other names they liked (question seven), there was again quite a range: One young man who had just seen the movie Troy proposed Achilles and Hector. Another was leaning towards Mars or Venus because "those names are god's name." And Ted was tempted by Zeus for much the same reason. (Personally, I always kind of liked Mercury.)

Not to be outdone, Johnson weighed in ecumenically with both Moses and Christ because he said "they have a nice meaning." And, speaking of gods that failed, one student still had a soft spot for Marx, although he claimed (perhaps somewhat disingenuously) to like it for purely apolitical reasons. Meanwhile, the Taiwanese patriot mentioned earlier favoured Rumsfeld, but he too denied any political agenda: "It [just] sounds great!" was all he would say. To some ears, I suppose it might.

Speaking of politics, another passage from Professor Liu's paper (2001, 3-4) is worth noting here: In a

(Continued on page 14)

"…where I work, seven of the fifty teachers changed their names…"

(Continued from page 13)

section headed "The Reflection of the Social Features of the Time," dealing with the Cultural Revolution of the late '60s, she writes: "In those years, everything had to be revolutionized…In order to follow the tide, newborn babies were given names associated with the revolution. Many adults changed their names as a token of revolutionizing themselves. Phrases such as 'learning from the workers', 'learning from the peasants', or 'learning from the soldiers' were popular names of the day."

She goes on to say: "In the Department of Foreign Languages of the university where I work, seven of the fifty teachers changed their names, though only five survive. Chun-niang, which means river girl, was changed into Yan-jun, which means following the army [though it didn't say where]. Another name, Cheng-ming, which means to inherit fame, was changed to Wei-min, meaning for the people.'

"Every name is OK, if the person likes it."

On a lighter note, one ingenious student liked the name Ivy because I-V-Y can be a code for I-Love-You. And one young person who really should have grown up here in the 1960s, liked the names Jazz and Cloud.

That might sound a bit flaky to our ears, but we have to be on guard against our own prejudices and cultural chauvinism. As Christine Savidou (2002, 2-3) cautions in her article, "Understanding Chinese Names: Cross-Cultural Awareness in the EFL Classroom":

> "Teachers often formulate superficial opinions about Chinese names which show them to be entertaining or [ridiculous]."

But, she advises, we need to get over that, or at least beyond it, and realize "that while the names Chinese students use may at first seem amusing… confusing or problematic, they are in fact the result of rational and logical choices.". To which I would only add: well, sometimes.

Question eight was a chance for them to get down and dirty and talk about the names they hated, and why. And they were not shy about doing so. One student got straight to the point, saying he hated "stupid names which sound stupid or mean stupid things." (That pretty much covers it.) Many names like Tom or Bob were rejected because they were "too normal," or "too old." Others were shot down because "in my country people usually choose them for pets" or simply because they were hard to pronounce. Kathy hated Lucy and Lilly because these are the names they always used in her middle school English book (painful memories, presumably).

One young man felt quite strongly that he would never want to be called "Short man" or "Baldy." Another, who wisely chose to remain anonymous, cited "Short leg" and "Short stick" as tags to avoid at all cost. He then confided, rather poignantly: "The short…is my complex." And yet another firmly rejected the name Dick because "This is the first impression you give to people." Perhaps Richard Nixon should have thought about that.

More than two-thirds of those who have a nickname think it's important to have a good one. Here are a couple of the reasons they offered: "A nickname shows what kind of person you are." And "Your nickname can show your inner spirit." There is, according to Shingo Muriyama (2003), a Japanese expression along the same lines: "names and natures agree."

But there were also some dissenting voices, even among those who had nicknames. One wrote, rather cryptically: "If you don't want to cheat some-

(Continued on page 15)

(Continued from page 14)

body, a nickname is unnecessary." And another said: "It's not interesting me. I don't care. It's not very important." (I wonder what she really feels about the subject.) One modern woman wrote with cool rationality: "Some people might say [otherwise] but I think personality is influenced by environment, society, and culture. Not [by] the name."

Still, many students saw this whole issue as a matter of personal choice — "[It's] none of my business" one wrote — and felt that once someone's choice had been made, it was worthy of other people's respect. Clearly, they did not want to get "judgmental" about it. A typical comment: "Every name is OK, if the person likes it."

The final question asked why it is that some students don't use nicknames. Their answers were quite wide-ranging. A few people went so far as to ascribe bad motives or bad character to these nay-sayers: "Maybe he or she isn't friendly or easy-going or open." Or else "they are too serious." Or they might even be guilty of reverse snobbery. As one disapproving student put it: "They want to be special." How dare they?

But, true to form, most students were not critical of their no-nickname classmates: "Maybe they think their no-nonsense name is the best." Maybe they have "religious reasons." Perhaps "He or she is traditional." "They want to be called by the name given by their parents." "They don't "want to be changed by their surroundings." They want "to be themselves."

A couple of other answers to this last question really surprised me. One had a rather wistful tone: "Maybe [such names] make them think some sad things." The other theory was more devious. Keep in mind that nicknames make life easier for the teacher—both to remember student names and to pronounce them. But, as this shrewd respondent put it, maybe these students "don't want their teacher to call [on] them a lot." I think that's brilliant, and I wish I'd thought of that back in law school.

Since all of this stuff about names is intensely individual, allow me to add a personal note: My own family name, McConkey, is a bit unusual, and there were times as a child when I would have preferred something more "normal." Growing up I was forever having to repeat it for people or correct their pronunciation. You get used to a lot of variations on the spelling, too. One time I got a letter from the Salvation Army addressed to a Dear Mr. McDonkey, asking for money. They didn't get any from me. Yet, strangely enough, all my international students are able to spell and pronounce my family name very well indeed.

In the mid 1990s I had the good fortune to teach overseas for four years at a university in Korea. Before going, one Korean friend of mine—I thought of him as a friend at the time—told me I should consider adopting a home-grown version of my family name. As you may know, that country's naming system is heavily influenced by both Confucian ideas and Chinese tradition: expensive astrologers are routinely consulted before baby names are chosen, and professional people typically use Chinese characters (three of them, with the last name first) rather than Korean letters on their business cards.

My buddy's suggested name for me seemed quite clever: Ma Gon Gi, which approximated the sound of Mc-Con-key. And he also gave me what he said were the best Chinese characters (there are usually several homonyms to choose from) to go along with each of those sounds. Naturally, I was delighted, and so, shortly after arriving in

(Continued on page 16)

"...strangely enough, all my international students are able to spell and pronounce my family name very well indeed."

(Continued from page 15)

Korea, I tried the name out on a few people. I got a rather strange reaction from most of them. It turns out Ma Gon Gi, as my friend had rendered it in Chinese, translates roughly as Powerful Horse Rising Up, which sounds impressive. But apparently it can also be interpreted to mean something like: stud with a really big erection. To make matters worse, a certain academic named Ma, a professor of literature, was notorious just then for having published what was widely thought to be a pornographic novel (although, to be fair, standards of public decency in Korea at the time were somewhat puritanical). In any case, I stopped using my catchy name after a few weeks, or at least, started giving it out much more selectively.

When our own son was born last summer, my Korean wife and I wanted to give him a couple of names, to reflect his bicultural roots. For his English one we ultimately chose Maxwell, which was my father's name. We agreed on this even though we both knew by then, from having read several baby books, that Max is now the number one name in North America for dogs.

We had a hard time reaching this consensus, though. I had previously suggested Chester, my grandfather's name, but that sounded like an old man to her. My uncle Wilfred's name also got short shrift. She then countered with any number of ridiculous suggestions, mostly offered by her meddling colleagues at work. I think the worst was Tristan.

It wasn't easy. The novelist Zoe Heller (2003), while awaiting the arrival of her second child last year, touched on the enormous difficulty of reaching agreement with her other half about the new baby's name. She wrote:

> "I have reached that point in gestation when the issue of what to call the forthcoming spawn has become paramount. All around my apartment, there are little lists scribbled feverishly on the backs of envelopes. These have usually been composed by me in the insomniac small hours, when it is possible to believe that Storm and Cherry are beautiful, romantic names that the father of my child will be unable to resist.
>
> But prosaic morning always comes and, with it, a rude riposte to my midnight delusions.
>
> "What, are you nuts?" my boyfriend cries, brandishing the envelopes over breakfast, "I've told you already: no weather, no fruit."

Naming is a fraught business. I have [she confessed] a weakness for the sort of louche, frivolous names favoured by celebrities."

While I do not share Ms. Heller's fondness for the names that, say, pop musicians come up with, I do find them interesting. We all know by now that the late Frank Zappa named his lucky kids Dweezil and Moon Unit. Michael Jackson, for his part, allegedly sired Prince Michael II. Keith Richards chose Dandelion for his daughter, but she later switched it to Angela. And David Bowie couldn't resist calling his son Zowie, though this was later changed to Joe and then changed again to Duncan.

Actually, Duncan was another name on my baby list, because it is both pleasing to my Celtic ear and genealogically apposite: The McConkeys, before they staggered out of Scotland for the promise of a more peaceful life in Northern Ireland, belonged to Clan

(Continued on page 17)

"…It is a rather depressing thing to see one's heartfelt choices revealed as the clichés they are."

(Continued from page 16)

Robertson, whose ancestral chief bore the Gaelic name — I have no idea how to pronounce this — "Donnachadh Riach," which roughly translates as "Fat Duncan." Alas, our stout leader was not, as I had briefly fantasized, the founder of Dunkin Donuts, which is why I am not a millionaire today. But I digress.

For those non-celebrities among us who want to avoid both the banal and the bizarre, one of the thorniest problems is how to be at least slightly original. Zoe Heller has found this to be an exercise in futility: "You may fool yourself for a while that you are dipping into an exclusive well of private association and personal taste, when you choose your names. But nine times out of ten, it transpires that you have been tapping into the same Zeitgeist as everyone in your socio-economic category. … It is a rather depressing thing to see one's heartfelt choices revealed as the clichés they are. But [she concludes] helpful none the less."

Ah, yes: the zeitgeist. For the record, the top ten baby names for 2003, at least in the United States, are as follows. For the girls, in order: Emily, Emma, Madison, Hannah, Hailey, Sarah, Kaitlyn, Isabella, Olivia, and Abigail. For the boys, from the top: Jacob, Aidan, Ethan, Matthew, Nicholas, Joshua, Ryan, Michael, Zachary, and Tyler.

If you looked way back to, say, the middle of the nineteenth century, however, the boys' list would have looked and sounded completely different: William, John, Charles, Harry, James, George, Frank, Robert, Joseph and Thomas. And, somewhat surprisingly, that list wouldn't have changed all that much a hundred years later.

Meanwhile, the girls' list back around 1850 was as follows: Mary, Anna, Elizabeth, Emma, Alice, Edith, Florence, May, Helen, and Katherine. And many of those names were still popular in 1950. But only one of them, Emma, can be found on the top ten list today.

Topping the charts, of course, makes you popular, but also — by definition — common. And therein lies the problem: How can your kid sound more exotic, without sounding like an exotic dancer?

Looking down our department's registry of students, my vote for the very best female name, different but not too different, is Lavanda. Second place goes to Calpurnia, but that is a bit of a mouthful. Among the other girls' names that strike me as edgy, if arguably lacking in gravitas, I found Bobo, Zozo, and Dodo. For the boys, I think the nod goes to Elvis. Not everyone is a fan, I know, but it certainly beats Potato, which is what one student calls himself. His mother gave him that name, he explained, because she felt his head was shaped like one.

Anyway, after my wife and I had finally agreed on Max as our son's "English" name, we wanted him to have a Korean middle name, to honour his Asian heritage, and this proved an even tougher decision. Both of us knew enough to avoid some of the obvious howlers such as Young Bum —he'd never get a job — or You Suck —he'd never get a date. We needed something distinctive, meaningful, and impossible for Anglophones to mispronounce.

My wife's Korean name is Yong-Kyong. Yong spelled like Yonge Street (without the E) and Kyong as in, I don't know, Kyonge Street. In translation it means something like "crystal in the capital" or, much more loosely translated, *Bright Lights, Big City* (which was, you may recall, Jay McInerney's first novel back in 1984.) The meaning actually kind of fits, don't you think?

(Continued on page 18)

"…When I lived in Korea, the names on the maps never seemed to match the ones on the road signs."

(Continued from page 17)

If her choice of spelling seems at first a bit odd — her use of O rather than OU — you need to know that the Romanization of Korean — the conversion of Hangul vowels and consonants into our alphabet — is a tricky business at the best of times. Basically, it's either going to look weird or sound weird.

There is also the problem of orthographic inconsistency. When I lived in Korea, the names on the maps never seemed to match the ones on the road signs. It seemed a conspiracy against foreigners. Then I found out the real reason: the ministry of tourism and the ministry of transport simply couldn't agree on the same system of Romanization. Or else they once had, but didn't anymore. Or something.

This could make for some scary moments. One time I was lined up at the bus terminal, waiting to purchase a ticket to Kangnung, a lovely coastal town on the East Sea (a.k.a. the Sea of Japan, but not of course in Korea — place names matter too). I thought the town was spelled KANG-NUNG, but then I glanced at my ticket and read GANG-REUNG. Where are they taking me? I wondered out loud, in a slight panic. Just then, the kindly woman standing behind me in line spoke up to reassure me, "Don't worry, same, same." And she was right.

"...Korean people [believe] the name decides his/her life and so-called destiny."

Yong-Kyong's English name is Joanne. How did she get it? Well, she had just come back to Korea after studying for a year in England — this was before we ever met — and she needed to find a job, preferably one that would allow her to continue practising her English. She got an interview with a French company, oddly enough, and it must have gone well because she was offered a position on the spot, and gratefully accepted.

At which point the interviewer, a Frenchwoman, strongly suggested that Yong-Kyong, who would be dealing a lot with "foreigners" (that's us, remember) should select an English-sounding name to make things easier all around. (Her nickname in England had been "Bubbles," but that now seemed a bit too frivolous for the working world, or at least the respectable, nine-to-five part thereof.) She agreed, and the two of them hastily flipped through a list of approved names together, before settling on Joanne.

As it happens, the newly christened Joanne went home that night, thought about the new job, and decided it would be too boring. So she called back the next day to say thanks but no thanks. But she kept the name, and uses it still, some seven years later. It has become part of who she is.

Our first son Max, who is now five years old, is called Young-Jo, which of course is a combination of his mother's Korean and English names. It is also the name of Young-Cho Hwang, a famous marathon runner who won the gold medal for Korea at the Barcelona Olympics. Our younger boy, Martin, just turned two. His middle name means something like "talented person" or, if you prefer, "genius". (Not to put any pressure on him, or anything.)

While I was actually the one who came up Max's name, after many false starts, I naturally deferred to Joanne when it came to picking the right Chinese characters to go along with it. We also enlisted the help of a good friend of ours, a Korean banker, who agreed to do some research on this — for free.

But he was very careful not to make the final decision for us because, as he explained in his report, the stakes were too high: "Korean people [believe] the name decides his/her life and so-called destiny. Therefore I cannot decide [on] the [best] Chinese characters for Young Cho."

(Continued on page 19)

(Continued from page 18)

And so it fell to Young-Jo's mother to make the call, which seemed only right. She briefly considered several other Chinese character combination combinations, including "swimming grandfather" (which struck me as vaguely Maoist) and "eternal construction" (which sounded like the perfect motto for Newnham campus) but finally opted for "shining hero," which sounds just about right to me. Or maybe it's just the way I'm saying it:

"When someone loves you, they say your name differently. And you know your name will be safe in their mouth." ◊

Rob McConkey has a B.A. (Toronto), LL.B. (Osgoode/York), M.Ed. (Brock), and a Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (Cambridge). He was called to the Ontario Bar in 1985: Barrister, Solicitor & Notary Public (non-practising) and is a member of TESL Ontario. He teaches in the School of English and Liberal Studies at Seneca College in Toronto and can be reached by email at robert.mcconkey@senecac.on.ca.

We are grateful to College Quarterly *for permission to reprint Professor McConkey's article.*

References

Fame's name game, or the celebrity mothers of invention. (2004, May 18). *Toronto Star*, p. C6.

Charles, L. H. (1951). Drama in first-naming ceremonies. *Journal of American Folklore* (64) 11-35.

Deluzzain, H. E. (1996). Names and Personal Identity. Behind the Name: The Etymology and History of First Names. http://www.behindthename.com/articles/html.

Heller, Z. (2003). Her name might be 'Smelly' in Farsi. *The Daily Telegraph*.

Kay, B. (2004, June 2). "Stop, Steve!—and other naming conundrums." *National Post*, p. A18.

Liu, Y. (2001, March 30). Names: The mirror of a society. Unpublished paper presented at the annual Massachusetts State Colleges Graduate Research Symposium, Fitchburg, MA.

Muriyama, S. (2003, April). Negotiating identity with an English nickname. Unpublished paper presented at the annual TESOL Conference, Baltimore, MD.

Rosenkrantz, L. & Redmond-Satran, P. (1999). *Beyond Jason & Jennifer, Madison & Montana*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Savidou, C. (2002). Understanding Chinese names: Cross-cultural awareness in the EFL classroom. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 8(9).

References

Lives Lived: We Remember Brenda Reble

Brenda Reble 1954-2007

Brenda Reble:

1954-2007

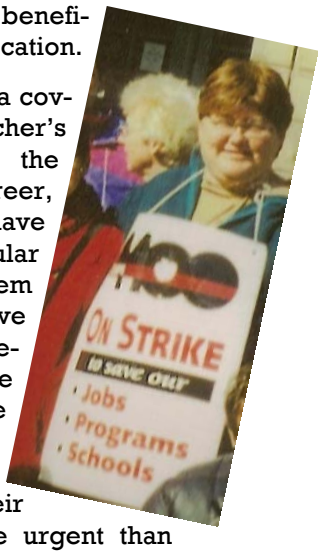
It was with shock and sadness that Toronto ESL teachers learned on June 13, 2007 of the sudden passing of a remarkable teacher, Brenda Reble, from cardiac arrest in her apartment on Broadview, just a stone's throw from Jones Avenue Adult Learning Centre. She had been a teacher there for almost 30 years. Recently, Brenda had moved to teach at Future Skills, a private high school with a strong ESL department in the northern part of the city. Brenda was 53 years old.

What was Brenda like? Friend and colleague Momoye Sugiman of Jones Avenue describes her this way: "realistic, stubborn, maternal, private, straightforward, insistent and persevering." But above all, she was passionate about her work, and passionate about people.

"She poured all of her energy into her teaching," recalls fellow-teacher Anne Erickson. Most will remember Brenda's early arrivals at Jones Avenue – invariably before 8:00 a.m. and sometimes earlier – so she could be first in line for the better of the two teachers' photocopy machines.

Brenda's lessons were not of the generic cookie-cutter sort. They were always tailor-made to fit the individual needs of her students. She would spend countless hours creating homemade grammar and vocabulary exercises, correcting stacks of student essays, composing tests, charting in exhaustive detail the progress of each learner. She even baked cookies and muffins and prepared salads for her often-hungry students.

"For Brenda, collecting authentic learning materials was just a way of life," says Sugiman. It was the only way that made sense to her. And the thousands of students who passed through her inspiring and exciting classes were the beneficiaries of this dedication.



Holder of a coveted Ontario Teacher's Certificate from the start of her career, Brenda could have taught in the regular high school system with its attractive salaries and benefits. Instead, she found her niche teaching adult newcomers, realizing that their needs were more urgent than those of suburban teenagers.

(Continued on page 21)

(Continued from page 20)

She nudged, challenged, coached, mothered and mentored each one.

For Brenda, there was no talking down to her students, no over-enunciation, even with beginner level classes.

Strong-willed, opinionated and straight-talking, she was also a firm believer in social justice, especially gender equity.

Unbowed by the skepticism and even warnings of others, she initiated classroom discussions of controversial and important topics: Sharia law and its role in the Muslim community, gay rights, and the causes of conflict, realizing that many of her students had come to Canada scarred by the ravages of war and social discrimination. She was especially sensitive to the needs of abused women.

"She was a one-person employment agency..."

Brenda helped students negotiate the tricky ins and outs of tenancy; she coached them on how to get desired outcomes through effectively-placed complaints and she insisted they learn about their city, planning field trips hither and yon to help newcomers learn to navigate on their own.

In her spare time – what she had of it – she coached her students on how to speak and present themselves in job interviews, pointed them to job prospects by using her vast network of connections, and helped them to create and edit resumes. She was a one-person employment agency. And many remember her for it with deep gratitude.

"She showed me what being a real Canadian means," recalled one student. "She helped everybody; it didn't matter where you came from. I will never forget her. Today I weep when I remember her."

Brenda's challenges in life came early. At university she suffered a grand mal epileptic seizure, which caused her to have to take heavy medication the rest of her life. She was also a mild diabetic, but giving up her joy of cooking was just not in the cards. Her generosity even extended

(Continued on page 22)

"…at her memorial service, Anne Erickson urged everyone to celebrate Brenda's life by throwing their own dinner parties in her honour."

(Continued from page 21)

to taking in homeless people for a shower, a meal, a change of clothes.

Brenda was also an active member of CUPE and volunteered for virtually every committee. Her commitment to her colleagues was unsurpassed, and she kept all around her up-to-date on union activities, urging them to get involved.

The child of missionaries, Brenda was brought up to put the needs of others ahead of her own. "She always wanted people to be part of a community, to meet each other and to be part of her family," explained her father Eric, a retired Lutheran minister.

In fact, just two weeks before her death she had invited every neighbour on her 18th floor over for dinner. Appropriately, at her memorial service, Anne Erickson urged everyone to celebrate Brenda's life by throwing their own dinner parties in her honour.

Brenda's brother Peter Reble perhaps put his sister's passing into perspective for all of us. "You ESL teachers are the front line in our society," he says, "the unsung heroes of the world. And Brenda was very proud of that."

Rest in peace, Brenda. You will not soon be forgotten. ◊

Communication Disorders in ESL Students:

Q and A with Dr. Fern Westernoff, Speech-language pathologist, Toronto District School Board

Do you have a student in your class who talks incessantly? Is there something more to the behaviour than being a social butterfly? How can a teacher recognize when a student's struggles to learn English extend beyond the realm of second language acquisition? When should a teacher refer a student to a speech-language pathologist?

These and other questions were answered in a recent workshop given by speech-language pathologist, Dr. Fern Westernoff.

Contact: The concepts of *speech* and *language* may still be confusing for some teachers. Could you help us differentiate between the two concepts?

Fern Westernoff: Certainly. I think that teachers are excellent at identifying a communication behaviour that is atypical of an English language learner, but perhaps are not able to describe the behaviour. Differentiating between the concepts of *speech* and *language* helps identify those students who may need the services of a speech-language pathologist.

Speech is physical, involving motor actions. It is what happens at the level of the vocal chords, throat, and mouth. There are many types of disorders, but the ones we see most frequently are articulation, dysfluency, and voice disorders.

Articulation refers to the speech sounds produced. We know that children learning to talk go through developmental stages as they gradually master production of more complicated speech sounds. We also know that English language learners of all ages, are likely to produce interference errors, which are related to learning a new language.

If a person does present with an articulation disorder, we typically see the problem in both of their languages. For example, the person would present with a lisp when speaking both the first and second languages.

Dysfluency refers to stuttering. Again, there is a developmental component. It is not uncommon for

(Continued on page 24)

"Which communication behaviours are typical of those learning English as an additional language, and which are suggestive of a communication disorder?"

(Continued from page 23)

children between 2-4 years of age to present with dysfluent speech, as they develop more sophisticated oral language skills. However, a familial history of dysfluency, stuttering in both the first and second language, and observations of secondary behaviours (e.g., eye blinking, nostril flares) can be indicative of a problem requiring the involvement of a speech-language pathologist.

Voice disorders involve problems with voice quality (e.g., hoarse or raspy voice), resonance (e.g., too nasal, not nasal enough) or pitch (e.g., too high or too low for gender or age). While speech-language pathologists can assess and treat voice disorders, these problems usually have a medical explanation. For this reason, the involvement of an ear-nose-and-throat specialist is indicated.

Contact: Are language disorders markedly different?

Fern: ***Language*** disorders are more subtle than speech disorders. Oral language is divided into *receptive language* (e.g., comprehension of what you hear) and *expressive language* (e.g., ability to express what you want to say). Speech-language pathologists would examine different levels of receptive and expressive language skills. For example, does this person understand as many words as other people of the same age (receptive vocabulary), can this person use specific words as well as others of the same age (expressive vocabulary). It would not be uncommon for English language learners to produce sentences with interference errors from their first language. We become concerned when we see language problems evident in the first language, or acquisition of English that is slower than expected.

There is a strong link between oral language and written language. Many students who have oral language difficulty may also experience difficulty learning to read and write. Early intervention is therefore important.

Contact: What suggestions could you provide for a teacher of adult English language learners, who, for instance, might have a student whose speech is very difficult to understand, and who physically has his mouth open all the time and drools so

(Continued on page 25)

Help and information

- **Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists** 1 Nicholas Street Suite 920, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B7 (1-800) 259-8519 www.caslpa.ca/english/index.asp
- **Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders** 13 Segal Drive Tillsonberg, Ontario N4G 4P4 (519) 688-0369 www.oafccd.com
- **Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists** 410 Jarvis Street Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2G6 www.osla.on.ca
- **Speech-language pathology private practice line (416) 920-0361**
- **Toronto Preschool Speech and Language Services (416)338-8255** www.tpsls.on.ca

"The ESL student who does not stop talking may be doing so in order to hide difficulty understanding what is being said."

(Continued from page 24)

much that he needs a box of tissues on his desk?

Fern: A number of issues come to mind with a situation such as this one. Keeping one's mouth open can be a symptom of different things, for example an allergy or medical problem (e.g., enlarged adenoids or tonsils). A referral to an ear-nose-and throat specialist would therefore be indicated.

Drooling is also an issue that would need medical evaluation. Speech that is difficult to understand can be the result of a hearing loss, voice disorder, or articulation problem. A hearing examination by an audiologist and speech assessment by a speech-language pathologist would also be suggested.

Contact: What suggestions could you provide for a teacher of a child whose acquisition of English appears to be much slower than that of other English language learners?

Fern: The rate of English language development relative to the amount of support provided is one bit of information we need to consider to determine if consultation with a speech-language pathologist is indicated. However, we need to gather more information and triangulate the data.

Information about the person's developmental and medical history could be very helpful. For example, students with later language development (children typically say their first words at 1 year of age and are combining 2-word utterances by 2 years of age) or a history of frequent ear infections may be academically at risk.

Asking parents about their child's skills in the first language may

(Continued on page 26)

References for Teachers

Battle, D. E. (1993). (Ed.) *Communication disorders in multicultural populations*. Boston: Andover Medical Pub.

Cheng, L. L. (2001). *Assessing Asian language performance: Guidelines for evaluating limited-English proficient students* (2nd edition). Oceanside, CA: Academic Communication Associates.

Cummins, J. (1996). *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society.* Ontario, CA: California Association for Bilingual Education.

Genesee, F., Paradis, J., Crago, M.B. (2004). *Dual Language Development & Disorders: A Handbook on Bilingualism & Second Language Learning.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Pub. Co.

Geva, E., Barsky, A. & Westernoff, F. (2000). (Eds.), *Interprofessional practices with diverse populations: Cases in point.* Westport, CI: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Hamayan, E. V. & Damico, J. S. (1991). (Eds.), *Limiting bias in the assessment of bilingual students.* Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Harding, E. & Riley, P. (1986). *The bilingual family*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swan, M. & Smith, B. (1987). (Eds), *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems.* Cambridge: Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers.

"Tongue Tied." Article in *Today's Parent* magazine regarding raising bilingual children http://www.todaysparent.com/lifeasparent/parenting/article.jsp?content=20040402_150336_3232&page=1

"Asking parents about their child's skills in the first language may also be helpful."

(Continued from page 25)

also be helpful. Be alerted if a parent comments that the younger sibling/ cousin speaks better or that their child has trouble following directions. Getting a copy of previous report cards (and translating them into English if needed), may also prove useful.

A history of academic problems provides different information than if the student was achieving well in a previous school setting. Once the teacher has all the information collected, she or he may begin to see a pattern of difficulty which can be discussed with the school speech-language pathologist. Speech-language pathologists have provincial and national guidelines to providing services to clients who speak little or no English.

Contact: That is very helpful information. I suppose that once ESL teachers have more information for describing a speech or language difficulty, they can encourage their adult students or the parents of young students to seek further services. In that regard, what resources are available for speech-language pathology services? Are any of these resources free?

Fern: Speech-language pathologists work in a variety of settings, including schools, hospitals, clinics, and private practice. Depending on the setting, some fees may be incurred for services. For example, there are no fees for speech-language pathology services in the school system, but fees may be charged in some clinics and for private services. Some people may have coverage for speech-language pathology services through their employment health plan.

Contact: Thank you so much for this information, Fern. It will certainly help teachers who may have students with unusual speech and language behaviours in their classrooms and don't know where to turn. ◊

"Speech-language pathologists work in a variety of settings, including schools, hospitals, clinics, and private practice."

Early in her career, Fern Westernoff worked exclusively with immigrant and refugee children who spoke little or no English. This prompted her to pursue doctoral studies at OISE, where she combined her training as a speech-language pathologist with her education in bilingualism and second language learning.

Since then, she has presented and published widely on the topic of communication disorders among English language learners. She has also participated in the development of professional guidelines for speech-language pathologists and audiologists working with clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, both at the provincial and national levels.

Fern has also taught English as a second language to adult learners in Israel.

Dr. Westernoff was interviewed for Contact by Dale Northcote

Cooperative Learning and Teaching as a Socio-cultural Practice

By Ray Kanrar

A language is a part of a culture, and culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture.

—Brown, H. Douglas, 2000, p. 177

This insight by Brown (2000) has important ramifications when we as ESL teachers look carefully at our teaching practice. The culture-language connection is perhaps most readily observable when we consider an instructional technique such as co-operative learning. In this article I review some recent classroom research on cooperative learning and discuss how further consideration and attention by ESL teachers may be needed to make cooperative learning activities work effectively for our students.

Specifically, I look at why some Chinese immigrant students were dissatisfied with cooperative learning activities and how culture may have played a role in shaping their feelings about cooperative learning.

Slavin (1995), a leading proponent of the technique of cooperative learning, has identified several important features of the approach. He concluded that cooperative learning not only develops students' interpersonal skills but also increases the achievement of every student in the group. By requiring students to interact in order to accomplish a set goal, students' tolerance for others coming from different backgrounds is also increased.

However, there are also critics of cooperative learning. McCaslin and Good, for example, (1996) noted that cooperative learning can encourage

(Continued on page 28)

"...cooperative learning not only develops students' interpersonal skills but also increases the achievement of every student in the group."

Features of a Cooperative Learning Approach

- Small, heterogeneous group composition
- Identification of specific goals for the group
- Supportive interaction within the group
- Individual accountability
- Development of interpersonal skills among group members, such as leadership, decision-making, trust-building, clear communication and conflict management
- Equal opportunity for success for all group members
- Limited and appropriate competition among group members

"It is difficult to disagree with Liang's conclusions."

(Continued from page 27)

students to place more value on processes and procedures — doing the task or set of tasks quickly and finishing the product - than on meaningful learning. They point out that this may only reinforce some students' misconceptions about cooperative learning - that peer relations and friendship are more important than learning. It may also encourage some students not to do their share of work.

In the study examined here, Liang (2004) investigated how Chinese immigrant students perceived their cooperative learning experiences in ESL classes in a Vancouver high school with a high percentage of Chinese speakers from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China. The students had grown up in different social systems, spoke different dialects, and adopted different written forms of the Chinese language.

To maximize the heterogeneity of the groups in the study, participants were randomly selected using a computer program. The groups included - to the extent it was possible - a mix of low, middle and high achievers, and males and females, with a wide range of ages. Teams of four were chosen, as that number seemed to be the ideal grouping for cooperative learning. Teams larger than four are generally considered harder to manage and often they do not lead to enough participation by all members of the group. As an integral part of the learning process, instructional strategies included cooperative student-student interaction about the subject matter.

Significant in Liang's findings was the frequency of negative attitudes expressed by the students towards their experience in cooperative learning tasks. Typical responses included: "Some group members do not do their part of the job"; "I can't do my best"; and "If I work individually, I can do my best".

An important implication of such findings would seem to be that proper structuring of cooperative learning experiences is a critical element in their success in the classroom. The process should try to ensure positive interdependence, moreover, by an appropriate division of the tasks among team members and individual accountability – in other words, each team member has to do effective work, such as writing answers.

Teachers also need to carefully arrange the learning environment so that there is shared participation in group discussions; and equal engagement in the group tasks where all members have the same opportunities and responsibilities to explain their own learning.

(Continued on page 29)

(Continued from page 28)

Liang's (2004) study also revealed that the students simultaneously liked and disliked working in groups.

The researcher speculated that the students' ambivalence about cooperative learning may have been a reflection of certain tensions in Chinese culture and societies inherent in the coexistence of collectivism and individualism, cooperation and competition.

It is difficult to disagree with Liang's conclusions. Many have commented that culture as an ingrained set of behaviours and modes of perception becomes highly important in learning a second language. If, as Brown claims, language and culture are intricately interwoven (Brown, 2000, p. 177), we as ESL teachers may need to accept the possibility that Chinese students (and perhaps many other students from a variety of cultural backgrounds) would naturally prefer a traditional teacher-centred learning environment in which learning is viewed as a process of transmission of knowledge from teacher to students. In such a model the teacher is the primary power and authority providing academic direction.

In the case of Liang's study, the sudden shift from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach may have contributed to students' dilemmas, immersed as they were not only in a new culture but in a very different pedagogical approach.

The academic environment in countries where a traditional teacher-centred approach is preferred is generally characterized by a highly competitive and rigid structure. Students are often treated as passive, silent and isolated entities who must constantly compete against each other, work hard and outperform their classmates. Those who fail in this race are considered "defective students". The faculty's job is to "weed out" these defective students. Little attention and support is given to developing individual learners' human potential. In such a rigid structure it would be a rare student who would choose to challenge the existing academic culture lest s/he be identified as unfit or stupid.

In a teacher-centred approach, most of the talking in classrooms is done by the teacher; individual students only speak when called upon. Teachers

(Continued on page 30)

"...some resistance by the Chinese students may have been predictable. "

(Continued from page 29)

characteristically praise and prefer students who sit and listen quietly and take good notes. Contrast that with what happens in a cooperative classroom where students, involved in simultaneous interaction, produce most of the talk. Students in a cooperative learning setting are often the creators of their own knowledge and teachers take on the role of catalysts who encourage and facilitate that learning.

"The more difficult the material to be learned, the more important is the need to have some social support amongst fellow-learners. "

The sudden transition from teacher-centred to student-centred learning was certainly a new and confusing experience for the students in Liang's study. Therefore, some resistance by the Chinese students may have been predictable.

There is a distinct possibility that the random selection of group members by the computer in the Liang study may have placed individuals in groups where they were not comfortable for various reasons (gender, age and experiential differences, preferred learning styles, and so on.)

Conceivably, cooperative learning situations might achieve more successful outcomes if teachers who know the students well as individuals were to make up the groups according to which students work well with which other students. Such a method might also avoid the possibility that less outgoing or popular students would be excluded in this process. Teachers might be well advised to use their own experienced and informed judgments when placing learners in groups so that the process will work. They then need to provide clear group goals, strategies and practices that will match immigrant students' goals, interests, and expectations. In this way, there is a greater possibility that students will work more successfully in a cooperative program, as they make it relevant and meaningful to their own lives.

It seems clear that further research should be done to discover whether the negative reactions voiced by the Chinese students in Liang's study are shared by immigrant students from other countries. It would be helpful, for example, to determine whether resistance to student-centred learning is a passing phase that is part of the overall process of acculturation. One suspects that some bad feelings, hostility, indecision, and unhappiness about cooperative learning may simply reflect a meas-

(Continued on page 31)

(Continued from page 30)

ure of 'culture shock' as immigrant students adapt to a new and strange social and academic environment.

If this is true, their resistance could be taken as a potentially positive transitional phase of acculturation as students are still in the process of acquiring a new perspective on a different kind of learning experience. As they participate in more and more cooperative learning experiences in classrooms at universities and colleges in North America, one might anticipate that they will adapt and assimilate. One might also hope that they would come not only to understand but also to share the view that learning can be an interactive social process pursued more effectively through interpersonal interaction within a cooperative context.

For successful learning to happen in a cooperative classroom environment, students should feel comfortable, confident, free to take risks, and have sufficient opportunities to speak. Pica, Young, and Doughty (1987) suggest that there are essentially two different types of linguistic environments available to second language learners: one, often found in the traditional teacher-centred classroom, where the language input is modified or simplified by the teacher and the other, a student - centred classroom, characterized by student-to-student interaction which emphasizes authentic rather than simplified input. Cooperative learning is representative of the second environment, the student-centred interactive classroom.

Krashen (1981, p.100) observed that if a language learner is at level i, the classroom input should contain i + 1. In other words, learners should be exposed to a level of language most of which they understand, but still be able to understand previously unknown content, using their cognitive and linguistic resources to discover or create meaning for themselves.

In cooperative learning tasks, speakers must focus on the immediate task of communication in real time, evoking student collaboration to achieve mutual understanding and adjusting their language when communication breaks down to make it more comprehensible.

However, even if the language is comprehended, it may not lead to further growth in their overall language development if it is not in what Vygotsky has termed "the zone of proximal development" — see Appendix (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86).

The nature of a cooperative learning setting should be such that it focuses the input in the zone of proximal development, and this stimulates the acquisition process for the next stage of the learner's language development.

Swain (1985) and others, however, have pointed out that a student may receive input in the zone of proximal development, but even that may not ensure language acquisition. The input must be received from a variety of sources so that the input becomes an *intake* that gets assigned to learners' long-term memory store. Cooperative learning tasks appear to offer hope for such input because they provide a natural source of redundancy in communications.

Interactive types of activities also address the issue of student comfort, lessening many students' anxiety about performing, and lowering their affective filters, thereby facilitating learning. To create conditions for effective interactions, teachers need to provide proper scaffolding - the instructional support that will help learners to comprehend the tasks they are performing. Teachers also need to monitor the learner-to-learner interactions, pro-

(Continued on page 32)

"...cooperative learning situations might achieve more successful outcomes if teachers...make up the groups according to which students work well with which other students."

(Continued from page 31)

vide assistance when communication breaks down, facilitate further discussions, and also teach learners strategies to negotiate meaning through clarification, paraphrase, and use of circumlocution.

The research cited in this paper has identified insights with regard to the experiences and dilemmas of immigrant students in a classroom setting in which cooperative learning is the instructional mode. Interactive language learning activities may be new for many learners, and immigrant students may have different expectations of how instruction should proceed, based on their previous experiences with education in their home countries.

Discussing with immigrant students the benefits of cooperative learning and the rationale for having them interact in meaningful discourse may be sometimes difficult, but it is undoubtedly an important step in motivating them towards cooperative learning. ◊

Ray A. Kanrar is currently an adult ESL educator at the University of Toronto. He completed a Ph.D. in Physics at the University of Calcutta, an M.Sc. from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur and a B.Ed. from OISE/University of Toronto.

Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank Jill Cummings, TESL instructor at Woodsworth College and Ph.D. candidate at OISE/University of Toronto, for her encouragement and invaluable comments that helped me in the preparation of this article.

References

References

Brown, H.D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (4tt Ed.). San Francisco State University, U.S: Longman.

Krashen, S. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Liang, X. (2004). Cooperative Learning as a Sociocultural Practice. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 60 (5), 637-668.

McCaslin, M., & Good, T. (1996). The informal curriculum. In Berliner, D., & Calfee, R. (Eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology*, (pp. 622-670). New York: MacMillan.

Pica, T., Young, R., & Doughty, C. (1987). The impact of interaction on comprehension. *TESOL Quarterly*, 21 (4), 737-758.

Slavin, R.E. (1995). *Cooperative learning*. 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Swain, M. 1985. Communicative competence: some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development, in S. Gass and C. Madden (eds.). *Input in Second Language Acquisition.* Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

APPENDIX:
Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

More than half a century ago a Russian scholar, Lev Vygotsky, made a great contribution to the field of cognitive and developmental psychology by proposing a theory of learning that has influenced not only our understanding of the processes of learning but also how teachers can arrange classroom interactions to enhance that learning.

Vygotsky's theory is unlike that proposed by Piaget, who posited that intellectual development drives the acquisition of knowledge. Vygotsky says that it is knowledge which drives intellectual development. For a learner to go from previously known and understood knowledge to new knowledge, s/he must go through what he calls a 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD).

Vygotsky defines this zone as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving [without guided instruction] and the level of potential development as determined by problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." (Vygotsky, 1978. p.86)

In Vygotsky's view, learning does not happen by itself; it is a social process, achieved through interaction with others. In the zone of proximal development it is the 'other' that pulls a learner along in the search for and development of more complex knowledge. In this case, the 'other' is a person skilled and knowledgeable in a field. This could be a teacher or even a peer who acts as a sort of guide until the learner has mastered the new knowledge to the point of becoming his or her own teacher.

The implication for classroom teachers is that it is important to remain within the ZPD of the learner. If the teacher sets a task too far above the level of understanding of the learner, s/he will not only be confused but will not achieve any intellectual growth. A similar problem occurs if the learning tasks are below the ZPD of the learner. The teacher must envision how far the learner can go in learning and provide the environment in which to do so.

Another element of the ZPD is referred to as 'scaffolding'. This refers to actions taken by a 'guide' to help learners properly navigate the ZPD.

In giving tasks to learners, the teacher must at the outset provide sufficient guidance so they understand the direction in which they must proceed. It is also important for a teacher to be aware of what is happening with the learner so that s/he can gradually withdraw and allow the learner to finish the task independently.

This provision of appropriate scaffolding is among the teacher's most important tasks. ◊

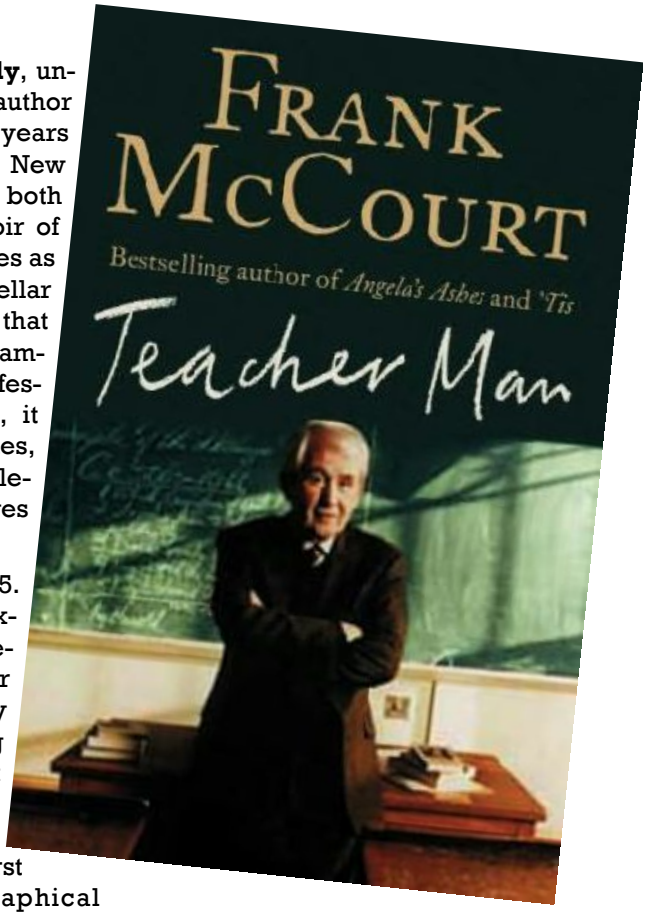
ZPD

BOOK REVIEW:

Teacher Man by Frank McCourt

Review by Jeannie Haller

***Teacher Man* is a lively**, unpretentious account of author Frank McCourt's thirty years as a high school teacher in New City, during which he taught both English and ESL. It's a memoir of McCourt's most rewarding times as a teacher as well as his less stellar moments. While he admits that teaching does not have the glamour or prestige of other professions such as law or politics, it should nonetheless, he argues, be not only recognized but celebrated. *Teacher Man* achieves this and more.



Teacher Man *by Frank McCourt*
Scribner 2005 258 pages

McCourt is now 75. Early on in *Teacher Man* he explains his reason for not becoming a published writer sooner. It is one that any teacher can relate to: teaching five classes, five days a week for over thirty years took all his time, energy and ingenuity. But after publishing his first two successful autobiographical works, *Angela's Ashes* (1996) and *'Tis* (1999), McCourt felt some pangs of guilt about not writing about his career as an educator and resolved to dedicate his third autobiographical book to his chosen profession.

"Like many new teachers, McCourt entered the classroom starry-eyed and full of high expectations."

Like many new teachers, McCourt entered the classroom starry-eyed and full of high expectations. He was going to save the world. His students would love and respect him. They would dote on his wisdom and revere him. In retrospect, he dryly confesses that he was simply ignorant of the realities of the profession before entering its practice. The truth was soon — and painfully — revealed.

For example, there were classroom dynamics that had never been discussed in the college courses he had taken at New York University to become a licensed teacher. Once in the classroom, McCourt quickly discovered that many of his students had low expectations of either school or themselves and few goals in life. He also found that in the day-to-day reality of high school teaching, quick

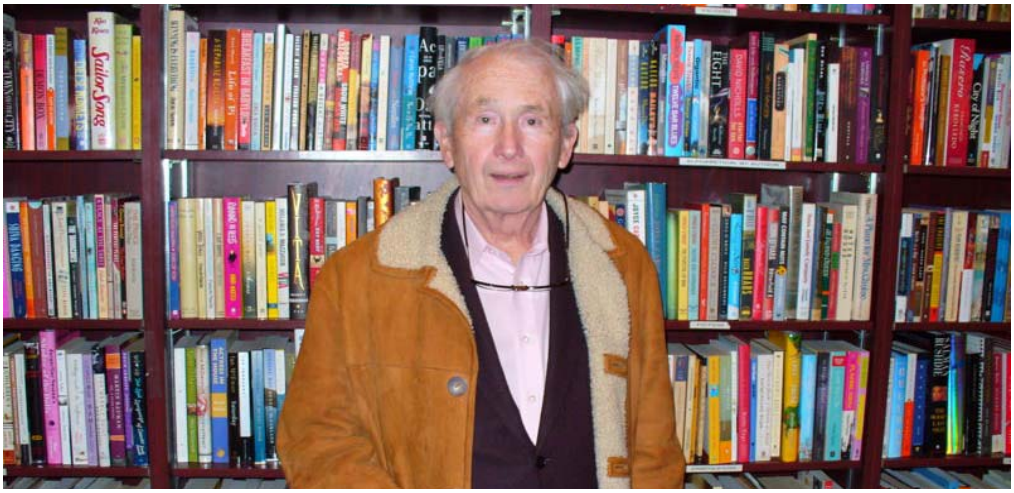
(Continued on page 35)

(Continued from page 34)

thinking - even on the first day of class — could make or break an entire year.

What did he find? One hundred and sixty names to remember, papers to mark and personalities to discover. There were out-of-the-classroom dealings with parents and principals. There were forms to fill out as well as school examinations to grade and curriculum guidelines to follow. And there were the students themselves, many of whom never really left McCourt's thoughts even when the school day was over.

McCourt discovered that he had to first earn respect from his students before even attempting to educate them. Over the years he established a unique teaching style that didn't really seem like the teaching method he was expected to practice at all. But it worked. Slowly, he started to connect with students who had previously seen him in the traditional one-dimensional way. How did he manage to connect? By telling them personal stories from his own life. His students learned that their teacher at the front of the classroom had, like themselves, come from very humble beginnings, perhaps even more impoverished than their own. Some of his students begin to see that perhaps they, too, could become something more than they had expected and began to envisage brighter futures for themselves.



Frank McCourt photo by David Shankbone

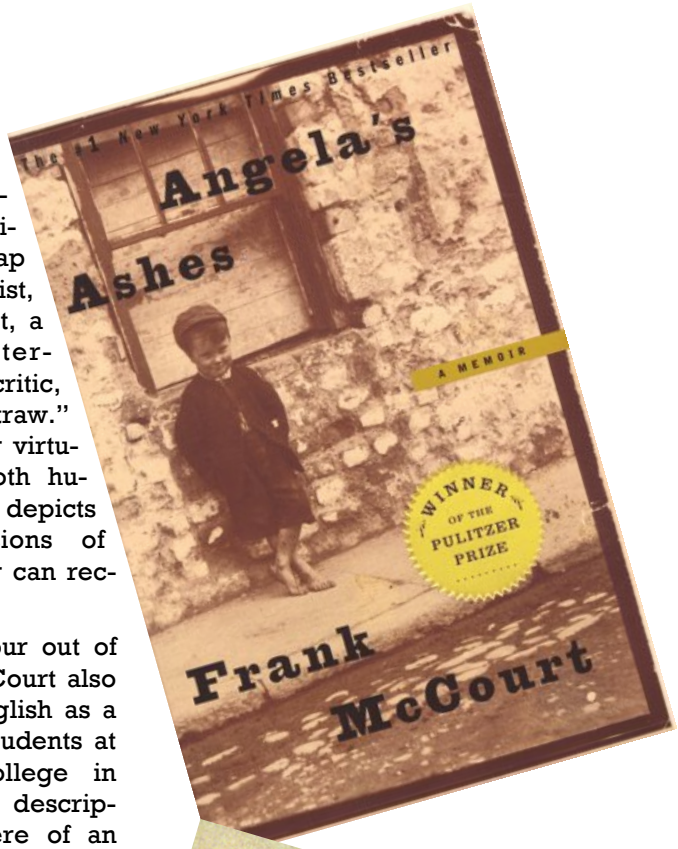
"...McCourt found teaching invigorating, rewarding, satisfying and fulfilling while simultaneously frustrating, exhausting, demanding and humbling."

All in all, McCourt found teaching invigorating, rewarding, satisfying and fulfilling while simultaneously frustrating, exhausting, demanding and humbling. Readers of *Teacher Man* will note McCourt's frequent use of the technique of stringing many words together to describe the contradictions of teaching. In one example he describes himself as "a drill sergeant, a rabbi, a shoulder to cry on, a disciplinarian, a singer, a low-level scholar, a clerk, a referee, a clown, a counselor,

(Continued on page 36)

(Continued from page 35)

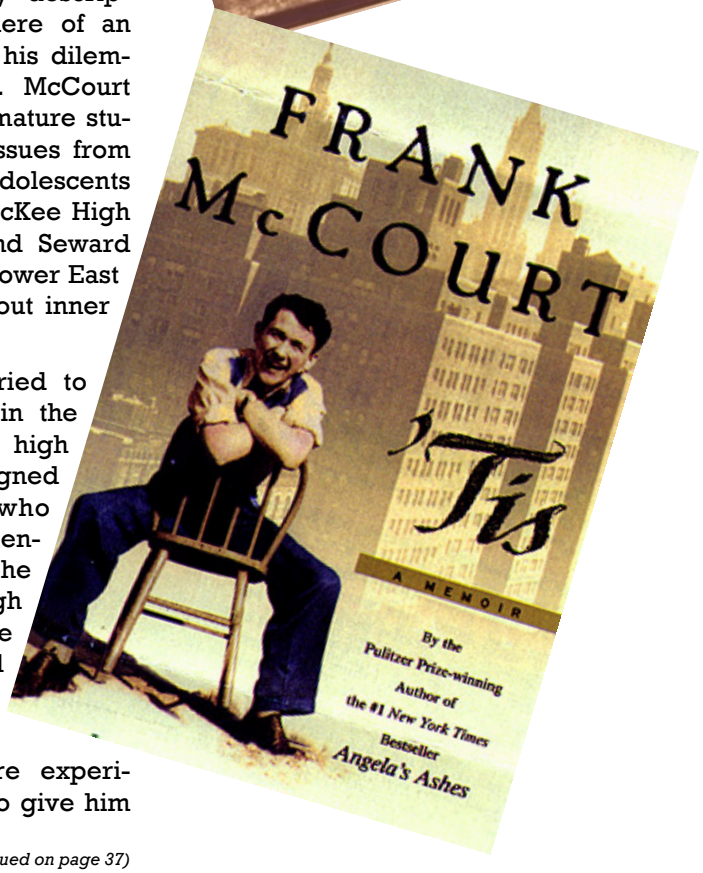
a dress-code enforcer, a conductor, an apologist, a philosopher, a collaborator, a tap dancer, a politician, a therapist, a fool, a traffic cop, a priest, a mother-father-brother-sister-uncle-aunt, a bookkeeper, a critic, a psychologist, the last straw." Such a list leaves the reader virtually breathless, creating both humour and irony, but it also depicts the many-faceted dimensions of teaching that every educator can recognize and appreciate.



In a short-lived detour out of the high school system, McCourt also spent one year teaching English as a Second Language to adult students at New York Community College in Brooklyn. Again, his lively descriptions capture the atmosphere of an adult ESL class, as well as his dilemmas as an ESL instructor. McCourt struggles with these more mature students who have different issues from the hormonally-charged adolescents he had grown used to at McKee High School on Staten Island and Seward Park High in the middle of Lower East Side of Manhattan. Talk about inner city.

"All these learners want to do is to survive..."

At first, McCourt tried to teach his adult ESL class in the same way he taught his high school classes. He assigned homework to adults who worked day and night and encouraged them to go to the library to research. Although respectful and polite, the adults are frustrated and confused by his teaching style.



An older and more experienced colleague decides to give him

(Continued on page 37)

(Continued from page 36)

a reality check. He advises McCourt that he is expecting too much from the class. All these learners want to do is to survive in their new and often frightening world and that may mean simply being able to read the daily newspaper or to function at work.

As an adult ESL instructor, I too have often felt that I missed the mark in the same way.

I related to McCourt's sinking realization that his demands were unrealistic. After one year of this dispiriting episode, McCourt missed his former high school classroom too greatly and, against even his wife's wishes, returned to it for the rest of his career.

Teacher Man is a testament to the highs and lows, joys and frustrations, successes and failures of every dedicated educator.

McCourt's stories paint a realistic picture of what teachers really are: caring, hard-working but fallible people, often full of anxiety and doubt but who nevertheless unswervingly try to reach their students.

It is a 'must read' for every instructor, not only as a testimonial to the profession but as an inspiration to its members as well. ◊

Jeannie Haller is a recent graduate of the Masters Program of Applied Linguistics, York University. She has taught many different levels of ESL and has spent the last seven years instructing Advanced ESL as well as an after hours pronunciation course with the York Catholic District School Board in Markham, Ontario.

flavour of the novel

Every class has its chemistry. There are some classes you enjoy and look forward to. They know you like them and they like you in return. Sometimes they'll tell you that was a pretty good lesson and you're on top of the world. That somehow gives you energy and makes you want to sing on the way home.

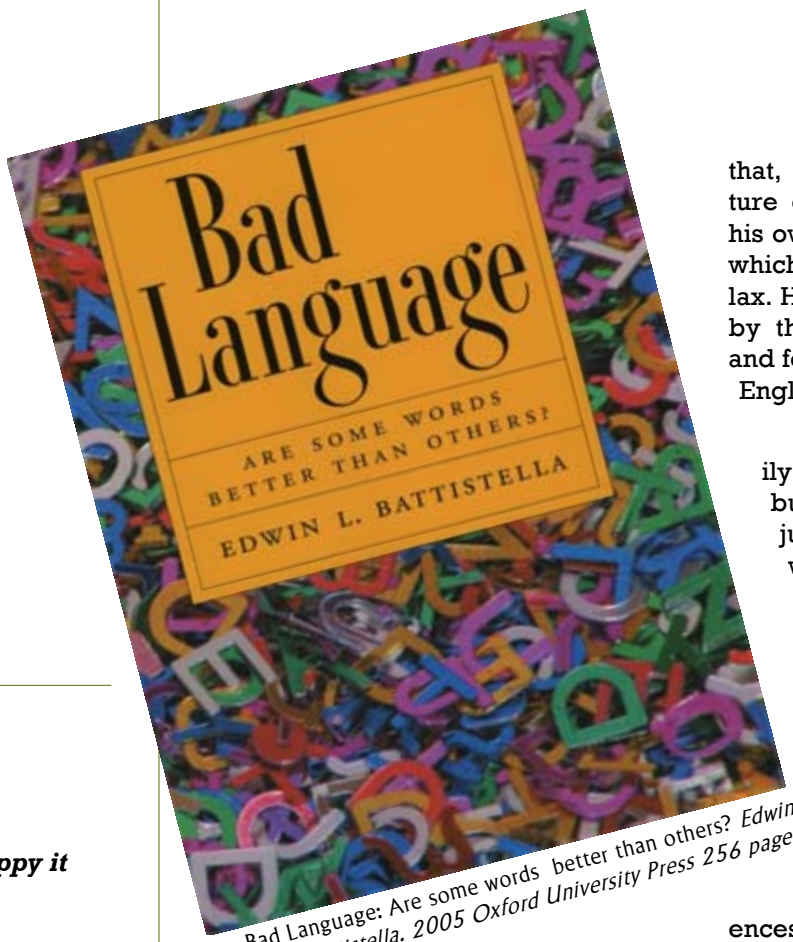
There are some classes you wish would take the ferry to Manhattan and never return. There's something hostile about the way they enter and leave the room that tells you what they think of you. It could be your imagination and you try to figure out what will bring them over to your side. You try lessons that worked with other classes but even that doesn't help and it's because of that chemistry."

"I related to McCourt's sinking realization that his demands were unrealistic..."

BOOK REVIEW:

Bad Language by Edwin Batistella

Review by Marg Heidebrecht



Bad Language: Are some words better than others? Edwin Battistella. 2005 Oxford University Press 256 pages

"Fast and snappy it isn't."

Perhaps it's an occupational hazard. As an ESL instructor, I notice errors in printed and spoken English. I make my living teaching newcomers to sound Canadian but always with a certain level of discomfort.

Who decides what's right? What makes language good or bad? I admit I was looking for some fast answers and snappy retorts when I picked up Edwin L. Battistella's *Bad Language: Are Some Words Better than Others?* Fast and snappy it isn't. Thoughtful, thought provoking and thorough it is.

Battistella admits from the start that, though fully aware of the structure of English, he makes choices in his own oral and written English about which rules to follow and which to relax. He asserts, "language is governed by the situation in which it occurs", and for most of us 'good' English is the English used by our peers.

Bad Language deals primarily with native speakers of English, but the principles upon which we judge what is good language and what is not apply equally to ESL. The author organizes his work into chapters on Bad Writing, Bad Grammar, Bad Words, Bad Citizens and Bad Accents.

Battistella is an academic, Dean of Arts and Letters and Professor of English at South Oregon University, which explains the 55 pages of footnotes and references and a slightly dense writing style. While he uses some current (and humorous) examples to illustrate the range of non-standard language usage around us (a certain Taco Bell commercial, for example) most of the book places today's American English in a broader and deeper historical context.

He wants us to know, above all, that error-free language is not necessarily good language. Good language convinces and communicates, he asserts. Error-free language may be simply that – correct in every aspect - but with no power to connect speaker to listener, writer to reader. Since language is interpersonal, he argues, we need to care not only about how people respond to *what* is said, but also to the *person* who is saying it.

(Continued on page 39)

Edwin "Ed" Batistella, photo: Orville Hector, Daily Tidings.com

(Continued from page 38)

Good writing, in turn, is also more than just free of errors; it fits a specific context and purpose. Battistella challenges those who value academic writing above all other kinds to consider that most people need writing for job applications, blogs, email and diaries. After college, he states, they don't need the rules and style of academic writing.

In his chapter "Bad Grammar", he looks at prescriptive vs. descriptive grammar. The former is the rules and structure. The latter deals with language as it is actually used in society. He points out that the people who are most interested in traditional grammar, and you can count ESL teachers among that group, are the ones who actually need it the least, since most of us speak and write reasonably well, and when we don't we are invariably doing so for style and effect.

Bad words are not limited to the four-letter variety, says Battistella, but include racist, sexist and politically incorrect language. He begins this chapter with a quote from Walter Mosley's 1998 novel, *Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned*, where one character cautions another to save profanity for times when he really wants to make a statement. The lesson is clear: if profanity is overused, it loses its strength - *reflective* use is much more potent than *reflexive* use.

This explains the trouble teens can get into when talking with the school principal or visiting their grandparents — their language may be reflexive, with no filter for the audience. Battistella also observes that there's a certain group cohesiveness that comes from sharing common slang, for example. Social groups use the same sets of phrases, idioms and curses; any newcomer to the group needs to adopt that language to fit in. The opposite, however, is true too. (Think of a certain middle-aged teacher — *moi!* — saying "Chillax!" to her peers and you get the idea.)

(Continued on page 40)

"Bad words are not limited to the four-letter variety..."

Lucy got some 'splainin' to do when she contrives to have her son not speak English with his Dad's heavy Cuban accent.

(I Love Lucy, *CBS1952)*

"…there's an important overarching theme: communication is what matters."

(Continued from page 39)

The chapter in which references to ESL and Canada appear bears the title, "Bad Citizens". Battistella first looks at both the subtle and blatant expectations of citizenship in his own country. He details the legal ups and downs of mandating that all American citizens speak English. Perhaps as a cautionary object lesson for his American readers, he draws attention to the FLQ crisis in Canada in 1969-70. The picture he paints of the Canadian linguistic scene is in stark contrast to the documentaries of filmmaker Michael Moore, who invariably portrays Canadians as placid, sensible, and quintessentially tolerant. In *Bad Language*, Battistella tellingly compares Canada's period of linguistic violence with the polyglot peace of the multilingual countries in the European Community.

The chapter "Bad Accents" includes a scene from a 1952 episode of *I Love Lucy*, the most popular TV comedy of its time. In one episode, Lucy doesn't want her son, Little Ricky, to speak English the way her Cuban husband Ricky Ricardo does. Not to put to fine a point on it, she doesn't want her child to speak with a heavy Spanish accent. Her schemes and antics fill the half-hour episode, but the point is well-taken, and Battistella underlines it. He bluntly states that very negative assumptions are often made about a person's character, work ethic and intelligence simply because of their accent. Helpfully, in this chapter he explores in some detail the pronunciation of non-native speakers, re-

(Continued on page 41)

(Continued from page 40)

gional accents and Ebonics, African American Vernacular English.

As someone who likes words – reading them, writing them, playing with them – I am grateful that *Bad Language* offers me – and others like me - the chance to step back and look at English in a larger historic context. More a textbook than a how-to, Battistella's book takes my current teacher's challenge of how (and how much) to correct second language learners and sets my understanding of and approach to linguistic diversity in a broader social context. I realize that I make choices all the time about which rules to keep and which to toss. (I also realize that as you read this review some of you might not have tossed the same writing rules as I did and could at this very moment be attacking my prose with a red pen…Ah well!)

For ESL professionals, there's an important overarching theme: communication is what matters. Function over form. Most of us are already convinced, but we still have educational outcomes to meet, not only for the sake of curriculum expectations but also for the sake of our students, who are counting on us to support them in learning the language they need to live and work here - an ongoing challenge for both them and us.

Good language, bad language. In this provocative book, Edwin Battistella makes us think about what those terms imply. And reflective practice is always good. ◊

Marg Heidebrecht's most memorable experience with bad language was neither grammatical error nor the four-letter variety. It was the mouth washing that resulted when she used harsh and cutting words to belittle a sibling. After 16 years in the ESL field, she has built a professional life that includes pieces of LINC instruction, teacher training and curriculum development, but leaves time for cycling, reading and travel. She's now comfortable with contractions in writing but still edits email and MSN messages to make sure the punctuation is correct. Everyone under 30, roll your eyes now!

"…communication is what matters."

BOOK REVIEW:

How to Make People Like You in 90 Seconds or Less by Nicholas Boothman

Review by Christine Kuch-Hailstone

Most voracious readers will eye the tiny book, *How to Make People Like You in 90 Seconds or Less,* laugh, and think they can zip through it in an hour. Child's play, right?

I don't think so. I strongly suggest you take your time when you read this book.

There is so much information jam-packed into Nicholas Boothman's *gem* that it should be read in a minimum of two sessions. Parts One and Two: *First Contact* and *The 90-Second Land of Rapport* can be easily managed in one sitting. But Part Three, *The Secrets of Communication*, should be read on its own. This way you'll retain everything the author intended to convey and you won't have missed any of his most vital points.

"There is so much information jam-packed into Nicholas Boothman's gem that it should be read in a minimum of two sessions."

The essence of this book is that although modern society has increasingly conditioned people to set up personal boundaries and to be afraid of one another, we all seek acceptance.

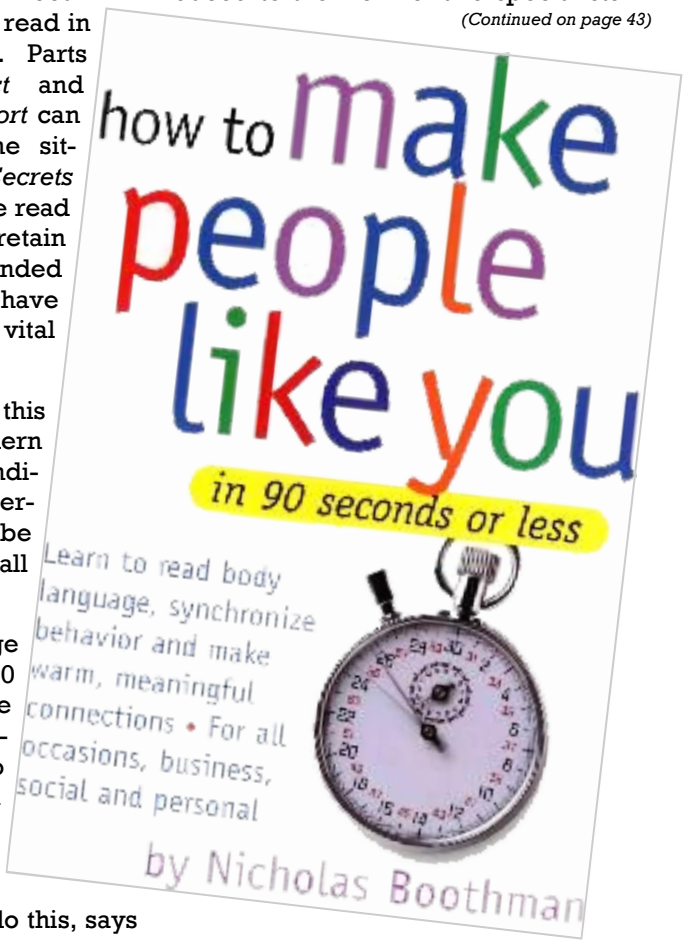
But since the average person's attention span is 30 seconds, and people judge one another in approximately 90 seconds, it is up to each one of us to try and make a favorable impression on others — to connect — in the shortest possible time. And we can learn to do this, says Boothman.

In fact, his simple message is that we ourselves are the gatekeepers of how others perceive us. The purpose of his book is to learn some of the skills of communication we may need.

Written by a former fashion and advertising photographer whose clients included AT&T, Coca-Cola, Bell, Vogue, GM and Revlon, Nicholas Boothman notes that in his former profession as a commercial photographer he had to constantly strive to establish an instant rapport with his subjects.

Then, by chance, he was introduced to the work of two specialists in

(Continued on page 43)



How to Make People Like You in 90 Seconds or Less *by Nicholas Boothman Workman Publishing 2000 hardcover 171 pages*

(Continued from page 42)

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), Drs. Richard Bandler and John Grinder. Their research had led them to conclude that if someone's favorite *sense* was found, it would be easy to "unlock that person's heart and mind."

Boothman realized that he had unconsciously been employing NLP strategies for years as a photographer. So he made a career-altering decision and relinquished his chosen profession to focus on NLP. It wasn't long before it became his mission to share the information from his studies, especially on the role the brain plays in how we connect with people. He has since become a respected public speaker, instructor and author.

Initially, *How to Make People Like You in 90 Seconds or Less* deals with connecting and synchronizing with others, via body language, handshakes, voice tone, eye contact, gestures and facial expressions.

"The sooner you know what you want and which is the most useful attitude to help you get it, the sooner your body language and your voice and your words will change to help you get it," says Boothman. One of his main recommendations is that we need to STOP TALKING and START LISTENING. He maintains that conversations should be like games of tennis; words being volleyed back-and-forth, to evoke mutual interest.

Boothman betrays a certain skepticism about people who get too wrapped up in their own life and experiences. They talk endlessly without regard for others, either out of nervousness or ego. We usually shy away from these people because they have "really useless attitudes", are consumed with negative traits, and their manner often includes anger, impatience, sarcasm, conceit, boredom and cynicism. Communication in this mode, says Boothman, is always doomed to fail.

What most people subconsciously want is to align themselves with those who have "useful attitudes." "People who know what they want tend to get it, because they are focused and positive, and this is reflected outward and inward in their attitude." They are warm, enthusiastic, confident, curious, and resourceful

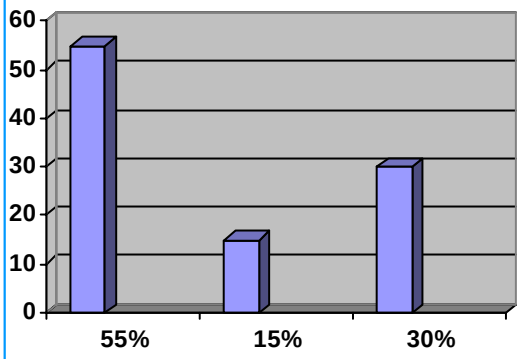
He cites the ground-breaking 1967 study by Dr. Albert Mehrabian, now professor emeritus of psychology at UCLA, on communication. In his famous paper, *Decoding of Inconsistent Communication,* the renowned psychologist confirmed that:

- 55 per cent of what we respond to takes place visually.
- 38 per cent of what we respond to is the sound of communications.
- Only 7 percent of what we respond to involves the actual words we use.

(Continued on page 44)

"...conversations should be like games of tennis; words being volleyed back-and-forth..."

People view the world in one of three basic ways:



Visually: 55 per cent of the population

Auditorially: 15 per cent of the population

Kinesthetically: 30 per cent of the population

"Sensing the type of person we are dealing with is thus another secret to effective communication..."

(Continued from page 43)

The three "Vs" of communication — visual, vocal and verbal — mean that over half of all communication is non-verbal. Therefore, body language and gestures are the true indicators of instinctive audience reactions. If you want others to accept that you are sincere, your actions, gestures and words must reflect sincerity. The elements must be coherent, in agreement.

Boothman's book is filled with useful advice on how to communicate. Conversations, he points out, can easily gain momentum when questions are answered with other questions. Learn what matters to the person with whom you are speaking. Synchronize yourself accordingly. Mirror the person's voice tone, volume, speed and pitch.

Good opening questions for conversations include: WHO? WHEN? WHAT? WHY? WHERE? and HOW? Avoid questioning forms of the verbs "to be", "to have" and "to do," because they evoke one-word responses. In this book Boothman helpfully suggests questions that can be asked at 10 different venues; these can easily be used in other scenarios, too.

Once you synchronize with people, and use their vocabulary (Boothman also gives us examples of useful vocabulary), the ability to develop rapport will be immediate. But this can be taken even one step further by learning about sensory preferences, because people view the world in one of three ways:

1. VISUALLY, motivated by what is seen (55 per cent of the population);
2. AUDITORIALLY, motivated by what is heard (15 per cent of us); and
3. KINESTHETICALLY, motivated by what is sensed (30 per cent of us).

What are the characteristic traits of how these three different types of people communicate?

Visual individuals speak quickly, wave their hands, look up with their eyes, dress well and say things such as, "I'd like to see proof of that."

Auditory people tend to talk at a medium speed, have melodic and expressive voices, gesture and move their eyes from side to side. They can be heard saying, "I hear that."

Kinesthetics often speak slowly, with great detail. They talk about their feelings, look down when

(Continued on page 45)

(Continued from page 44)

speaking, and oddly enough, wear textured clothing.

Sensing the *type* of person we are dealing with is thus another secret to effective communication.

People from all walks of life will find *How to Make People Like You in 90 Seconds or Less* an effective tool. While reading it I thought of my 14- and 17-year-old nephews and how Boothman's principles of communication would help them. What amazing knowledge to learn at an early age!

Similarly, it seems to me that ESL students would benefit from the information in the book too, because even though they may not yet be fluent in English, learning how to connect with people — at least in the western cultural milieu — carry on conversations, and 'read' others would assist them greatly. Much the same might also be said for ESL teachers, whose job after all is communicating with groups of people every day.

Although Boothman's writing style is easy to comprehend, sometimes the flow of the text is interrupted by his insertion of exercises and highlighted examples. Perhaps putting the exercises at the conclusion of each chapter, and combining his numerous examples (found in shaded segments) within the text, would be less disruptive for the reader. And, concluding with his selected *parable* may not be the strongest finish. Yet, these are only tiny faults that do not diminish the overall importance of Boothman's insights.

Most people, no matter what their occupation, have some degree of difficulty when forming relationships, addressing public forums, asking for a raise, dealing with their boss or other authority figures, or even just interacting with in-laws. This book will help with all of these communicative chal-

(Continued on page 46)

contents of the book

PART ONE:

FIRST CONTACT

1. People Power

2. First Impressions

PART TWO:

THE 90-SECOND LAND OF RAPPORT

3. "There's Something About This Person I really Like!"

4. Attitude is Everything

5. Actions *Do* Speak Louder than Words

6. People Like People like Themselves

PART THREE:

THE SECRETS OF COMMUNICATION

7. It's Not All Talk – It's Listening, Too

8. Making Sense of Our Senses

9. Spotting Sensory Preferences

10. Putting it All Together

The book's Table of Contents

(Continued from page 45)

lenges and many more.

I cannot say if people will be more apt to "like" you in 90 seconds once you've finished reading this book and started employing its techniques. My bet, however, is that you'll assimilate with people far more easily.

We will leave it up to the individuals you are interacting with to determine the success of the skills and techniques Nicholas Boothman espouses. ◊

Having worked in the public relations profession for 28 years, Christine Kuch-Hailstone has been accredited as an Associate in Public Relations and heads her own company, KUCH COMMUNICATIONS. She has taken ESL courses and volunteered her time teaching Vietnamese and Korean students.

"…sometimes the flow of the text is interrupted by his insertion of exercises and highlighted examples."

Highlights: 35th Annual TESL Ontario Conference

Plenary Speakers

- **Nina Spada** – OISE/Univ. of Toronto. Thursday, November 22 11:00AM King II Ballroom
- **Jayme Adelson-Goldstein** – co-author *The Oxford Picture Dictionary.* Friday, November 23 11:00AM King II Ballroom
- **Dave Sperling** – of Dave's Internet ESL Café. Saturday, November 24 12:30 Regency Ballroom – Mezzanine Floor

8th Annual Research Symposia:

Thurs., Nov. 22 1:30–4:30

"Vocabulary Development and Retention"

- **Carol A. Fraser**, Glendon College, York University:
- **Parto Pajoohesh**, Univ. of Alberta

Fri., Nov. 23 8:30–10:30 & 1:30–4:30

"Native English-speaking teachers/Non-native English-speaking teachers"

- **Luciana C. de Oliveira**, Purdue University
- **Lucie Moussu**, Ryerson University
- **Farahnaz Faez**, Univ.of Western Ontario

"Content-based Language Teaching"

- **Roy Lyster**, McGill University
- **Alysse Weinberg, Sandra Burger, Amelia Hope**, Univ. of Ottawa
- **Joanna L. White** – Concordia University

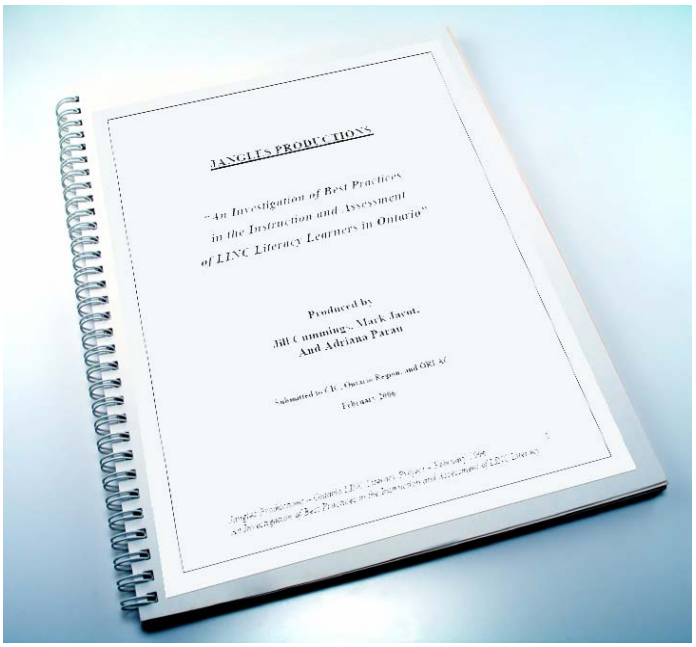
Sat., Nov. 24 9:00–12:00

"Literacy in ESL Populations"

- **Sarah Bukhari**, Ontario Literacy Coalition
- **Jose A. Carmona**, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
- **Diane Hardy**, Bow Valley College, Calgary
- **Luigi Iannacci**, Trent University

The Jangles Report on LINC Literacy

A Report on Meeting the Needs of Literacy Learners in Ontario



One of the most striking developments in ESL over the last five years in Canada has been the growing numbers of newcomers arriving here with literacy needs, as a result of changes in immigration policy, notably the *Immigrant Refugee Protection Act* of 2002.

This situation has placed greater demands on those delivering LINC programs.

In 2005, a decision was made to launch an investigation of literacy in order to ascertain best practices and make recommendations for literacy education from teachers, coordinators and assessors who deliver LINC programs in Ontario.

As a result, all those responsible for program delivery across the province could share and benefit from the pooling of this information and in turn, provide guidance to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and the Ontario Region LINC Advisory Committee on how to improve the overall LINC program to better meet the needs of literacy learners.

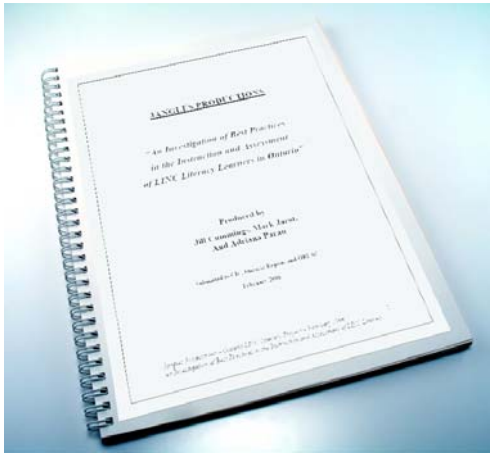
The research which fed into the production of what has come to be called the Jangles Report included investigating and documenting existing classroom provisions for literacy level learners, interviews and focus groups with teachers, assessors, coordinators and learners, and a survey of selected participating LINC sites in Guelph, Hamilton, London, Kitchener, Toronto and Ottawa.

The report highlighted 12 principal recommendations on LINC literacy instruction:

1. Provide all LINC programs a cLear policy statement from CIC that literacy students require specialized classes and services for them to realize their settlement potential.
2. Provide designated literacy classes, since most literacy students at present are placed in multi-level classes.
3. Implement the four phases of literacy development as outlined in the *Canadian Language Bench-*

(Continued on page 48)

"The report highlighted 12 principal recommendations on LINC literacy instruction."



(Continued from page 47)

marks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners.

4. Ensure small literacy class size (maximum of 10).
5. Supply adult literacy materials and computer resources.
6. Provide professional development specific to literacy instruction and assessment.
7. Institute greater program flexibility to respond to the changing literacy demographics.
8. Increase child-minding support.
9. Provide adequate transportation assistance.
10. Establish Toronto literacy centres.
11. Update the *LINC Literacy Curriculum Guidelines.*
12. Involve best practice teachers, coordinators and assessors in resource development, facilitation of PD and long term research to track literacy students' progress.

"The report highlighted 12 principal recommendations..."

In addition to the recommendations on instruction, the report made recommendations concerning assessment:

- Provide refresher workshops on how to use the existing CLBLA more effectively (Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Assessment).
- Provide an equivalency reference chart that will bridge between the Literacy Benchmarks as describe in the CLBLA and the Literacy Phases described in CLB – ESL for Literacy Learners; as well, to reflect that equivalency reference chart in the assessment tools, the ARS and all the accompanying documentation.
- Provide ongoing training and professional development for assessors and assessment coordinators.
- Foster good working relationships between LINC Assessment Centres and ESL programs providers.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada has responded to the recommendations in the report and has indicated that it agrees with most of the report's recommendations. It has already begun to address the recommendations by amending contribution agreements with some Service Providing Organizations.

For more information, go to: atwork.settlement.org and type "Jangles Report on LINC Literacy" in the search box. ◊

Calling All Reviewers

Contact is looking for people to read and review books and learning materials related to ESL. These include classroom textbooks, academic works, multi-media materials and books of general interest with some connection to ESL.

If you are such a person, consider being a reviewer for *Contact*. For our next issue in the winter of 2008, we are looking for reviewers for these titles:

• **Tools and Tips for Using ELT Materials – A Guide for Teachers** by Ruth Epstein and Mary Ormiston. University of Michigan Press 2007 Michigan Teacher Resource softcover 204 pages

• **Language Experience in Second Language Speech Learning – in honor of James Emil Flege**. Ed. by Ocke-Schwen Bohn and Murray J. Munro. Language Learning & Language Teaching 17. Benjamins. Hardbound 406 pages

• **How Koreans Talk: A Collection of Expressions** by Sang Hun Choe and Christopher Torchia. Eunhangnamu 2002 softcover 305 pages

• **Accent on Canadian English – a Pronunciation Program for Speakers of English as a Second Language** by Lisa Bjerke and Maria Iannelli-Guajardo. ACE 2006, softcover 206 pages with 4 audio CDs.

Tips for Reviewers:

Summarize the content, identify the audience/s, note organizational elements such as glossaries, indexes and citations of other works, if applicable. Describe illustrative material, comment on the author/s' writing style, the layout and design, and evaluate the usefulness to other ESL professionals. Extract a paragraph or two that you think would give our readers 'the flavor of the text'. Be as positive as you can. Enjoy the experience.

Your review may be gently edited for length and other normal copy editing procedures apply.

Submission Deadline for February 2008 issue – December 31, 2007

The Facts:

Word length: 1000 words maximum

Submit by: e-mail, CD, or hard copy.

Format: straightforward word processing. Do not design or lay out the review.

Illustrations or photos: If you include these, do so as separate attachments.

How to Get the Books and Materials:

• Contact TESL Ontario at: www.teslontario.org or administration@teslontario.org

• Phone: 416.593.4243 Ext. 3 or 1.800.327.4827 Ext. 3 (for Ontario callers only)

All about You

Provide your name, your professional affiliation/experience, e-mail address and telephone number/s where you can normally be reached.

"Your review may be gently edited for length and other normal copy editing procedures apply."

IN THE CLASSROOM:

Working with Japanese Learners

by Shweta Gupta

"...Japanese provides ESL teachers with a unique set of instructional challenges."

One of the basic reasons Japanese learners find English difficult, at least in the initial stages, is that a great many linguistic features are so different in the two languages.

For example, sentence elements in the two languages have a very different order. In addition, certain sounds exist in English that are not present in Japanese.

Moreover, in Japanese culture tentativeness is customary rather than assertiveness, especially in classroom situations.

As a result, this mix of cultural traits, combined with grammatical, lexical and phonetic differences between English and Japanese provides ESL teachers with a unique set of instructional challenges.

Those of us who have beginner level Japanese students in our classes can attest to the difficulties that many of these learners face.

In this article we will examine just a few of the common problems and offer a number of practical classroom solutions.

As with all learning activities, clear models of how to complete the activity are crucial for success. Supported practice also builds confidence in the learner.

(Continued on page 51)

(Continued from page 50)

1. No distinct /r/ and /l/ sounds in Japanese

Japanese has only one liquid sound, somewhere between the sounds /l/ and /r/ in English. Both /l/ and /r/ are pronounced by most Japanese like a short, flapped /d/. For this reason many Japanese learners of English have difficulty pronouncing words such as *fire* and *file*. It's not uncommon for such words to be written and pronounced something like this: *faidu*.

The addition of the vowel sound /u/ at the end is customary in spoken Japanese, in which speakers 'round off' syllables at the end. ESL teachers should expect this addition of an ending vowel syllable in many English words, especially in the early stages of learning.

The syllable structure of Japanese is relatively simple, generally consisting of a vowel and a consonant or a vowel alone. But there are no consonant clusters in initial or final position. So Japanese learners often find the complicated combinations of sounds in English difficult to reproduce.

Following the same principle outlined above (the substitution of /l/ for /r/ and vice-versa), the pronunciation of *grammar* often appears as *glamour*. Other examples abound. Teachers need to seize opportunities of such mispronunciations to demonstrate to their Japanese learners the importance of accurate English pronunciation to the meaning they want to convey.

Some teachers find it helpful to employ an old but tried and true technique, using minimal contrast pairs containing /l/ and /r/ for pronunciation practice. In the following example, student A reads out a given set of /l/ and /r/ words to student B. A then repeats only one of the two words. Student B identifies which word was repeated and then circles or underlines or highlights it with a coloured marker.

glass	grass	lain	rain
fly	fry	rake	lake
Light	right	rot	lot

To provide controlled practice with larger language structures for beginner and lower level students, instructors can prepare short dialogues on file cards, such as these:

Questions	Answers
1. a. Where is the grass?	In the window
2. b. Where is the glass?	In the yard

Prepare similar dialogue cards for other minimal contrast word pairs such as: *light/right, lake/rake/, fly/fry, play/pray, lamb/ram, long/wrong*. Picture clues on the Questions card will also provide a visual cue to help many beginner level students.

2. Absence of /th/ sound

Since both voiced and unvoiced /th/ are not found in Japanese, pronunciation of these sounds presents a problem for many learners.

Questions	Answers
1. a. What is a bath for?	To get clean
b. What is a bat for?	To play ball
2. a. How do you spell "both"?	B-O-T-H
b. How do you spell "boat"?	B-O-A-T

(Continued on page 52)

"To draw attention to the use of articles, present a short paragraph, and while reading it aloud highlight the articles."

(Continued from page 51)

Question and Answer cards similar to those above will help provide practice.

3. Absence of articles

Many Japanese speakers acquire a high level of fluency in English but never master the use of articles. There are no words in Japanese equivalent to the English articles "a", "an", and "the". If, for example, you want to refer to a book in Japanese, you don't say "a book" or "the book". You just say *hon* (book), which means both "a book" and "the book".

To draw attention to the use of articles, present a short paragraph, and while reading it aloud highlight the articles. This identifies the target words and also demonstrates their frequency in English. Here's an example:

> Yesterday I went to **the** Wal-Mart store and I bought **a** storybook for my daughter. **The** story was about **an** elephant. **The** title of **the** book was "One Day in **the** Life of **a** Baby Elephant". There were many pictures in **the** book. I said, "This will be **an** interesting book for Keiko." I gave **the** book to her and she took it to school. She showed **the** book to **the** teacher. **The** teacher said, "That's **a** wonderful book, Keiko."

Distribute copies of another paragraph and have a student read it aloud. The rest of the group should highlight the articles as the passage is read.

Provide explanations for the use of articles for count nouns and give examples for the use of "an" – before vowel sounds.

For further practice, provide students with lists of nouns and phrases. Have them arrange the target items in lists under **a**, **and**, and **the.** Take the list words from material that is being read in the class so students make associations with contextualized language.

a	*an*	*the*
	an apple	
a cellphone		
		the car

Sample word list: *television, ipod, cellphone, car, camera, envelope, immigrant.*

As students begin to produce more written texts of their own, use their stories and sentences as the practice material.

4. Question indicators

In Japanese, questions are indicated by the particle *–ka* at the end of an interrogative, but there is no question mark to show interrogation as we have in English. Japanese also does not use auxiliary verbs such as *do* to form questions.

Questions therefore need to be modelled in English, preferably using sentences taken from reading material in the classroom. The use of rising intonation for some kinds of questions will be familiar to Japanese speakers and that is a help.

(Continued on page 53)

"As the students produce more written texts, use their sentences and paragraphs for punctuation practice."

(Continued from page 52)

For practice with English punctuation, have students insert question marks in sentence strips.

What's your name
Where do you live
Do you have any children
Can you tell me your address
Do you know your postal code

For extended practice, have students insert punctuation marks in short paragraphs copied from classroom reading material. Demonstrate the task completion first and encourage the students to work in pairs or triads. As the students produce more written texts, use their sentences and paragraphs for punctuation practice.

5. Absence of a future tense

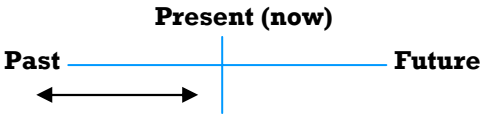
In Japanese, the present tense is used along with " time words" to indicate future actions or states. Therefore, students have not learned special verb forms equivalent to the English "I will go tomorrow". A Japanese student would simply say:

ashita ikimasu
tomorrow go
"[I will] go tomorrow."

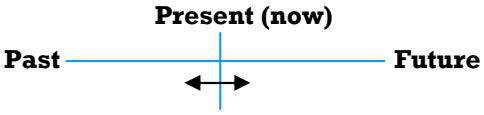
Usually in English they do not insert time markers with auxiliary verbs to indicate future actions, following the Japanese model.

A visual representation such as the one below is often easier for Japanese students to understand than a verbal explanation.

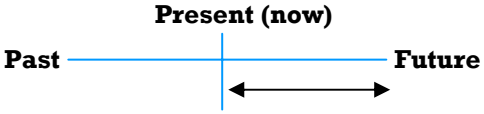
Sentence A: **She drove a car**. (in the past, not anymore)



Sentence B: **She drives a car**. (in the present, now)



Sentence C: **She will drive a car**. (in the future)



Japanese learners will customarily say or write something like this: *I see my teacher tomorrow*, using the present tense for the future.

For further practice, give students sentences that are in the past and have them change the tense using 'will' to show events that have not happened yet but will happen tomorrow. For example:

Teacher: I saw you yesterday.

Student: I will see you tomorrow.

(Continued on page 54)

"In Japanese…there is no question mark to show interrogation as we have in English."

(Continued from page 53)

6. Placement of verbs in a sentence

Verbs in Japanese customarily come at the end of a sentence or a clause. So do particles that show interrogation, affirmation and tentativeness.

Examples:

Watashi wa Nihon-jin desu.

I Japanese am.

Watashi wa Kyootoo ni ikimasu.

I Kyoto go.

In addition, Japanese verbs are self-contained. Almost all Japanese verbs can stand on their own as a complete sentence. They don't require a subject or an object.

Therefore, in English many Japanese learners leave out pronoun subjects and objects. Furthermore, Japanese verbs do not change for person and number, so learners often forget to add *–s* to third person singular verbs.

Japanese learners often have to be shown that the verb in an English sentence or clause often comes towards the beginning of the sentence, rather than at the end. This feature of English can be explained to Japanese learners as a 'positive' aspect, because it cues the learner to the direction that the sentence's meaning will take.

For practice in ordering the sentence elements, display single sentences for all to read. Read the sentences aloud to the group. Then give pairs of students the same sentences on strips of paper, but with the elements cut up and scrambled. The task is to reorder the scrambled elements into customary English word order. Students should then write the sentences.

- Keiko / met / He / in the mall
- return /the library /at 4 'o' clock/ will/ I/ from
- cell phone / is not / today / working / my
- went / my son / on / last night / the internet

"Japanese learners often have to be shown that the verb in an English sentence or clause often comes towards the beginning of the sentence..."

Conclusion

Activities such as those presented above have proved useful with beginner and lower level Japanese-speaking students.

However, the starting point for effective instruction is first to deepen one's own knowledge of the students' first language, learning about its similarities to and differences from English. In other words, trying to see English afresh, from the perspective of the learner. ◊

Shweta Gupta is an ESL Instructor with the Peel District School Board. She specializes in teaching reading. Presently, she is teaching a reading and writing class to multi-level beginner students at Adult Education Centre, North and Computer Basics at the Adult Education Centre, South. Other than her love for teaching, she enjoys white water rafting, biking, and swimming.

For your interest: *Learner English*

Learner English – *a teacher's guide to interference and other problems. Second edition. Edited by Michael Swan and Bernard Smith. Cambridge University Press*

(Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers). Series editor: Penny Ur. 2001

Softcover 362 pages. Has an accompanying cassette and audio CD.

Learner English **is a** 'must-have' book for ESL teachers who want to learn more about the languages represented in their classrooms. This user-friendly resource is also designed to inform teachers about the characteristic difficulties with English experienced by learners from at least twenty different languages.

The book's 22 chapters are organized by language group, so you can easily look up your area of interest. Each chapter covers the phonology (the sound system) of the mother tongue, its orthography (the writing system), grammar, vocabulary, culture, and more.

Learner English also has something no other book contains: precise details about the problems teachers can expect to find among their students, with samples of the errors they make, indicated by asterisks. It even provides word-by-word literal translations of passages of text, so that ESL teachers can see how close or how far apart the native language is from English.

Each chapter is divided into short sub-sections. The "Distribution: section starts off each chapter. It pinpoints areas of the world where the language is either the official language or is widely spoken. The next section (puzzlingly titled "Introduction"), identifies the language family, shows how it is related to other languages, gives a short linguistic history, and provides information on dialects and outside influences on the language.

The section titled "Phonology" contains very useful phoneme charts showing which sounds are present in the native language that are also found in English. These charts also show, perhaps more importantly, which English sounds are not in the language. It's these ones that help to explain common pronunciation errors made by the students from each language. Other topics covered include speech style, rhythm, stress and intonation

The following section on "Orthography" provides a sample of what the writing looks like.

But by far the most detailed section of each chapter is on grammar.

(Continued on page 56)

Learner English

(Continued from page 55)

Sub-topics in this section cover the grammatical map: 'word order', 'questions and negatives', 'auxiliaries', 'time, tense and aspect', 'future time', 'modals', 'active and passive verbs', 'gender and number', 'conditionals', and 'question tags'. If your students from a particular language are experiencing repeated difficulties in any of these grammatical elements, this book will help to explain why.

The section on "Vocabulary" identifies such things as cognates and 'false friends'. It also compares idiomatic expressions with English equivalents and alerts teachers to potential confusions.

Finally, the notes about "Culture" describe students' attitudes and expectations concerning schooling, the role of the teacher, methods and practices, and the value placed on learning and literacy in the culture.

This book is a goldmine.

Learner English is accompanied by both an audio-cassette and an CD with authentic samples of speakers from each of the languages covered. (These are optional 'add-ons' and don't come packaged with the book. Too bad!) In fact the only thing really missing are classroom activities on how to deal with the errors that students make. But most ESL teachers already have plenty of materials for that.

The Second edition of *Learner English* has added some languages to those in the original book, but unfortunately for Ontario teachers this version has dropped Vietnamese. Nonetheless this resource book should be on every teacher's shelf as a professional resource. ◊

"...If your students from a particular language are experiencing repeated difficulties in any of these grammatical elements, this book will help to explain why."

the flavour of the text

Korean

Korean nouns are not preceded by articles, have no grammatical gender, and do not normally have plural forms. Although nouns can be made plural by adding the suffix "*dul*", this may be omitted when the meaning of plurality is obvious. Thus the word *yunpil*, for example, may mean *pen*, *the pen*, *a pen*, *some pens*, or *the pens*. This sense of the 'irrelevance' of the plural ending is so deeply ingrained that Korean learners of English not only omit the plural *–s* in their own speech and writing, but also frequently fail to pronounce it when reading aloud English texts. Terms such as *blue jeans* and *high heels*, which have been incorporated into Korean, are used without the *–s* by Koreans.

Koreans share with many other nationalities difficulty with the English ascription of the concept of uncountability to e.g. *news*, *advice*, *information*, *furniture*, and *luggage*.

TESL ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

MARCH 31, 2007

JULIUS L. RÉDLY
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT
Licensed Public Accountant

TESL ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

INDEX TO THE ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

MARCH 31, 2007

Page 1	Auditor's Report
Page 2	Statement of Financial Position
Page 3	Statement of Operations and Net Assets
Page 4	Schedule of Project Contributions
Page 5	Schedule of Conference Expenses
Page 6	Notes to the Financial Statements

Julius L. Rédly

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

Licensed Public Accountant
79 Truman Road
North York, Ontario; M2L 2L7
Telephone (416) 443-0990 * Fax (416) 447-2410

AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the members of
TESL Association of Ontario

I have audited the statement of financial position of TESL Association of Ontario as at March 31, 2007 and the statement of operations and net assets for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the association's management. My responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements.

I conducted an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that I plan and perform an audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free of material misstatements. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation.

In common with many non-profit organizations, TESL Association of Ontario derives part of its revenue contributions from the general public in the form of project administration fees, membership fees, certification fees, conferences and meetings which are not susceptible to complete audit verification. Accordingly, my examination was limited to the examination of banking transactions for those activities for the year ended March 31, 2007.

In my opinion, except for the effect of the adjustments, if any, had project administration fees, membership fees, certification fees, newsletters, conferences and meetings been susceptible to complete audit verification, these financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Association as at March 31, 2007 and the results of its operations for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles.

TORONTO, CANADA
September 5, 2007

Chartered Accountant

TESL ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

Incorporated without share capital under the Laws of the Province of Ontario as a non-profit organization.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AS AT MARCH 31, 2007

(with comparative figures as at March 31, 2006)

ASSETS

	2007	2006
Current		
Cash on hand and in bank	$ 92,162	$ 66,231
Term deposits-including accrued interest	272,409	293,635
Accounts receivable	48,332	20,161
Prepaid expenses	3,371	9,023
Total assets	$ 416,274	$ 389,050

LIABILITIES

Current		
Accounts payable and accrued charges	$ 14,060	$ 20,456

NET ASSETS

Per attached -see page 3	$ 402,214	$ 368,594

The attached notes form an integral part of these financial statements!

Approved:_____ _____ _____

TESL ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS AND NET ASSETS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2007

(with comparative figures for the year ended March 31, 2006)

	2007	2006
Revenue		
Contributions		
Projects - see page 4	$ 494,087	$ 172,221
Membership fees	286,874	276,098
Certification fees	47,451	78,922
Others	8,278	7,792
Affiliates' mini conferences	49,897	39,985
Interest	9,641	8,107
Total revenue	$ 896,228	$ 583,125
Expenses		
Annual TESL Ontario Conference - see page 5	$ 202,736	$ 96,139
Affiliates' mini conferences - see page 5	71,438	55,558
Certification costs	4,406	2,257
Other project expenses	139,959	34,785
Salaries and employee benefits	213,228	189,650
Rent, telephone & utilities	43,772	42,032
Memberships and affiliation expenses	68,395	62,770
Contact newsletter	3,600	7,255
Meeting expenses	23,545	21,955
Computer & equipment purchase/rental	11,618	16,415
Stationery, supplies, postage & couriers	15,639	14,996
Website costs	18,108	17,619
Office and general	46,164	42,412
Total expenses	$ 862,608	$ 603,843
Excess of revenue over expenses for the year	$ 33,620	
Excess of expenses over revenue for the year		$ (20,718)
Net assets - opening balance	368,594	389,312
- closing balance	$ 402,214	$ 368,594

TESL ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

SCHEDULE OF PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2007

(with comparative figures for the year ended March 31, 2006)

	2007	2006
Project contributions:		
Annual TESL Ontario Conference		
Registration and publishers	$ 122,772	$ 121,065
Citizenship and Immigration Canada		
LINC - Conference assistance	201,384	-
	$ 324,156	$ 121,065
Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration		
Ontario Curriculum Project	108,849	-
Research Symposium	2,494	-
Pay Equity Program	9,259	9,259
Ministry of Education - Research Symposium	-	5,000
Citizenship and Immigration Canada		
SNAP	25,030	24,319
ORLAC	24,299	12,578
	$ 494,087	$ 172,221

TESL ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

SCHEDULE OF CONFERENCE EXPENSES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2007

(with comparative figures for the year ended March 31, 2006)

	2007	2006
Annual TESL Ontario conference		
Conference planning costs	$ 12,618	$ 10,523
Conference Assistance - registrants' travel and accommodation	109,342	-
Printing, supplies and miscellaneous	25,463	41,102
Rentals	51,545	43,394
Webcasting	10,968	1,120
	$ 209,936	$ 96,139
Affiliate mini-conferences		
Honoraria and salaries	$ 16,349	$ 11,843
Printing, supplies and miscellaneous	16,057	15,776
Meeting expenses	39,032	27,939
	$ 71,438	$ 55,558

TESL ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

MARCH 31, 2007

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 revenue and expenses of the following Affiliates:

Durham	Hamilton-Wentworth
Kingston	London
Niagara	North York-York Region
Ottawa	Peel/Halton/Etobicoke
Northern Region	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 has entered into a new five year lease, commencing April 1, 2005, paying a monthly rent of $ 3,150 plus occupancy cost.

7. The operation 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.

8. TESL Association of Ontario has $ 10,000 revolving overdraft protection credit with the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. If and when this credit is used, interest is charged at prime plus .75%.