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# Special Research Symposium Issue

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# Foreword

This special refereed issue of *Contact* is a response to our members' request for more research-based presentations at our annual TESL Conference. More specifically, our members expressed an interest in learning about new developments in the field of L2 teaching and their possible applications to the classroom. To respond to this need, we organized four symposia for our November 2000 conference around the following themes:

- Reading and Writing,
- Oral Skills/Pronunciation
- Refugee and Immigration Concerns
- Technology

Research/practitioners and practitioner/researchers in the above four fields were identified and invited to present on different but related topics of each theme. With one exception, all the presentations have been published in this special issue. Given the large number of papers, we have decided to group them according to their respective theme areas and to provide a brief introductory note at the beginning of each theme.

As an introduction and framework for this collection of articles, we have included the plenary address delivered by Dr. Heather Lotherington of York University entitled, *ESL Literacy and New Media: Reshaping Literacies in the Age of Information.* In her article, Lotherington reflects on "how texts and literary practices are evolving in the age of information changing the dimensions of what ESL teachers need to learn and teach about language and literacy". She traces the path from classrooms where paper-and-pencil technology was the norm and literacy was defined as being able to read and write teacher-mediated texts to classrooms dominated by electronic texts on the world-wide web where the learner needs to have highly developed critical reading skills to be able to assess and critique texts. The WWW, as she points out, has had a disintermediary effect – the elimination of the "middleman"– making learners both the producers and consumers of texts. After tracing this evolution, Lotherington examines its impact on our conception of language: the content of our L2 language lessons, the role of the learner in the age of new literacies and, finally, the retraining of teachers to prepare learners to succeed inside and outside of the classroom. She questions whether we, as a field, are ready to meet this challenge. Finally, in her article, Lotherington raises a number of important issues, many of which are addressed by presenters in the four symposia: new conceptions of literacy and language skills, situated learning, the role of technology in the classroom, the evolution of English and learning new language.

We would like to thank all the researchers who participated in the symposia and who took the time to write and submit their articles, as well as Symposia co-chair Sharon Rajabi. The *Contact* Editor and Editorial Support Committee certainly hope that this special research issue will be a pleasant and informative read as a result of their contributions.

Robert Courchêne
Guest Editor



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# Reshaping Literacies in the Age of Information

Heather Lotherington
York University

This paper draws on two studies conducted in Toronto in 2000.[1]

## Introduction
## Old ways of teaching, old technologies and old literacies

"This is a pencil."

There was a time when this was a valid snippet of language for language learners. Structural notions of language and behavioural notions about language learning prevalent in the 1950s, 60s and 70s gave way to more communicative notions of socially appropriate, functioning language in the 1980s.

We moved from structural language building into more communicative paradigms as we gained an important insight into language learning: it's not only what you say but how you say it. Now at the dawning of the twenty-first century, we need to question whether we have looked at literacy proficiencies the same way we have thought about language proficiencies: are we working with socially strategic literacies?

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Although we don't work "This is a pencil." much into dialogues anymore, pencils, themselves, still hold an important place in our literacy practices. The pencil as technology is an indispensable tool. It is cheap, reliable, portable, erasable. However, the technologies that facilitate our literacy practices have proliferated in the information age and become ever so much more complex than the simple lead pencil.

Once upon a time schooling meant learning "the three Rs": reading, writing and arithmetic. Basic literacy and numeracy still form the cornerstone of fundamental education. However, literacy and numeracy competencies have changed dramatically over the tenure of compulsory schooling.

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Literacy as we have known it over the past century has been a world principally on paper; a world most often serving culturally defined communities of readers; a world of socially sanctioned knowledge in static, hierarchically organized texts. But, as we move into the global society of the 3rd millennium, much of the social and political ground of literacy is shifting: the relationships between readers, writers and texts are being repositioned; paper is becoming increasingly an electronic abstract; language norms and standards are being rewritten; textuality is evolving dimensionally. The gatekeepers of knowledge in academia and the publishing industry are being challenged by the web, which provides instant mass access to texts no longer subject to tedious decisions about quality through peer review processes. Enter the era of multiple, post-modern literacies.

## English today
## Are we keeping up with change?

Our linguistic ancestors were a collection of brutal northern European tribesmen who came from around Denmark, Holland and Germany. They invaded Celtic civilizations in a northern island which, after much bloodshed and pillaging, eventually became known as the land of the Angles: 'Englaland' (Angle-land) (McCrum et al, 1986: 60-61). Their language, now better known as English, has survived many waves of other conquerors, including particularly, the Vikings and a nearly 200 year stint under Norman French rule.

English has changed greatly in both form and status over the past millennium from being the vernacular of illiterate English peasants under the rule of the Norman French to a – and indeed most would say *the* – language of global importance.

Languages achieve dominance through their speakers, not through some intrinsic quality of the language (Crystal, 1997). International languages are powerful languages. This power is wrought through political, military or economic might (Crystal, 1997). The language of greatest economic and political power in today's world is increasingly thought to be English.

Crystal (1997: 53) posits that English got to these lofty heights through a combination of pre-20th century British colonialism, and 20th century American economic power. I'm going to add a third

significant contributing factor: the world wide web.

Our new technologies have brought the corners of the world together - at least the rich world. Everyone else wants in, too, and even if they don't, they are pegged by cyber-colonialists as emerging markets. Marchart (1998) sees the cultural fabric of this cyber-colonial force as either techno-orientalism, emanating from Japan, or the new electronic frontier, surfing to you from California. But there is no disputing the fact that the vast majority of traffic on the web is in English, the language of electronic access. On the plus side, this makes English an easy sell - not that English has been hard to sell for the past few hundred years. On the minus side, it creates a global climate for what Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) call "Englishisation", which threatens linguistic ecology.

The world is certainly becoming a much smaller place and with increasing mobility comes multiculturalism. We live in a more mobile universe now, and not only do we need a lingua franca for global economic grease, but this language is being used more and more for both multicultural and intercultural communication.

As the use of English escalates in importance in intercultural contexts, the language is steadily declining in native speakers (Graddol, 1999). English is increasingly becoming a second language in this world; an adjunct language used interculturally. One of the great international forums for intercultural use of English is the internet.

As English globalizes, it simultaneously localizes (Singh & Singh, 1999), and, according to Crystal (1997) may eventually splinter into global and local variants, as did Latin over a thousand years ago. In terms of global effects on English, we are all trying to keep up with the changing language code as the electronic universe unfolds. Internauts all, we read icons, abbreviations and emoticons as normal parts of what many must think was once a perfectly good language.

With increased web-based communication, reading and writing are changing dramatically. The great majority of reading and writing on the web is in English. And what is happening to this language? Writing conventions and standards are being rewritten daily. Not only do we read: ICQ, b2b (business to business), and the ubiquitous :) as standard units of language these days, but we seem to have lost capitalization and spelling regularity in the bargain.

Electronic language use is increasingly case-creative, e.g., WordPerfect, iMac. According to Russell Smith, writing in the Globe and Mail (25/11/2000: R11), because DOS wasn't case-sensitive, people started to use capitalization - or not - in creative as opposed to traditional ways - essentially as style. We simply didn't need upper case to write email addresses. We didn't bother to stop and capitalize in our sloppy emails. And now we're seeing the result in print, for instance the new *eatons* has lost its initial capital and its apostrophe. This is in the real as, vs. the virtual, world of print.

Conventional spelling seems to have become rather optional in many electronic language environments, as well, due again to the ephemeral nature of writing in emails and chat rooms, etc., that mimics speech. Nonetheless, inaccurate spelling is not necessarily to be worried about, in any case, because our software now makes changes for us - reasonably efficiently if you like American spelling.

## New literacies
## Literacy reconsidered

What is literacy? Once upon a time it was the ability to read and write. However, literacy, like everything else in life has become much more complicated. Where once we learned to read hierarchically organized texts written on paper, now we must also navigate post-modern hypertext on screens. Accessing and producing these texts requires different cognitive skills and social practices.

As the world we live in gets increasingly better connected in both real and virtual realms, our needs for literacy diversify. Indeed we now speak of literacies, signalling the varied literacy practices we use, and even multiliteracies, a term coined by The New London Group and explained as follows:

> …we attempt to broaden this understanding of literacy and literacy teaching and learning to include negotiating a multiplicity of discourses. (New London Group, 96: 60).

So where is English as a second language within this notion of "a multiplicity of discourses"?

Given the increasing multiculturalism of our province, we need to think carefully about where English fits into the scheme of complex language and literacy practices expected of Ontarians today.

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This is especially salient in the English as a second language context. What are socially, politically and economically appropriate literacies in this day and age? What should teachers of ESL be teaching?

Touch typing is certainly as important as handwriting. Yet do we teach it systematically in school?

My daughter learned cursive writing in Australia, where she attended school in grades 3, 4 and 5. In grade 4, Mrs Binks, her homeroom teacher, awarded pen licenses to the children only when they met her standards for writing with a pencil without making a terrible mess, a pencil, being erasable if you don't keep within the lines. When my daughter finally won her license to use a pen, she wrote to every friend and relative imaginable with her brand new ball point pen and told them proudly that she had earned her pen license. As you might imagine, no one had ever heard of such a thing as a pen license before. She got all sorts of amusing replies, including one from my mother suggesting that most of us would fail any handwriting test these days and we should all have to earn our pen license.

Although I still think we need to be able to print and write manually, handwriting is becoming a lost art. Indeed, some might even say that it is going the way of the dodo. This is not to say that questions about right and left handedness will relate only to your golf swing in the future, but most of my writing these days utilizes a keyboard. Touch typing is certainly as important as handwriting. Yet do we teach it systematically in school? Much has changed since the days when learning to type imprisoned a female in a pink-collar ghetto. Little did we know then how our own education, both in terms of fundamental skills and social understanding, would be so changed through binary code.

Postmodern reading increasingly involves navigating data clouds for information, which is not organized in hypertext as it is in nicely indexed, hierarchically arranged and peer-reviewed books and journals.

## A historical view

The information revolution is but one in a series of technological revolutions that have impacted on education. These must include: the scientific revolution, which certified knowledge over belief, such as in evolutionism vs creationism; the industrial revolution, which allowed mass distribution of print; and the electronic revolution which gave us transistors and microchips, so that we could communicate more easily across our shrinking world (Lotherington, 1999).

Education is regulated through access to literacy. Previous to the 20th century, education was the domain of the privileged and was synonymous with prestige, classical languages. When education began to be publicly available, it was not only for the elite but it was carefully controlled by those in power - most often church or state - and maybe a colonial culture.

The 20th century has spawned mass education – education available for everyone, then mass media; information made public, not only intended for the elite, but selected and organized by those in power. These media have included print mass media, then, with the help of the transistor, electronic media (radio, television, cinema), and, later with the microchip, and interactive new media. With the internet, archiving knowledge is no longer the preserve of the elite. The interactivity of the web and its archiving potential undoes peer refereeing as well as the democratizing creation of and access to knowledge.

## Textuality

Electronic texts are quite different from paper texts. Hypertexts are dynamic and open-ended. Screens may be full of movement, print being designed, placed, coloured, illustrated, animated and even connected to sound. Electronic pages often include simultaneous multiple texts utilizing various media as in dedicated news screens, with stock market quotations marching across the bottom of the screen, weather reported in another quadrant, news above and so forth. These pages are connected through links in nonlinear ways. This is hypermedia (Nelson, 1992: 2).

Strangely enough, in the age of information, we have a hard time finding it. Postmodern reading increasingly involves navigating data clouds for information, which is not organized in hypertext as it is in nicely indexed, hierarchically arranged and peer-reviewed books and journals. Information search skills need to keep up with the new ways in which information is stored and accessed. The literate user needs to be able to choose, locate, and evaluate information. We must be able to guide this search.

## Critical literacy

In the information age, educating for critical literacy is essential so that ESL learners can engage with new as well as old texts. We see this immediate and startling need for critical literacy in the very justified public worry about children accessing pornography on the web. It's all out there - how do we teach children and adults alike to critically select?

The notion of critical literacy is a diffuse one. The roots of educating towards a socially constructive literacy are found in the writings of Paulo Freire, whose work with adult literacy questions the politics of language and literacy education.

Allan Luke describes the epistemological territory well (1997:1):

> Although critical literacy does not stand for a unitary approach, it marks out a coalition of educational interests committed to engaging with possibilities that the technologies of writing and other modes of inscription offer for social change, cultural diversity, economic equity, and political enfranchisement.

In the age of information, we need to be very concerned about teaching, learning and practicing critical reading skills.

The internet has been described as disintermediating (Clark, 1996; Willmott, 1997). Essentially this means that the proverbial "middle man" is cut out of assessing, critiquing, censoring and shaping text. Information age learners are increasingly both the publishers and consumers of electronic texts with the direct-to-you publishing capabilities of the internet, which displaces the literary elite, including the reviewer, the publisher, the teacher and the librarian. Electronic texts are seldom peer-reviewed; quality control is left to the reader. Because of this, critical literacy skills need to be sharply honed in all readers from very young children to the adult coming from another or a pre-electronic culture.

The internet makes the world your oyster; texts can come from anywhere. It will be part of our job to ensure that all learners, especially those who come from other cultures, understand how to critically mediate the fragmented chaos of hypertext out there in cyberspace and, more importantly, to know how to incorporate both modern and post-modern literacies into knowledge construction. In so doing, we need to reconceptualize classroom literacies.

## Language

As we have seen, literacy is mutating rapidly. Over the past decade, new media have developed exponentially, to carry multimedia messages that blur traditional communicative boundaries between speech and writing, saturating electronic texts with graphic illustration and orchestration, connecting and mediating our ever-shrinking world in nanoseconds. Rapid changes to text access and form are reshaping the epistemological boundaries of literacy education. In fact, the very stuff of written texts, language, is changing along with texts.

Many things are happening to language. For example: formality boundaries between speech and writing are disappearing; writing systems are hybridizing; cultural traditions such as the authorizing power of the signature are weakening; and cyberspace demands are mobilizing American English as global Cyberspeak.

The exponentially increasing communication technologies we have at our fingertips, increasingly complicate what used to be distinguishable lines drawn between written and spoken language. We "talk" in chat rooms that require literate access, pay bills on telephones using keypad knowledge, "phone" interlocutors using keyboards and modems, hold virtual office hours and classes, and casually contact colleagues around the world – including those we have never met in person – via email.

The traditional dichotomy between written language and oral language is quite simply melting in electronic contexts. Formality boundaries, routinely taught by ESL teachers, wherein the formal requirements of the business letter, or the existence of literary terms, such as *thus, heretofore,* and *notwithstanding*, not to mention grammatical fossils such as *whom* and *shall* that were previously shown their rightful place in language, are now are doomed to extinction in paper texts.

I remember visiting an adult basic literacy centre in Toronto in the 1980s, for the purpose of discussing text simplification. A lesson on written vs spoken language I have never forgotten was embodied in the comment from a woman who was learning to read and write: "Thus!" – what kind of word is that! I never heard tell of it before. What does it actually mean?"

I predict that *thus* will go the way of *forsooth*, *methinks*, and *thine* and emoticons :) and acronyms such as b2b (business to business), b2g (business to government), b2c (business to consumers) (The Globe and Mail 17/8/2000: T2) will grow in their place. We are seeing changes in Chinese writing, for example, where untranslatable terms such as: TCP/IP and www have been imported into the script itself, which is not alphabetical.

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Electronic literacies have impacted on social and cultural traditions in many interesting ways. For example, signatures, the classic literary identifier – at least in a Western culture such as Canada – are losing their supreme clout as we increasingly accept unsignable emailed letters for administrative purposes. We can conduct an amazing amount of electronic business, doing everything from applying for a loan to making auction bids on electronic paper.

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The biggest challenge of all to language and literacy practices emerges from technocolonialism, which influences not only the shape and function of English, as well as who needs to use the language, but its already dominating importance globally. This creates an ecological issue for teachers of English as a second language. English should not take over the domains of other languages. Teaching ESL is about adding to individuals' language competencies, not decimating our society's language wealth.

## Teaching ESL today
## Focus on language and literacy proficiencies

Teaching a language is very complex. Embedded in the teaching and learning of language proficiency is the development of socially appropriate literacy practices. No one would consider teaching oral English without a literate base. This doesn't count as economically viable language learning. Literacy – especially literacy in English – has changed; teaching English, especially as a second language, has to change along with it.

Whether explicit or not, we work with strong social biases about language and literacy. Society sees literacy in terms of the dominant language or languages, for example. Literate behaviours that are sanctioned include writing academic papers, reading good literature, writing poised formal letters, etc. Literate behaviours that don't get much of a nod include anything using unofficial, minority languages, and reading or writing texts society doesn't understand and approve of, such as comics. But new genres and access routes to texts are emerging daily, and we can no longer base all teaching of reading and writing in English on historical textual hierarchies which, at one time, built towards classical attainment and literary success.

Furthermore, educational notions of literacy progression may be viewed, erroneously, according to our own notions of chronology. How many of us are comfortable with technology? Very few of us. Most of us have learned modern literacy behaviours through print media, and we tend to hierarchically process text as – first you learn to read on paper, then you can go on to the computer – as if the computer were a sort of bonus. Our children, on the other hand, can manipulate technical systems with much greater naturalness than we can because this is how they are becoming literate – on the computer at home when they don't want to do their math homework.

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We need to ensure that we teach both hierarchical reading and post-modern reading as a pedagogical necessity and that these are contiguous, not sequential. We tend now to address literacy needs in an invalid chronology of first ESL learners' need to do paper and pencil writing, then they can go on to the fancy computer stuff.

We perform a terrible disservice to new users of ESL if we do not teach them flexible literacies. They need to be able to access relevant texts, old and new. This is not easy. Our educational institutions – and certainly our educational budgets – are based on old technologies and old accesses.

There is a buy-in cost to technological learning. However, I believe that human rights issues are at stake if we locate our new ESL learners in old technologies and old ways of learning - ways that will not prepare them for life in Ontario, in Canada, in North America and in the virtual universe within which they, too, will search for jobs.

## Focus on the learner

What do ESL learners need to learn? We need to re-evaluate not only what learners need to learn but what they do <u>not</u> need to learn.

ESL learners still need to learn to read and write English. They need to be able to manipulate a pen. They need to read and write connected text. They also need to understand how texts are and can be connected. Hypertexts consist of short, largely unedited, open-ended, nonlinear and linked electronic pages. The postmodern reader and writer needs to be able to source out texts and effect useful links. This is knowledge construction.

There has never been a better time to teach critical evaluation of texts; choosing what you need, when you need it. All academic literacies require critical evaluation skills. Students increasingly accumulate a critical acumen through process writing,

library research, design projects, conducting scientific experiments, physical competition, writing reports and essays, playing a musical instrument and so on. However, utilizing internet-based resources means that the reader has to do the work of the reviewer, publisher, librarian, and teacher because virtual information is unfiltered.

The disintermediating properties of the web eradicate the current quality control bottleneck effected by book and journal publishers. The disintermediating effects of the web also include individualizing the organization of information. There is no handy auto-librarian function amongst all those text sorting commands. The reader must be able to locate texts and evaluate their quality, relevance, and appropriateness and this takes an increasingly greater critical sense. These critical literacy skills are needed by all learners, from the pre-schooler, (who shouldn't be surfing censored sites), to the adolescent in ICQ conversations to the adult learner, looking for everything from employment opportunities to a life partner.

We may also need a serious reality check amongst ourselves. For far too long, ESL teachers have been treated as the grammar police, armed with a red pen and an itchy trigger finger. Beware the mechanics of language! Good spelling and grammar – which of course simply mean accordance with prestige regional norms – indicate education.

This is not to say that presentation is not important in language, especially in written documents. I have problems going red-pen gaga myself, and I cringe at nouveau grammar, such as "if I would have known", which is endemic in Ontario. However, spelling and grammar, which are sensibly seen as subordinate to creative and functional language use in any case, can now be at least partly relegated to machine checking. This doesn't mean that we suddenly don't need consistent spelling in order to read a text without problems, but we have other things of more substance to worry about, and we should readjust our priorities accordingly.

We need to critically evaluate language, literacy and learning skills, so that those more exploratory and collaborative skills that are made possible through electronic media are facilitated. ESL learning can't simply model past performance but must be recreated within the ever-expanding language universe that is now unfolding.

## Focus on the teacher

Many of the teachers in Ontario teach students who have completed – for better or for worse – their foundation schooling. Others teach students who have had some of their basic education in a system that doesn't parallel ours. Still others have children of school entry age who come from a different cultural and linguistic milieu.

The job of the ESL teacher is very important: to enable learners, wherever they are in life, to be able to function optimally in what is a second language of powerful economic, educational, social, business and political utility: English. This, as we all know, is a challenge, depending on where the learner is coming from, metaphorically speaking, and where she or he is going.

ESL students get Canadian socialization alongside their language learning. A part of this socialization is to the social structure of the Canadian classroom. Every teacher in this room could tell a story about ESL students' or their families' culturally different notions about the teacher, and stories would range from gift-giving of indeterminable intent to social fears of speaking to, much less questioning, the teacher.

A common expectation of our ESL learners is to sit in a very teacher-centred classroom. Teachers have authority. Students sit quietly, listen and learn.

However, one of the success stories of computers in the school, where they have been best put to use, is that they facilitate collaborative teaching and learning. Indeed some presenters at computers-in-education conferences have gone so far as to say that the software is secondary to the collaboration it facilitates in learning. Teacher-centredness is not very compatible with new media. Control of information is out of our hands. This can be a scary thought.

Most of us were, ourselves, educated in a teacher-centred system, where we learned to follow the teacher as model and to refer, and, indeed, defer to acceptable guides, whether human or textual, in order to solve problems. We asked the teacher or we looked it up in the dictionary or the encyclopedia or the textbook. In fact, most of us learned about learner-centredness in teacher-centred education courses in university.

Most of us, then, are ill-prepared for the sorts of learning strategies we all need to develop in the age

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of information, where electronic problem-based learning is at the root of knowledge construction. Children born in this era are not uncomfortable, however, with problem-solving in electronic media. Indeed this age reversal in the direction of information transfer is extremely hard for most teachers and parents. How often do you hear," I'll ask my kids. They know how to use this stuff better than I do."

The technological revolution we have been experiencing, which has been most acute over the past decade, has changed our world and our ways of expression.

In schools with elite computer-based programs, teachers have worked hard to come to grips with the problem of kids knowing more than they do. It is endemic. In some classes, collaborative teaching groups which include specialist computer teachers are formed to revitalize the curriculum through planned integrated teaching modules. In others, student collaborative groups are formed with one or two students picked for special computer training which they then disseminate on a help-desk basis in class. Other schools use software to enable conferencing across age groups, classrooms, schools, cities and borders, both provincial and national. All are based on some conception of collaborative learning. "Banking education", made explicit by Paulo Freire (1998/1970) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* – as the idea of pouring knowledge into essentially empty heads – becomes extinct in this climate of learning.

So what do we teach now? This is a hard question. The answer changes day by day. But we do have to realize that the information revolution is not going to retreat. This means that we will have to attend to new kinds of texts and text processing, new ways of learning and new ways of teaching.

We have seen the historical, institutional sanctioning of literature and literary standards disintegrate as authors become their own publishers, interested netsurfers become reviewers, and God-knows-who become distance educators.

Basic reading and writing practices are rapidly changing. Increasing technological support for language mechanics means that sentence mechanics are increasingly being assisted; templates for letters mean that we can relegate some of the tedium of form – whether that form persists or not – to electronic tutoring.

Students will need much more sophisticated reference skills with the publisher's bottleneck being broken, though. Direct-to-you text access means that information is not evaluated, censored, organized, and stored in a logical system. Hypertext is open-ended; we who read electronic texts are involved in their writing in that we concatenate webpages according to our needs. The critical skills facilitating electronic information search and retrieval, not to mention publication need to take precedence in this environment.

We do a disservice to our ESL learners of all ages if we teach them only old literacies. Especially in adult learning, such teaching is a breach of human rights, creating a paper-literate substratum of society that will become obsolete. ESL learners of all ages need old literacies, certainly; they need to be able to negotiate text in all forms – old and new, modern and post-modern, traditional paper and pencil and new electronic media.

## Conclusion

"Computer" is a back-formation, based on the verb "to compute". What we do now with the computer includes, but very much exceeds its original number crunching function. Computers have changed how we live, how we communicate, how we organize our day, our work, our social lives, *what* we read and write and *how* we read and write.

Technology isn't an add-on or an option. It isn't going to go away and we can't ignore it and do things the old way. The technological revolution we have been experiencing, which has been most acute over the past decade, has changed our world and our ways of expression. We communicate differently; we read differently; we write differently. We have created dimensionally enriched genres of text and coined new language conventions. We have seen the once easily distinguishable borders between speech and writing disappear in chat rooms, bulletin boards and email correspondences. We have seen the historical, institutional sanctioning of literature and literary standards disintegrate as authors become their own publishers, interested netsurfers become reviewers, and God-knows-who become distance educators. The socially sanctioned intelligentsia is cut out of this electronic picture.

This paper is intended to raise awareness and stimulate discussion. There aren't easy answers to the issues I raise because of a number of factors. There is an economic entry cost to new literacies. We as teachers haven't necessarily achieved a technological comfort level ourselves. Most of us need to work collaboratively with technical support. Indeed, technology is moving so quickly that no one is on top of things. But the line between the haves and the have-nots – in terms of computers – is growing so rapidly that we need to make sure we don't breach human rights by training a subclass of paper literates in an increasingly technological world.

In this paper, I have highlighted how English language and literacy are changing dramatically as we enter the age of information. This has profound repercussions for teachers of English as a second language as it does for learners of all ages, which, incidentally, we have all become again.

1 The studies this paper draws on are: *Assessing public conceptions of literacy*, which I conducted in 2000 with the assistance of Jean Shi Jing Xu, Maria Carmen Carrero de Salazar, and Franca Vani; and *Factors that contribute to innovative teaching with technology*, an ongoing large-scale, multisite research project which is being conducted in the Centre for the Study of Computers in Education atYork University. My role in the *FACIT* project is as associate researcher, and the schools I have been studying for this project are in the greater Toronto area. I would like to acknowledge with gratitude York University Faculty of Education for supporting the *APCL* project with a Minor Research and Development Grant, and the Telelearning Network of Centres of Excellence for their support of the *FACIT* project.

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# THEME 1: READING AND WRITING

## Introduction
## by Heather Lotherington

The two papers discussed in this overview approach different aspects of literacy and do so in different ways. Beare's qualitative study examines writing, in particular, as cognitive processing. Hunter et al's ethnographic studies of workplace literacies show how language and literacy proficiencies are embedded in a larger social matrix extending throughout and beyond the confines of the particularized workplace.

In *In-Sites research: Literacy and language threads in the workplace tapestry*, Judy Hunter, Mary Ellen Belfiore and Sue Follinsbee bring together ethnographic studies of literacy expectations and practices in three diverse workplace contexts, providing rich detail of the socially and politically situated literacies in various workers' lives. The tapestry metaphor illustrates the intricate and inextricable interweave of the literacies created, adopted, adapted and practised by different members of industrial workforce teams in order to efficiently do their jobs. The working contexts are varied; they include: a suburban, multinational, unionized food processing factory (Triple Z); a small-town, privately-owned and non-unionized textile factory (Textco); and a partly-unionized, upmarket, downtown hotel (The Urban Hotel). The workers come from a variety of linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds.

The tapestry metaphor illustrates the intricate and inextricable interweave of the literacies created, adopted, adapted and practised by different members of industrial workforce teams in order to efficiently do their jobs.

In these diverse workplace contexts, literacy is scripted as a job requirement. Literacies are not only hierarchically envisioned, but, in the case of The Urban Hotel, in particular, they are highly visible. Workers wear their designated stations in terms of their uniforms.

Management-driven mandated practices, such as the HACCP documentation required of Triple Z assembly line workers, and ISO tracking computer entries at Textco are contrasted with worker-devised literacies, such as Miranda's bilingual notes to facilitate Textco computer entries, and Giselle's improved housekeeping form for The Urban Hotel. The studies highlight conflicts in labour vs management interpretations of and valuing of literacy practices. In the case of Triple Z, the management expects individual control of mandated literacies, whereas the workers reveal a preference for an alternate apportioning of responsibility. At The Urban Hotel, Giselle's efficient, functional form goes unrewarded professionally. At Textco, Miranda creates a personally meaningful strategy using unorthodox language, which, though facilitative in the larger literacy aim, is only marginally tolerated by management.

Many questions and issues are raised. Whose literacies are authorized? Whose literacies are recognized? Can workers design their own effective literacy practices? Can these practices be socially co-dependent or should all literacies be envisioned as intrapersonal skills?

Sophie Beare, in *Differences in writing of adult L1 and L2 proficient writers,* approaches literacy as a problem-solving activity, asking whether the composing process varies in L1 and L2 for proficient, bilingual writers. Using think-aloud protocols, she explores the writing processes of English-Spanish bilinguals who are working professionals or graduate students. Her findings indicate no significant differences in content-generating and planning processes in writing across languages for the participants of the study. Participants did, however, note their insecurities with L2 grammar.

Sophie Beare, in *Differences in writing of adult L1 and L2 proficient writers,* approaches literacy as a problem-solving activity, asking whether the composing process varies in L1 and L2 for proficient, bilingual writers.

In both studies, literacy can be seen as social practice, contextualized economically, and as problem-solving activity. Bilinguals in Beare's study are writing for a living, whether as writers, teachers or graduate students, just as the workers in Hunter et al's triple workplace ethnography are devising and learning literacies for their jobs. All are solving problems through their literacy practices, although these problems range from writing a good story to finding individual and collective ways to assist in the fulfilling of job-related literacy practices required by management.

# Differences in Writing of Adult L1 and L2 Proficient Writers

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## Abstract

Recent research into the writing process of second language writers has produced a range of different conclusions: the composing process is different in first (L1) and second (L2) language writing (Silva, 1993); the writing strategies are similar in both L1 and L2 writing (Matsumoto, 1995); adult L2 writers are less effective in their L2 than in L1 academic writing (Silva, 1993). In the review of the literature, Silva's studies reveal that L2 composing is more difficult and less effective than L1 composing (Silva, 1993, 1992). Yet other studies, Berman (1994) and Matsumoto (1995) suggest that writers transfer their writing strategies from L1 to L2 provided they possess L2 grammatical proficiency (Berman, 1994).

The object of the study (Beare, 2000) was to explore writing processes in proficient L2 writers. Eight participants took part in this study; each participant was proficient in two languages: English and Spanish, and in academic writing in both languages as determined by the British Council IELTS.

The participants' first and second languages were either English or Spanish and they had either studied beyond the secondary level in both languages or worked in both languages where academic writing was required. The researcher collected data through individual interviews, participant observation, think-aloud protocols during writing, and from writing samples. A profile of each participant, focusing on his\her content-generating and planning in L1/L2 writing processes, was developed.

## Introduction

For the last decade, researchers have been investigating the differences in the L1/L2 writing process by studying content generating and planning processes of L1 and L2 writers. These processes have either been compared (Silva, 1993) or the impact of L1 on L2 writing has been examined (Friedlander, 1990). The results of the studies indicate two positions. Position one: Silva concludes in his study that "L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically, and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing" (1993, p.669). Position two: Matsumoto (1995) conducted research with four Japanese university professors on their processes and strategies for writing a research paper in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The results suggest that EFL professionals "use strategies similar to those used by skilled native English and proficient ESL writers." (Matsumoto, 1995, p.17). Moreover, the researcher found that her subjects perceived "their L2 research paper writing process as virtually equivalent to their L1 counterpart." (p.17). The researcher explains that "already existing L1 writing strategies transfer to L2 writing." (p.17).

The object of the study (Beare, 2000) was to explore writing processes in proficient L2 writers.

Other studies have indicated similarities between the L1 and L2 composing processes. Jones and Tetroe (1987) analyzed protocols to study the L1 and L2 planning behaviours of six Spanish-speaking L2 writers. Their research findings indicate that first language skills transfer to the second language and that second language proficiency affects the quality of the text but "it appears to have little role in constraining the planning process" (Jones and Tetroe, 1987 p. 55). In researching 126 secondary school EFL students Berman (1994) found that "many learners transfer writing skills between languages, and their success in doing so is assisted by the grammatical proficiency in the target language" (p. 29).

In the present study, we explore writing processes (generating and planning processes) in proficient L2 writers while they compose in their first and second languages. The participants used Spanish and English in their two writing sessions, either as their first or second language.

In the present study, we explore writing processes (generating and planning processes) in proficient L2 writers while they compose in their first and second languages. The participants used Spanish and English in their two writing sessions, either as their first or second language.

The study was guided by one general question: are there differences between L1 and L2 writing processes? More specifically, do the content generating and planning profiles of L1 and L2 vary cross-linguistically in proficient bilingual writers?

## Research Methodology

In order to compare the differences in content generating and planning of L1 and L2 proficient writers, a qualitative study was conducted. Think-aloud protocols (writers verbalize their thoughts while writing) were used to explore the writing processes. The subjects in this study were proficient in academic writing in both their first and second language as they had either studied or worked in both languages beyond secondary education.

Data collection for this study included information from interviews, think-aloud protocols, and researcher's observations during writing sessions.

Data collection for this study included information from interviews, think-aloud protocols, and researcher's observations during writing sessions. This type of data was not immediately accessible for analysis and had to be encoded. Transcribed think-aloud sessions and written products were sectioned into words or utterances that represented the various generating or planning characteristics. The data gathered during interviews, think-aloud protocols, and written products were analyzed in an attempt to search for patterns, ideas, or hypotheses.

Eight bilingual participants (English/Spanish) took part in this study. Four participants were native speakers of Spanish born in Mexico, Colombia, Cuba, and Chile and the remaining four participants were native speakers of English who had studied Spanish at the university level. The native English speakers used Spanish with their spouses and during their work assignments in Spanish speaking countries. In terms of age and gender, the subjects included three men and five women, between the ages of 20 and 50. Two were professional writers (short story, non-fiction) in both languages, four were language teachers (Spanish or English) and two were graduate students in Spanish. In order to participate in this study, they had to score Band 9 on the IELTS, in their second language.

The data gathered during interviews, think-aloud protocols, and written products were analyzed in an attempt to search for patterns, ideas, or hypotheses.

Each participant had to perform the following tasks:

1. Participate in an interview with the researcher before and after the writing sessions.
2. Write an expository essay in L1 on a provided topic. While writing, the participant verbalized (think-aloud protocols) his/her thoughts into the tape recorder.
3. Write an essay on a topic provided in the participant's second language (same procedure was followed as in 2 above).

## Discussion of the Results

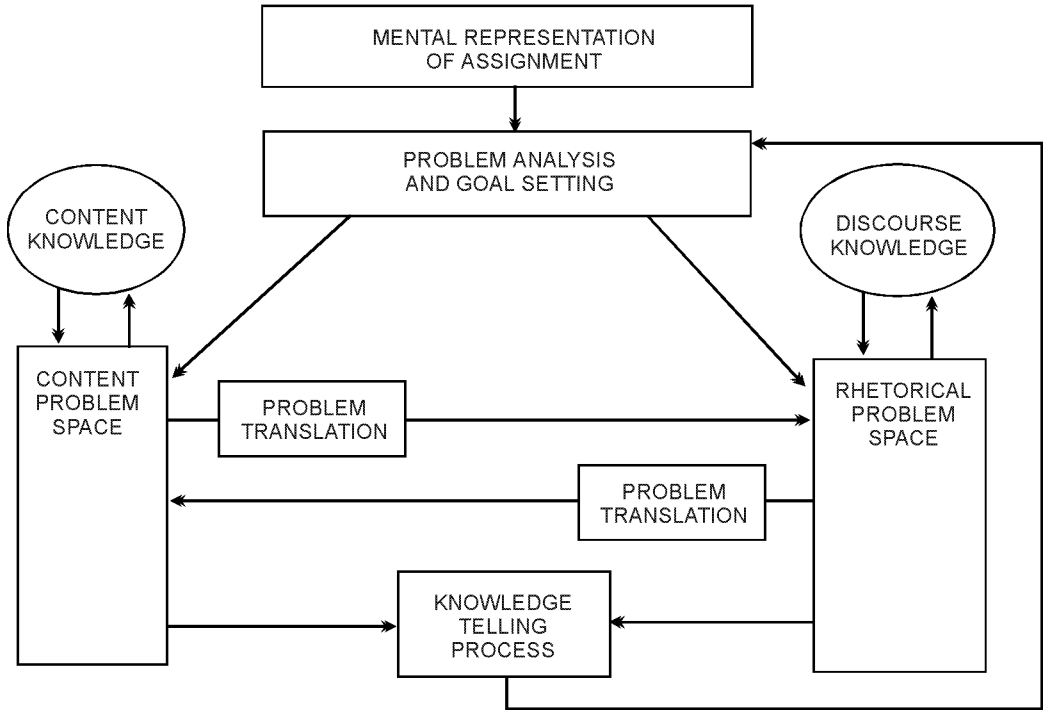
1. The Process used during the think-aloud verbalization.

The writing process used by the participants in this study fits the knowledge-transforming model (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987) in that there is a recursive flow between various components of the model so that the knowledge is transformed.

The knowledge transforming model developed by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) was chosen as part of the conceptual framework for this study. The choice of this model was based on the assumption that Bereiter and Scardamalia's model (1987) gives a clearer view of both the generating and planning processes. According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), both generating and planning are embedded in the model. The researchers indicate that a proficient writer would use the knowledge transforming model whereas the novice writer would use a knowledge telling model. Writers who use the knowledge transforming model "could probably be found among people at advanced levels in any intellectual discipline. They are used to considering whether the text they have written says what they want it to say and whether they themselves believe what the text says" (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987, p.11). Their model is very interactive and dynamic.

The knowledge transforming model (Figure 1) illustrates the interaction between text processing and knowledge processing. It is assumed that a proficient writer who is presented with a task, develops a mental representation of the task and begins problem-solving operations by examining what content needs to be generated. The writer then sets goals and starts up with the content problem space. The operations that direct content generation are executed by the planning process of the writer. In the content space, problems of belief and knowledge are worked out. In the rhetorical space, problems of achieving goals of the composition/text are dealt with (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987, p. 11). Figure 1 shows arrows going back and forth from the content problem space to the rhetorical problem space indicating a recursive process where thoughts are transformed as the writing progresses or continues.

**Figure 1. Knowledge Transforming Model**
(Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987, p. 12)




The following examples from a think aloud protocol demonstrates the recursive process in L1 and L2 content-generating and planning predicated on Bereiter and Scardamalia's 1987 model.

| L1 | L2 | |
|---|---|---|
| Reads the topic | Reading the topic | (Problem Analysis) |
| "I have to read it again" | Rereading the topic | (Problem Analysis) |
| "I can't think in these terms" | "Okay no problem" | (Problem Analysis) |
| "I think Canada is unique" | "First it would definitely be gender" | (Content Knowledge) |
| "I think of cultural differences" | "In English we don't have genders" | (Content Knowledge) |
| "I can argue that as a... How do I say this?" | "I can't remember how to say this" | (Rhetorical Problem) |
| "Scrap that" | "I will have to look it up" | (Problem Analysis) |
| "history...history...Okay historical motivation" | "I always get interested in the words I look up" | (Content Problem) (Rhetorical Problem) |
| "Okay, back up here" | Rereads the topic | (Problem Analysis) |
| "Canada...with the Spanish society" | "Other people have difficulties in..." | (Content Problem) |
| "that doesn't make sense" | "What do you call that?" | (Rhetorical Problem) |

**Table I**
**Percentages of the attention paid to specific processes as indicated by the number of utterances made during think-aloud session.**

| **L1 (Spanish or English)** | | | | | | | | | | **Average** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Maria (S)** | **Kristin (E)** | **Eduardo (S)** | **Jorge (S)** | **Paula (S)** | **Cathy (E)** | **Mary (E)** | **Keven (E)** | **English EL1** | **Spanish SL1** |
| 1. | Generating Content (by other means) | 10 +(33%) | 40 +(63%) | 28 +(38%) | 45 +(38%) | 8 +(44%) | 88 +(43%) | 165 +(54%) | 171 } +(61%) } | 55% | 38% |
| 2. 3. | Generating Content (by rereading) | 55 | 16 | 17 | 3 | 24 | 33 | 7 | 21 } | | |
| 4. | Conceptual Planning | 85 (43%) | 31 (36%) | 32 (27%) | 19 (15%) | 14 (20%) | 38 (14%) | 42 (13%) | 38 (12%) | 19% | 28% |
| 5. | Process Planning | 16 (8%) | 1 (1%) | 6 (5%) | 10 (7%) | ** | 23 (8%) | 5 (2%) | 44 (14%) | 6% | 5% |
| 6. | Rhetorical Planning | 25 (13%) | ** | 27 (23%) | 11 (9%) | 8 (11%) | 20 (7%) | 31 (10%) | 5 (1%) | 4.5% | 14% |
| **L2 (Spanish or English)** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. | Generating Content (by other means) | 37 +(34%) | 7 +(63%) | 11 +(28%) | 17 +(23%) | 46 +(65%) | 77 +(49%) | 22 +(57%) | 91 +(90%) | **EL1** | **SL2** |
| 2. 3. | Generating Content (by rereading) | 23 | 28 | 12 | 2 | 5 | 21 | 16 | 18 | 64% | 37% |
| 4. | Conceptual Planning | 70 (41%) | 10 (15%) | 27 (32%) | 43 (52%) | 9 (12%) | 5 (3%) | 7 (10%) | 6 (5%) | 8% | 34% |
| 5. | Process Planning | 20 (11%) | ** ** | 2 (2%) | 3 (3%) | 6 (8%) | 14 (7%) | 2 (3%) | 2 (2%) | 3% | 6% |
| 6. | Rhetorical Planning | 16 (9%) | ** | 5 (6%) | 6 (6%) | 1 (1%) | 25 (12%) | 3 (4%) | 2 (2%) | 4.5% | 5.5% |

* No utterances found in the think-aloud transcription

\+ means item 1 and 2 are added to give percentages

The results from the think-aloud data, when analyzed against Bereiter and Scardamalia's 1987 knowledge transforming model, indicate that there are no dcross-linguistical differences between L1 and L2 content-generating and planning for the participants in this study.

Moreover, there are similarities in L1 and L2 content-generating and planning. In generating content, Spanish speakers paid equal attention to generating content in both languages; native English speakers produced more utterances than Spanish speakers during their L1 and L2 content generating process. Although there were differences between the two groups, there were no differences between L1 and L2 when each participant's results were examined. What it means is that each individual writer applied similar process in writing L1 and L2.

Table 1 summarizes percentages of the attention paid to specific processes during the writing session.

## 2. Data from Interviews

While generating content the participants explained that they used the topic or subject of the writing task to help them start generating content in their first language. Rereading or self-questioning helped them also in generating content as well. Free writing was mentioned by one subject as a possibility in content generating in L1 and L2.

In their L2, all of the participants said they used the topic itself, or reread what they had written so far to generate content while writing. While planning, the writers said they linked ideas and built paragraphs in both languages (L1 and L2).

The results from the think-aloud data, when analyzed against Bereiter and Scardamalia's 1987 knowledge transforming model, indicate that there are no cross-linguistical differences between L1 and L2 content-generating and planning for the participants in this study.

**Table 2**
**Percentages of the attention paid to specific strategies**

| L1 (Spanish or English) | Average Number of Participants | | English L1 | Spanish L1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. Rereading to Edit | 7 | (except Kristin) | 7% | 4% |
| 8. Use of L2 and L1 (when writing in the other language) | 1 | (Spanish Speaker) | – | 1% |
| 9. Pausing | 1 | (English Speaker) | 1% | – |
| 10. Talking to the Experimenter | 6 | (except Maria, Kristin) | 4% | 12% |
| **L2 (Spanish or English)** | **Average Number of Participants** | | **English L1** | **Spanish L1** |
| 1. Rereading to Edit | 6 | (Except Mary, Kevin) | 7% | 6.5% |
| 2. Use of L2 and L1 (when writing in the other language) | 3 | (2 Spanish, 1 English) | 7.5% | 6% |
| 3. Pausing | 1 | (Spanish Speaker) | – | 1% |
| 4. Talking to the Experimenter | 5 | (Except Maria, Kristin, Eduardo) | 8% | 3.5% |

– indicates no one used this particular strategy
* for more information see table – in Appendix I

Although there were differences between two groups, there were no differences between L1 and L2 when each participant's results were examined.

The divergence in the point of view of whether there are differences in L1 and L2 writing suggests a need for more rigorous research, such as research with several languages as second languages.

The findings in this study support the view that if the writers are proficient in their L1, their writing skills will transfer from L1 to L2, implying that the writers use similar writing strategies when writing in both first and second language (Berman, 1994; Matsumoto 1995).

Results from this study (see Table 2) suggest that there are similarities, not differences, in generating and planning processes in L1 and L2 writing of proficient adult writers. In general, the results (transcribed think-aloud) when analyzed against Bereiter and Scardamalia's 1987 knowledge transforming model indicate that there are no differences cross-linguistically between L1 and L2 content generating and planning for the participants in this study. The findings of this study support Matsumoto's (1995) findings based on her research with bilingual subjects (Japanese/English). Small differences occurred in content generating between English native speakers and Spanish native speakers in my study; the English speakers generated more in L1 and L2 than Spanish speakers did. This was confirmed by observation and transcribed think aloud protocols.

## Implications for Research

Various questions/issues were raised while the data from the study were analyzed. The divergence in the point of view of whether there are differences in L1 and L2 writing suggests a need for more rigorous research, such as research with several languages as second languages. More comparative research is also needed to explain the transfer of skills and differences that are not facilitated by transfer of skills. Comparing different revision styles may provide an insight into the composing processes – some individuals tended to revise while composing, others left revision to the end. It would be very interesting to see whether the revision varies between L1 and L2 and whether it is influenced by the native language or culture. Perhaps more studies could be conducted with non Indo-European language group. Does the writer (proficient in both first and second languages) have more difficulty with revision if his/her language is a non Indo-European language group: Matsumoto (1995) found in her study that her subjects perceived writing in L1 to be similar to writing in L2. Do the writers' perceptions affect their writing processes? Spanish speaking participants in this study said that the writing in English was different or required different skills than the writing in Spanish. Spanish speakers were the ones who noticed the difference. They said that they worried more about the choice of words in writing Spanish. One could replicate this study and use it with other language groups to see if the results are different from those of this study. Also, an increased number of subjects in future studies comparing L1 and L2 writing processes would add to the data and thus make the results more generalizable.

Since this study used proficient bilingual writers who were highly competent in both their first and second languages, there were no significant differences between their first and second language content generating and planning in writing. However, more research would be helpful in the area of L2 proficiency and writing as at lower L2 proficiency levels the results might show significant differences.

## Implications for Teaching

The findings in this study do not support the view that L1 writing and L2 writing (generating and planning) processes are different. Rather, they support the view that if the writers are proficient in their L1, their writing skills will transfer from L1 to L2, implying that the writers use similar writing strategies when writing in both first and second language (Berman, 1994; Matsumoto 1995).

What does this suggest for the teachers of ESL who are dealing with learners who are not very proficient in English.

According to Berman (1994), L2 students who function at lower proficiency levels, may need greater help with their second language skills in order to transfer their writing skills. Also, L2 writing teachers need to devote more time and attention to strategic concerns to enhance learners' writing (Silva, 1993), particularly with those who do not possess "grammatical proficiency", as mentioned by Berman (1994). One of the findings (in this study) indicated that Spanish writers seemed to generate less content in their think-aloud protocols while writing in both L1 and L2, whereas English speakers produced more content. It is difficult to attribute the reason to the difference between L1 and L2. Native Spanish Speakers, (NSS) may have verbalized less in content-generating than Native English Speakers, NES, but attended more to the planning processes. Another possible explanation is that NSS may have been taught in their writing courses to be more focused on planning and not to generate too much content. A reason may be that NES are taught to generate more than they need. The researcher has taken writing courses in English and has been advised during the writing process to generate more than needed to make the essay successful. It may be that different schooling systems in non-English speaking countries teach somewhat different writing strategies. Thus ESL teachers should focus on teaching writing strategies pertaining to content generating, in this case with Spanish native speakers, if the students are

having difficulty with content generating. Since the present study points to individual differences relying on a similar variety of writing strategies for both L1 and L2, the writing teacher should encourage students to use their L1 writing strategies in their L2 writing, provided they were successful in their L1 writing.

## The Author

Sophie Beare recently earned a Ph.D. in Education from Ottawa University. She teaches/coordinates the TES/FL Program at Algonquin College in Ottawa. Her research interests lie in first and second language writing, and in language teacher education.

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# In-Sites Research: Literacy and Language Threads in the Workplace Tapestry

Judy Hunter, Mary Ellen Belfiore, Sue Folinsbee

Our aim is to examine the many ways that literacy and literacy learning take place, how literacy and literacy learning are organized, carried out and perceived in workplace settings, and how they affect workers and their workplaces.

Literacy framed as a skill set is flat and one dimensional; in contrast, our experience with literacy in the workplace is multi-dimensional.

## Introduction: In-Sites Research

*In-Sites Studies in Workforce Literacy* is a two-and-a-half-year study of literacy and literacy learning in four work sites across Canada. It is funded by the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Commission, and housed at Ryerson Polytechnic University. The project involves a partnership among five researchers[1] from the public and private sectors. We are practitioners and academic researchers; our collective experience includes workplace and post-secondary teaching, consulting, research, and writing. We are based in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Our research sites which include food processing, textile manufacturing, hi-tech manufacturing, and hospitality and tourism, are unionized and non unionized, small and large, urban and rural.

Our aim is to examine the many ways that literacy and literacy learning take place, how literacy and literacy learning are organized, carried out and perceived in workplace settings, and how they affect workers and their workplaces. We have focussed on the following questions across sites:

- What are people doing when they are participating in the literacy expectations of their workplace? What outcomes and opportunities arise from successful participation?
- What are people doing when they're not participating in the literacy expectations. What kinds of tensions arise related to lack of participation?
- How are power relations and a sense of 'value' at work embedded in participation in workplace literacies?

These questions interested us as practitioners since we have found that the prevailing approach to workplace literacy as a set of skills does not match our experience of the complex relationships among people, literacy and work. Literacy framed as a skill set is flat and one dimensional; in contrast, our experience with literacy in the workplace is multi-dimensional. We want to see these relationships more clearly through a close examination of how workers live out their literacy activities. So, as practitioner researchers, we are not aiming for solutions to workplace literacy issues; rather our goal is understanding through inquiry. As academics, our interest in theories of literacy, work and learning takes a different turn with a collaboration with practitioners – building a bridge from theory to practice.

## Research Methods

We used ethnographic research methods to explore our research questions. Ethnography is a qualitative approach that identifies understandings of research participants' lives from their own perspectives, rather than the researchers'. We aim for an insider's point of view. Following these methods, we have systematically collected our data by:

- non-participant observation of work activities, training, meetings, audits
- participant observation; one researcher worked on the line and others participated in training with other workers
- in-depth interviews with people at all levels at each site, sometimes more than once
- review of formal and informal print materials used at work.

Our data is in the form of:

- field notes from observations, participation, conversations in many different settings
- reflections on our field notes and interviews
- transcriptions of interviews
- workplace documents including training materials, workers' writings, and quality materials.

Our study underwent a standard ethical review process with Ryerson Polytechnic University. We all used consent forms at our sites to assure confidentiality of all research participants.[2]

We completed our data collection at the end of June, 2000. We are now analyzing and writing up our data, looking for common themes and patterns across

our sites in relation to our questions, as well as those themes that are unique to each of our sites. Our project will end in September 2001 with a manuscript for a book documenting our findings on literacy and work in Canadian settings.

## Theoretical Framework

The dominant discussion on literacy and work paints a picture of workers as simply unable to keep up with the requirements of the "new" or changing workforce in the age of information and work reorganization. Moreover, this picture of literacy and work squarely puts the onus for economic prosperity of nations and companies on workers' literacy skills. The argument is simple: workers lack literacy; today's jobs require more. The common solution? A skills-based approach that focuses on what workers need to be more competent at their jobs.

However, a growing number of researchers and theorists, ourselves included, are critical of this dominant construction of literacy and work; instead, they take a socio-cultural perspective. These writers treat literacies as plural, and as a complex multi-faceted social practice in which literacy is densely interwoven and intertwined with knowledge and experience meshed into the social relations and power dynamics of the workplace.

Thus, the theoretical starting point for our research is the concept of literacy as a social practice. That is, when we make sense of what we read, when we choose certain language and format in writing, we aren't acting in a vacuum. The meanings of written language and communicating through written language – whether in essays, web sites, work process forms, poems, memos, or lists – are embedded in our social and cultural lives.

All of our activities involving literacy are entangled in the society in ways that are not always obvious. We all know that the texts we read and write communicate information, but at the same time they serve many other purposes as well. For example, literacy is linked to issues of power, as Gowan's research among hospital workers shows management's "closely held belief in the power of literacy to control employee behaviour" (1992, p. 31). Gowen reveals in her study of this workplace literacy program for African-Americans that what managers interpret as poor literacy skills are often acts of resistance. Other researchers have shown how literacy practices can serve to establish and manage our roles and relationships in the workplace. A study by Cook-Gumperz and Hanna (1997), for example, describes how changes in record keeping technology affect nurses' roles simply as caregivers vs information processors. Much recent research on workplace literacy and language complicates the picture of skills by looking to the social sphere in order to understand how and why people do or do not engage in literacy activities. (e.g., Castleton 2000; Darrah 1997; Gee et al 1996; Goldstein, 1998).

This way of looking at literacy, called in the research literature, "socially constructed or socially situated," has been well accepted in school literacy research since the mid 1980s as a theoretical framework for explaining how people make meanings with texts . In that same decade, researchers in other disciplines began looking at knowledge and skills similarly, that is as artifacts and constituents of social practices rather than objective, scientifically measurable elements. Initially, this view was most popular among critical educators, feminists, and environmentalists. Now it is an integral part of much mainstream academic thinking, and is central in the thinking of what is often called the new literacy studies (Gee, 2000).

In our research, we want to see how literacy as a social practice applies in the workplace, an area that has up to now looked at literacy as individual skills. The workplace is increasingly globalized, competitive, quality-controlled, and document-driven. It's a place where even what we call very basic skills, signing your name on a production form, can have risky implications, or failing to skip lines in creating a check list, can throw off a work routine.

## Tapestry Metaphor

We use a tapestry metaphor to visually explain our concept of literacy as a social practice. We see the workplace as a tapestry, and literacy and language are threads woven within it. By itself, the thread is just a piece of colour; as part of the weave, it helps create the picture. There, in the weave, we find its meaning.

We want to examine literacy and language within the weave because they get their texture from the weave and that's where the meaning resides. The weave is the social practice with those other threads of relationships, power dynamics, production processes, and controlling forces all interwoven with literacy. In our research, we take certain sections of the tapestry, magnify them and shine the light on them, so we can closely examine the texture, the colour, the quality of the weave or the social practice.

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As ESL workplace teachers, we certainly acknowledge and appreciate the complexity of the workplace as tapestry. But then we often lift the thread of language and literacy from the picture to examine it separately as reading or writing skills alone. We lose literacy's place in the tapestry and, consequently, we lose those local meanings that give us the complex and lived picture of how literacy and language are used and valued.

For example, it is standard practice to use authentic workplace materials to capture reading and writing tasks which are relevant and "in context." Do we realize that these materials mean one thing to us and probably something quite different to the participants in the group? They understand and perform these reading and writing tasks within the weave of their workplace. Our job *as researchers* is to get inside that weave and understand language and literacy as they experience it in the daily routines of their work. *As workplace ESL teachers* we may not get inside the weave, but we can know that there is more going on than just finding the words on the page, or learning to read a chart or analyze data such as monthly quotas met and unmet posted on the wall. To do that, at the very least, we need to listen for local meanings, listen for how workers think about their tasks and routines, and pay attention to how they live them.

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In the sections that follow, we present several stories from our sites that will better illustrate the nature of our preliminary findings.

# Triple Z: Why are we making so many mistakes?

Mary Ellen Belfiore

The name Triple Z comes from zowey, zingy, zesty - advertising words used to describe the flavour of the pickled condiments and relishes produced by this food processing company. Triple Z has been operating for almost half a century in the same suburban location. Starting as a family business, it is now owned by a U.S.-based multinational corporation. It has a multicultural workforce with a large Italian population. The average age of the unionized hourly workers is mid 40s, with one third of the workforce 55 years or older. Four years ago, the company and union sponsored three sessions of an English in the workplace course, mostly attended by middle aged and older workers. Since then, all communication both written and oral is in English only.

Triple Z looks like a traditional assembly line production plant with workers doing repetitive tasks or monitoring automated machinery. The new initiative driving change is a food safety certification program called Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points or HACCP. HACCP is an all-encompassing system aiming for a tightly controlled environment. This regulated environment is achieved through written documentation and adherence to correct procedures. The company, in the initial stages of certification, is trying to forge a new identity including seeing workers as literate. The workforce has English as a second language, supervisors and trainers often attribute problems with written documentation to their language and literacy skills. Indeed, many of the workers have difficulty writing short phrases or sentences on their forms. They have tried ESL courses; they have tried training workers on the line – still problems in documentation persist.

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Bozena is head of the laboratory and responsible for both the quality program and HACCP certification. She says HACCP makes greater demands on people in terms of reading and writing, "but it's been good. At first there was resistance, but now it's good for everyone. If we don't expect it, they won't learn it. We don't point fingers. It's OK to make mistakes." But in my observation, I found that it's often not OK even as laboratory technicians admitted. These technicians tell workers that documentation can cover them, protect them whenever there are problems with the product. Workers interpret this advice in a variety of ways.

## The Meeting

At this meeting, literacy and language issues took centre stage. Employees were not filling out their HACCP documents correctly even after everyone had been trained to do so. The question for the

meeting was: why are we making so many mistakes? As became clear, there was not one simple answer (like improving reading and writing skills) because language and literacy are woven into the workplace fabric and are meshed into production demands, interpretations of the job, social relations, and power dynamics.

This unusual meeting was called by Liz, the production manager, to find out how the company could make sure that the codes printed on the caps of the jars and on the boxes were correct. The previous day six people had all signed off "OK" for correct codes on the caps when in fact the "best before date" was incorrect. Workers, the lead hand, the lab technician, the mechanic and the supervisor had all written OK on their forms. Production ran for 3 hours - almost 15,000 jars got through their documentation system before the error was noticed.

The company had retrained people on how to complete these forms just a few weeks prior to this meeting. Repeated incidents of incorrect documentation cast doubt on the effectiveness of the lab's training and forced a new approach - get everyone involved in cap coding into one room and find out what's wrong.

Liz called 18 people into the meeting. "All the key people are here. I need your help. I gathered you here to find out what can be done." Gathered around were line workers, mechanics, supervisors, laboratory head and technicians, the maintenance superintendent, and the production manager. Liz frequently repeated throughout the meeting that everyone had a role to play in assuring quality and accuracy and that she was "not trying to find fault or point fingers."

To get the message across more directly, Liz went through four overheads showing forms the operators and lab technicians had filled out as well as maintenance forms for that production run. In rapid fire instructions, she explained the date codes to everyone by pointing quickly to the small print on the screen. When in doubt about the codes, "Ask questions," urged the supervisor, "nobody will be angry if you ask questions." Liz drew attention to areas where the codes were incorrectly marked "OK" for the three hours the product ran. She repeated that she wasn't pointing fingers but had to use the forms to get some answers and some ideas about how to correct the problem. Neva, one of the workers whose form was shown, said later, "I felt bad. Everyone made the mistake but she showed my form."

Then, workers in the room began to give explanations, express their frustrations and offer suggestions. Vittorio, the mechanic: "It happened because no one paid attention…Too much stress - that's the problem." Not following up on this opener, the production manager kept looking for more answers: "What else can I do for you?" Rocco, the forklift driver, responded, "I have a suggestion that will solve all the problems. We need a lab tech every ½ hour to check. People don't know how to fill out the forms or why."

Liz replied that it was everyone's job to document the production process, including the operators. Then Svetlana, an operator, expressed frustration and blurted out, "People confuse. Need more checks. Sometimes not there the mechanics, the lab. I no like to argue [with] other people."

Liz didn't follow up on this comment. Svetlana later told me the confusion was because "the caps [are] different, the codes in different places. We confuse. We have too much to do: fix boxes, look at caps, look at labels, too much." Her partner on the line, Filomena, reiterated the same message: "We work hard. We have lot to do. We need a person just walking around and checking. A person only in here [the label room area alone]."

None of these comments made it to the floor of the meeting. Instead, the manager continued showing people the forms that were incorrectly filled out and instructing them how to put in the exact time, and to write any problems in the comment section.

Liz: "Is everybody comfortable with what I just explained?"

Silence.

Liz: "What else can I do?"

A flurry of frustrated responses followed:

Rocco: "We need more lab techs."

Supervisor: "No, you don't. You guys can do it."

Rocco: "So, why are we making so many mistakes?"

Liz: "That's what we're asking you."

Neva, whose form had been shown on the overhead, was getting impatient and threw out the obvious: "Yesterday we made the changeover and we didn't look to check." After a pause, she answered the question "why" before management asked her: "We're too busy to check."

The previous day six people had all signed off "OK" for correct codes on the caps when in fact the "best before date" was incorrect.

The company had retrained people on how to complete these forms just a few weeks prior to this meeting.

## Contradictions in the Meeting

While Liz talked the words of employee importance and participation, her actions contradicted those words. She mentioned several times that she wasn't pointing fingers yet workers like Neva felt singled out when everyone had made the same mistake. Liz could have instructed people by showing how to complete a form correctly rather than displaying the incorrect ones. In fact, Rocco said that people were never carefully instructed on the how and why of their forms. Liz chose to ignore this part of Rocco's remark and concentrate on the contentious issue of "whose job it is anyway".

Liz could have instructed people by showing how to complete a form correctly rather than displaying the incorrect ones.

Despite giving repeated invitations for input, Liz was not prepared to explore the issues workers brought up: stress, lack of time, more maintenance and lab support, and a full understanding of HACCP. Instead she used the meeting to further management's efforts toward worker responsibility and ownership of the job. In a follow-up interview, she said what she heard at the meeting was that "this is something new, even though mechanically they are filling out the information. But mentally, they're not really paying attention to the information that they have documented." She used the meeting as an opportunity to raise awareness, remind workers of their responsibility and pave the way for discipline if necessary:

> … like it opens their awareness a little bit more. And also, I guess … address the level of responsibility, you know. Which in their mind they thought… it should be someone else's job … and meanwhile it is their own … and not somebody else should be looking over their shoulder to catch their mistake. Should be done correctly the first time.

Despite giving repeated invitations for input, Liz was not prepared to explore the issues workers brought up: stress, lack of time, more maintenance and lab support, and a full understanding of HACCP.

With the pace of change at Triple Z, the assumption is that more work will be demanded and that everyone (workers, staff and management ) will continue to shoulder it. Employees at all levels of the organization complain about the increase of work, the reduction of the workforce, and the futility of arguing against it. "What to do?" is the common question. The answer - live with it. Much of this added work is a result of the culture of documentation that demands data, analysis, written verifications and a seemingly limitless explosion of paperwork.

For Bozena, documentation is the only source of information when products are recalled. She admits that most workers don't know how she pours over their paperwork looking for clues on recalls. She also says the meeting raises attention to the importance of documentation and to "make sure they really understood what they are looking for." With her responsibility for HACCP certification, she wants employees to understand "the necessity of completing the documents on a timely basis and telling the truth without fear."

Fear – another thread interwoven with literacy. The lab technician, a young woman who has the trust of most line workers, has trained them on completing the forms. She says they "lie because they want to keep themselves from getting into trouble."

> It's very hard for them to understand that if you made a mistake, I'm not going to get angry that you made that mistake. I will get angry if I find out you made a mistake and you're hiding it from me…. I think that they still are afraid.
>
> … even though we say it's OK to make a mistake, really, it's not always little. It's not OK, but the point is it's more OK to make a mistake and be honest, than it is to make a mistake and lie. Because then you get in trouble not only for making a mistake, but for lying. I think that's where, for them they feel I'm damned if I do and damned if I don't.

## What does this form mean to people?

The form is simple to fill out and yet its meanings are complex. Bozena says she wants people to really understand what they are looking for. That understanding minimally involves knowing what HACCP is, who demands it, and why it's important for the company, as well as learning how to fill out the forms correctly. Most workers don't know what the paper is for, who reads it, or what people do with it. They do know it can get them in trouble. The meaning of these forms for the workers right now is not a positive one – it is part of the picture of stress, power relations, work reorganization, added job responsibilities and possibly disciplinary action. We believe that their compliance in filling out the forms will depend not so much on learning how to read and write the form, but bridging the different meanings that workers and management have of documentation.

As workplace ESL teachers, management may ask us to teach people to fill in forms correctly. If literacy and language are viewed and taught as just a set of skills, our efforts will fail on the production floor. When these workers go on the line, they will not necessarily use the form in the ways management or

teachers want them to. When we use a standard reporting form like this in class, what meaning do we attribute to it? Are we aware of how the form is woven into workplace life and the multiple layers of meaning it carries for different employees? Do we assume that it comes with a bubble of neutrality, with no history and no personal meaning for people? If the class participants examine it as a social practice with all its 'meanings in use,' perhaps we will get closer to understanding what motivates and discourages literacy use on the job. As teachers, we will learn what workers already know and do with their paperwork; at this site, workers could learn the HACCP story in all its details.

# Texco: Worker Books

## Sue Folinsbee

Texco is a small, non-unionized, privately-owned textile factory which makes specialized fabrics for a niche market around the world. The factory, located in a small town in Ontario, employs 60 people – a mix of men and women, long term employees along with those just out of school, and those born in Canada as well as first generation immigrants from Greece, India and Portugal. In the mid-nineties, Texco offered English at the Workplace for several years.

The company has been in transition from an oral culture to one that is increasingly paperwork-centred and data driven as a result of becoming ISO 9001 certified in 1994. ISO stands for The International Organization for Standardization. It is a certified international quality system to ensure customer satisfaction beginning with conformance to quality requirements, and continuing with reduction of variation and waste.

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One of our findings across all our sites was that workers had developed their own books. At this site, many of the long-term warpers[3] and fixers (mechanics) have created their own literacies for their own purposes — to have more control over their work, to be able to work more safely, more efficiently and more accurately. They pool their knowledge and experience and share this among themselves both verbally and in writing. An understanding of how these literacies are created is important in making visible to us how workers gain and share knowledge as a community and how they maintain some control over their work in the face of increasing standardization. Ironically it is often the long-term employees who are frequently accused of being unable to adjust to change and most in need of better literacy skills.

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This story is about one worker, a warper named Miranda. Her story is connected not only to the stories of other workers across our sites, but also to the much larger story of the contradictions of the new data-driven workplace.

Miranda is one of the first workers I meet and work with at my site. She works in one of the most high tech parts of the plant on a new computerized warper where one must enter all the elements of product set- up into the computer. She also enters tickets into an ASA400 computer system as part of traceability under ISO.

Miranda, in her mid-fifties and of Greek origin, is a lively and friendly personality with a great sense of humour and many stories. An experienced worker, she has been at this plant for 15 years and in the textile industry for 28. She confides to me that she only had the opportunity to go to grade 5 in Greece and that she finds entering data in the AS 400 computer system difficult. She is one of a small group of women in the warp room who befriends me while I am at the site. I spend many hours working with Miranda as a participant observer over the period of several weeks that I am in the Warp Room. While Miranda teaches me the details of warping, we share stories about families, learning and school and good food. She shares with me her recipe for the *best* moussaka in the world. She also chides me for my constant uniform of black pants, black t-shirt and black safety shoes that I wear while I am at the site. The story of Miranda is one that would be familiar to most ESL teachers. Although I want to provide information here of human interest, the story I want to tell and what I want to stress is that Miranda is a highly competent, creative and experienced worker. As I get to know Miranda and the others, I discover that she and several other workers have their own spiral notebooks with diagrams, calculations and instructions

on how to perform different work procedures. I am intrigued by these worker-made books and eventually ask if I can look at them and follow up with interviews with Miranda and others.

Miranda explains to me that a lot of what she gets for her book is from one of the supervisors who sometimes speaks too fast. She tells me: " So I have written down a little bit of Greek and a little bit of English.

Miranda explains to me with a sense of pride that most of her notes are related to how to enter things into the AS400 computer.

> You want to know the truth? This is for myself. See, I am not used to computer and stuff and anything I have to use to put though any work orders and stuff, I need to know which buttons to push through. So I have to have it, and some of it I don't know by heart you know. But sometimes I get stuck which is very often and I have to have a book.

I notice that Miranda's book is an interesting mix of Greek and English. Miranda explains to me that a lot of what she gets for her book is from one of the supervisors who sometimes speaks too fast. She tells me: " So I have written down a little bit of Greek and a little bit of English. So afterwards I'll put in English and make it clearer." The pages of her book are filled with instructions for using the AS400. The pages are printed in English with chunks of Greek interspersed among the English. Miranda emphasizes to me that she uses her book every day to help enter and transfer tickets and work orders into the system.

They are told by management to put their books away when the auditor comes.

One of the other workers, Cathy, tells me that under the ISO system these worker books exist as uncontrolled, non-standard documents and their use could be considered a non-conformance especially when the external auditor comes around. They are told by management to put their books away when the auditor comes. Herein lies the contradiction. Although workers are pushed to take initiative and continuously improve in the "new workplace," they are actually penalized for this under a system like ISO—the worker books being a prime example.

Although Miranda would score low on writing using ways we assess literacy these days, we see that by following some threads of her literacies, in some parts of the picture she is highly literate. She was able to make literacy do what she wanted, have control over her work and do her work well.

In fact, in all our sites, there are workers who use print creatively - that is, they create their own forms, their own manuals or books to help them with their work. In some instances, the workers' documents capture the collective experience of people in a certain department. They use their own manuals and forms rather than the standard ones for a variety of reasons - many of them pointing to the inadequacy of the standard documents to get across information effectively or in a way that gives workers control over their own jobs. People construct their own ways of using literacy in their jobs that makes sense to them but don't necessarily correspond to the standard. As a result, they create their own documents outside the standard documents. These documents are the products of workers on the floor, workers who are often characterized in the dominant discussion about literacy and work as the ones with deficits. These are the stories we often don't hear

*What does this story mean for planning and teaching ESL in the workplace?*

I would suggest that as planners and teachers going into workplaces, a starting place for investigation is to assume a rich community of practice that workers like Miranda engage in to be successful and competent in the new workplace rather than to assume a lack of literacy skills in isolated individuals. As an educator, when I work with companies, I always suggest that they pay attention to the principles of clear language and design as part of everyday good writing practice. As a workplace educator at Texco, I might have recommended that certain documents be rewritten in clear language in workers' own books. As a researcher I found out the reason people create their own books is far more complex than not being able to read and understand manuals. It has more to do with ownership, control and finding a place to "empower" oneself, regardless of their literacy skills, in workplace settings where this is becoming increasing ly difficult to do.

# The Urban Hotel: Quality and ESL

Judy Hunter

## The Hotel

The Urban is a large downtown hotel. It caters to higher end business and leisure travellers. It's a work site with nearly a thousand employees, a very diverse group racially and culturally. The workforce varies between long-time employees and occasional, part-time workers. It's partly unionized and hierarchically structured. The hierarchy is immediately visible in employees' style of dress. Upper level management wear their own suits; others wear uniforms that range from professional looking dress to matching pastel pants and shirts. The hierarchy is also evident in freedom of movement in the hotel, methods of remuneration, literacy practices, as well as decision-making rights and responsibilities.

The hotel has had a corporate-designed quality improvement program in place for about five years. Much of the quality program, aimed chiefly at employee service to guests, is communicated through text. Posters encouraging service excellence line the walls. Employees carry cards along with their identification that remind them of the hotel's four standards of excellence. There is a variety of incentive programs and prizes for recognition of quality work. As well as regular, individual job ratings, charts tallying guest compliments and complaints for all employees are displayed in office areas. The quality message is ubiquitous; it is a visual, textual part of everyone's workday life.

In the following story, I will focus on one ESL employee, whose situation presents an ironic counterpoint to the stories from Triple Z and Texco. In this case, however, it was not management who identified a skills deficit. Giselle was a Floor Manager in Housekeeping who saw herself as deficient in ESL skills, and who may have interpreted the limitations on her work life as related to ESL skills. The irony of her story to me is that she appeared unquestionably competent in all aspects of workplace communication. The competence she displayed in the literacy practices of the workplace, particularly in the design and presentation of a reporting document, to me, surpassed that of many native English users. Moreover, neither her co-workers nor her superiors showed any negative reactions to her communication. Her story tells us how deeply engrained the notion of individual skills can be in both language and literacy. But it also tells us how the production and reception of simple workplace documents are intertwined with workers' expertise at their jobs, the meanings and presentation of documents to others, and the social and power relationships in the workplace.

## Giselle's Story

As a Floor Manager, Giselle supervised and supported room attendants and served as a liaison between the room attendants and the main housekeeping office. An Afro-European immigrant, she'd obtained an undergraduate degree in political science back home, and had come here hoping to do a Masters. But she ran out of money, and when a friend told her there were openings at the Urban Hotel, she used her European hotel experience to get her job. She'd worked at the Urban for two years.

She occasionally made errors with verb tenses, articles, plurals, or word choice, but she didn't have any that might be called glaring fossilized errors. She spoke fluently. She talked to me with ease about the nature of her everyday work and its challenges while I shadowed her.

Giselle also used all the documentation with ease; she even designed a new work form to overcome some of the ongoing problems with common types of room complaints. She researched the kinds of complaints that occurred most often, made a chart to create a rotational cleaning scheme, and titled the 90 Day Rotational Cleaning Program. She presented it for feedback at a morning staff meeting, passing out copies of the form she designed. As she explained its use, she invited collaborative input. The chart was a checklist, laid out horizontally on a legal-size sheet with 40 single cleaning tasks listed in the left column and dates following along to the right. The list included tasks not usually done in everyday room cleaning, like cleaning out the bathtub drains. The idea was that room attendants would add one task to their regular room cleaning, go through the list until all the tasks were finished, then begin the cycle again.

While the document appeared to be a simple grid-like checklist, its design and content involved

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Giselle's collegial style of presentation and the feedback she received suggested to me a cooperative, mutually respectful relationship among these coworkers.

Giselle expressed frustration, not at the quality program, but at the low wages, the unappreciative attitude of many of the managers, and the increasing workload. Now what she wanted to do was take a course in pronunciation, to perfect her accent so she could talk like a Canadian and get a better job.

considerable expertise. Giselle needed first to research the most outstanding kinds of problems guests reported on their rooms. She then needed to distinguish these particular problems from everyday cleaning tasks. When she compiled the checklist, it was important for her to define the new tasks and incorporate them smoothly into the existing daily workload, so that each additional task would not add an onerous amount of time to the work day. To do that, she needed to understand the time constraints and workloads of the room attendants. Finally, she had to create a format that readily conformed to actual work patterns, for if it upset well-established work routines, it might not be used efficiently. In other words, constructing the document required much more than writing a list of tasks along one side of a paper with dates lined up across the top.

The rest of the Floor Manager staff received her new document favourably, some offering small corrections, for example that the housemen take care of the balconies. They all agreed to try it out. They would try one task a day. Carol suggested they begin with the bathtub drains, where she had "seen some big old frogs". The following week I asked how the program was going and was told it was working fine. I believe this early successful use of Giselle's work sheet had to do not just with her expertise at the job, but also with the collaborative way she presented it to her peers in the Housekeeping Department and her relationship to them. Giselle's collegial style of presentation and the feedback she received suggested to me a cooperative, mutually respectful relationship among these coworkers.

Giselle's relationship with the other managers was built on more than her presentation at a single meeting. She was part of a vibrant working group of predominantly Black women, from Nova Scotia, Europe, and the Caribbean, who set the tone of the workday in the Housekeeping office. The atmosphere was most often hectic but also full of vitality, energy, and humour. The two telephones rang constantly; coordinators paged the guest floors; room status reports were consulted and updated with new printouts; forms were prepared, handed out, filled out and handed in; people came in and out of the office in busy bursts. People carried on several conversations at once, often work demands interspersed with social talk. Joking and teasing were common.

Not everyone participated in the social community of the Housekeeping Office. Two management level employees in the Department were distinctly outsiders. Their lack of participation in the everyday social culture of the workplace showed their marginalization. But partly because they were managers, because of the ways they constructed themselves as distinct, and because of their lack of intimate knowledge about the ways people performed their jobs, their initiatives around literacy practices were resisted, in contrast to Giselle's work.

Mark, a white man in his 40s, seemed apart from the group. He wore his own black suit, shirt and tie, indicating management status, but no name tag. I later learned that Mark was an external consultant, hired by the department head to recommend and oversee job restructuring in the department, particularly the floor managers. Thus, he was positioned from the start as an outsider and potential threat to the workers. Moreover, his revision of several working documents and changes to procedures around checking and recording the accuracy of other documents were seen to be unilaterally imposed. His manner was considered heavy-handed, and even though he sometimes attempted to join in the office humour, his jokes tended to fall flat. When out of earshot, he was at times the object of resentful comments and derisive joking. Many of his initiatives were strongly resisted by the majority of the group. Similarly, several people mentioned their resentment of the department head, an Anglo-Canadian who had arrived recently from another, smaller hotel. They criticized the head's lack of understanding about the job demands, and also her style of interaction, which they often considered dismissive and disrespectful.

Despite the success with her work document, Giselle was not happy. She said she "put lots of time in" working on the chart. It was "good for the hotel, good for everyone", but she was resentful of the department head who didn't seem to recognize all the extra work and time she'd put into the project in her job rating. To me, her work was a clear example of the quality program's success. Although Giselle didn't explicitly talk about the program, her project, and the time and energy she spent on it, was a positive reflection of the hotel's quality goals.

Giselle expressed frustration, not at the quality program, but at the low wages, the unappreciative attitude of many of the managers, and the increasing workload. Now what she wanted to do was take a course in pronunciation, to perfect her accent so she could talk like a Canadian and get a better job. Yet I felt there was nothing distracting about her soft European accent.

Giselle seemed to believe that being stuck in the low-paying job she had could be changed with a more Anglo-Canadian accent. But I would tend to think her race, culture, or interactional style probably played a greater part in job success possibly inside and probably outside the hotel. The hotel had a visibly diverse hiring policy, of which they were proud, but at the same time there was a clear schism between the Anglo-Canadian administrators and the Black housekeeping coordinators and floor managers, who formed a powerful, experienced working group in Housekeeping. Nevertheless, the power and solidarity derived from their competence, knowledge, and common work experience could only challenge the overall department hierarchy in limited ways. Their resistance to imposed documentation practices may have been effective because it came from the work group and was eventually recognized to be in the best interests of the hotel. I don't see Giselle in conflict with the administration. Nor do I see her document as designed to conflict with any of the consultant's work, but her membership in the community of culturally, racially, and stylistically different work group aligned her oppositionally to the department administrators, and may have played the biggest part in her lower evaluation.

There was clearly no evidence in the workplace to fault Giselle's literacy. Giselle did blame her department head for her lower than expected job evaluation, but in a larger sense, she blamed herself, naming her language skills as a problem. We, as ESL specialists, might see cases like Giselle's simply as misdiagnoses, for we see them all around us — many people who think their English is holding them back when it's really something else. Or we might consider these so-called "English problems" as euphemistic reasons for rejection, which we are also aware of.

But as Ballard and Clanchy (1991) have pointed out in school settings, ESL students and their teachers (not just ESL teachers) often too readily name English language as a source of various kinds of school failure, when culture is often much more the source of problems. Different ways of looking at knowledge, roles of students and teachers, and educational expectations are the factors that Ballard and Clanchy see as underlying problems for the ESL students they investigate. Likewise, I'd like to suggest that different, subtler aspects of the Hotel and of North American workplace culture may figure in the disappointments of women like Giselle. Cultural and racial differences, interactional styles, and power issues may be intertwined. Like the issues at Triple Z and Texco, these issues are more complex, socially sensitive, and nuanced than a simple language or literacy label. Certainly, they're more difficult to deal with than skills. But what Giselle and many of us do when we name a concrete language skill as the culprit is to individualize the problem and internalize the blame. What we also want to do is look at the broader, more complex, tougher issues.

*What does Giselle's story mean for planning and teaching ESL in the workplace?*

When people come to us, naming their ESL needs, we need to look more deeply, acknowledging how broader social issues, like racism, may influence their lives, how the values and pressures of the workplace may impinge on their images of who they are and how capable they are. Further, we need to consider our roles in advocacy for non-native English speakers and in educating those outside the profession. We need to inform the public and the workplace of different ways to see these issues.

## Discussion

What we hope to have shown in these stories is our new understandings of workplace literacy that go beyond document-based skills analysis. We have learned that the ways people engage in literacy activities is much more complex than they appear by looking at documents alone or English proficiency alone.

At the same time, the stories show the ubiquitousness of the notion of workers' skills as the source of problems. In each of our stories, ESL language or literacy skills were named as barriers to workplace success. At Triple Z, management saw workers as deficient in language and literacy skills. At Texco, workers were typical of those many of us have taught in workplace ESL programs. At the Urban, a worker herself, whose literacy competence could not be faulted, talked of the need to improve her pronunciation. In other words, when non-native English speaking workers were involved, problems were readily attributed to their language and literacy skills.

Our stories show three examples of participating/not participating in the literacy expectations of the workplace. In each, the reasons behind their participation and the nature of their participation become apparent only when we look beyond single threads in the workplace tapestry. The workers at Triple Z were not participating in the HACCP documentation required of them. Yet the underlying rea-

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sons had more to do with contradictions of risk and blame, superficial training, and increasing workloads than with skills. And the consequences of their non-participation were increased blame from management and frustration on both sides. Miranda, with her worker books at Texco, participated in literacy practices that went beyond the expectations of the workplace. She used hand-written books to increase her autonomy, efficiency, and control over her work. She was resourceful in drawing on her bilingualism to construct books that improved her work and ultimately benefited the company. Nonetheless, her books were considered non-standard documents, for which she could be penalized under the standardized documentation system. Again, we see contradictions around workplace literacy practices; this time they involve risk and blame related to worker initiative and resourcefulness. The final example presents an ironic counterpoint, for Giselle, despite being a second language speaker, is highly competent and thoroughly engaged in the literacy expectations of her job. She has, in the hotel's terms, gone "the extra mile". But when the supervisor doesn't acknowledge the value of her work accordingly, Giselle turns not just against the supervisor, but her own language skills. We would interpret her job evaluation to be more likely related to underlying issues of power, culture, race, and interactional styles. The literacy themes we have seen in these three stories – of deeper, more complex issues of power, worker autonomy, control of work, risk and blame, contradictory workplace agendas, and cultural, interactional conflict – have cut across all our research sites. They have deeply enriched our understandings of what participation in workplace literacies really entails.

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## Conclusion: Larger Implications for ESL and for Work

Glynda Hull a prominent researcher on literacy and work says: " To be literate in a workplace means being a master of a complex set of rules and strategies which govern who uses text and how and for what purposes" (1995, p.19). As workplace educators, we are interested in using these research findings, which illustrate some of these complex rules and strategies to improve practice for those who plan for and instruct in workplace programs.

### Awareness

The first step is always awareness. We can use this research to complicate the picture and help practitioners think beyond the individual strand in the tapestry. Reading the critical perspectives on literacy and work makes the invisible visible and gives us a more balanced perspective of literacy at work.

### Planning

In our program planning and overall workplace needs assessment, we can investigate what these complex rules and strategies are, the consequences of compliance or non-compliance and what discourages or motivates literacy use on the job. We must advocate for a democratic planning process that involves a worker/ management partnership to surface the different interests of these groups and the dynamics of workplace power relationships. In our needs assessments we can pay attention to the contradictions between the ideal values of the workplace and the reality of life on the plant floor. This research can help us focus in on the appropriate areas and ask the right questions. As workplace educators we must understand the difference between those issues that have an educational component and those that are an issue of company practice.

We must advocate for a democratic planning process that involves a worker/ management partnership to surface the different interests of these groups and the dynamics of workplace power relationships.

### Teaching

We need to consider the complex rules and strategies around engaging in literacy tasks as part of learning to fill out forms and do paperwork; through this examination we learn what people already know and do with their paperwork.

ESL and work mean much more than just using the right phrases or learning how to write a memo. Teachers and participants have to acknowledge and count as knowledge the power and social relations that are interwoven with the literacy tasks that people are expected to do. This more complex examination of literacy and work shines the light on the weave in the tapestry and perhaps with more clarity and understanding, both workers and teachers can return to their jobs and make decisions with insight.

## Acknowledgements

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## Notes

1. The five members of the research group include the three authors, and Tracy Defoe, an education consultant in Vancouver and Nancy Jackson, Faculty of Education, McGill University.

2. All proper names in the following discussion are pseudonyms.
3. Warping is a process that prepares the yarn for weaving by ensuring that the required number of ends for the product being made are of the same length and the same tension.

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# THEME 2: ORAL SKILLS AND PRONUNCIATION

## Introduction
## by Robert Courchêne

Teachers and researchers need to see listening as an interactive process rather than a simple transmission of information from speaker to listener. It must be reflective of what happens in the real world.

He identifies five key factors that teachers must focus on: intelligibility, negotiability of meaning, balancing form and meaning, and choosing meaningful topics and contexts that reflect/theorize/modify "works in progress".

The papers in this section examine different aspects of aural/oral skills with a major focus on pronunciation. In his paper, *Listening Comprehension: We've Come a Long Way, But…*, Mendelsohn presents a critical overview of listening comprehension research from the unique perspective of a classroom teacher and seasoned researcher. He begins his paper by identifying classroom teachers'questions about listening comprehension (e.g., text difficulty, learning styles) and how they differ from the research actually being carried out in the field; he goes on to point out that if this gap is going to be bridged, researchers must become classroom teachers and textbook writers. He then examines why the traditional approach to listening – listen and answer the questions we have prepared for you – fails to recognize the situated or contextualized nature of listening; we listen for many reasons and consequently pay attention to different aspects of the message. To redress the situation, Mendelsohn proposes a shift from a product to a process-based approach to listening based on listening strategies that must be taught to learners along with a closer integration of top-down and bottom-up approaches to listening. As well, teachers and researchers need to see listening as an interactive process rather than a simple transmission of information from speaker to listener. It must be reflective of what happens in the real world. To achieve this teachers must use, where appropriate, authentic texts and ask students to carry out tasks that are both authentic and purposeful. Mendelsohn concludes with a plea for more research and for closer ties between research and practice, especially in terms of materials and classroom methodology.

Morgan, in his paper, *Language, Identity, and ESL Pronunciation: An Integrated Approach*, draws our attention to the fact that there is more to pronunciation than the teaching and learning of sounds. Our personality, individuality, our very identity is closely tied to what we say and how we say it. Pronunciation reveals our education, our social class and, in many cases, our place of origin. In the first part of his paper, he reviews the research of sociolinguists such as Labov, Gumperz and Tannen who wanted to establish correlations between race and language and also between language and social class. They wanted to establish norms and patterns of regularity in spoken language. While recognizing the important contribution these researchers have made to the field, Morgan points out that they have failed to take into consideration the agentive role of the learner as well as the fact that learner identity is not stable over time. Based on the research of Norton, Tooley and Ibrahim, he presents a more interactive approach to identity, meaning and pronunciation with an emphasis on the role that language plays in an individual's ongoing reconstruction of his/her identity.

In the next section of his paper, Morgan turns to classroom considerations for integrating identity into pronunciation lessons. He identifies five key factors that teachers must focus on: intelligibility, negotiability of meaning, balancing form and meaning, and choosing meaningful topics and contexts that reflect/theorize/modify "works in progress". He illustrates each of these with practical examples. In the last section of his paper, Morgan presents two "lessons in progress" in which he demonstrates his approach to the teaching of pronunciation. In both lessons, Morgan shows how situated approaches to language learning allow learners to use their own personal experiences to interpret the meaning of texts and also to negotiate the meaning of texts with co-participants. In doing so, they reveal and (re)contruct their personal identities on an ongoing basis.

# Listening Comprehension: We've Come a Long Way, but ...

David Mendelsohn, York University

## 1. Introductory Comments

Before beginning the paper, I would like to clarify where I am coming from: I am here today to speak about the state of listening comprehension research, and that is one of the areas in which I work, but the other area which is equally precious to me is my classroom ESL teaching. In short, what I am saying is that my interest in research is in how it can inform classroom practice, and this will be reflected in my paper.

It is always a pleasure to be invited to speak at TESL Ontario, and I am delighted by the fact that these four Research Symposiums are on the programme. Last year at the conference I called for TESL Ontario to make a shift and to embrace theory and research more than it had in recent years. I would like, therefore, to congratulate Bob Courchêne and the Conference organizers for taking this step.

In this paper, I will be surveying some of the most important innovations in our thinking on the teaching of Listening Comprehension, what the very recent literature in the field of listening has to say, and where we are in terms of our classroom practices when teaching listening. Throughout this talk, I will describe the most recent innovations in our thinking and in the theoretical literature. However, I would ask you to be constantly aware of the last word of my title: "We've come a long way, BUT…" because in relation to a number of the innovations I will be discussing, I will be pointing out that the innovative thinking in the theoretical literature has not yet found its place in the classroom texts and methods.

## 2. An Acknowledgement of the Gap Between Researchers and Classroom Practitioners, and What Listening *Teachers* Want to Know

Berne (1998, 1996) has examined the gap that exists between researchers and classroom practitioners, and she comes up with the same points that I have been making for the past several years in various presentations and articles: that teachers and researchers focus on different things. It is interesting to note that in her research, Berne (1998) found that the only common ground is in an acknowledgement of the need to teach listening strategies.

Berne's empirical study showed that classroom teachers seldom or never refer to listening research. What the teachers are looking for is classroom-based research that will address their issues; Berne identifies the following examples from the teachers' responses:

- the effectiveness of different types of activities
- research on the assessment of listening comprehension and on learners' responses to different forms of assessment
- the relevance of culture in the teaching of listening
- how to determine the level of difficulty of a text – an issue I will return to later
- the relationship between listening and other skills
- what to do about differences in learning styles when teaching listening

A survey of the research literature quickly reveals that that these are clearly not the kind of research questions being addressed by the researchers – hence my claim that we've come a long way, BUT ….

Berne concludes with some suggestions as to how to bridge the gap between researchers and classroom teachers:

- researchers should be writing classroom textbooks
- there should be more collaboration between the two groups
- there should be an increased emphasis on listening in methods courses for teachers
- classroom teachers should be encouraged to find out more about the research through jour-

I will be pointing out that the innovative thinking in the theoretical literature has not yet found its place in the classroom texts and methods.

There should be an increased emphasis on listening in methods courses for teachers.

nals and through conference presentations such as this research symposium

- and my addition: researchers should be required to be classroom teachers of ESL at the same time.

Researchers should be required to be classroom teachers of ESL at the same time. When we listen to an announcement on the subway about a break-down and train delay, it is essential that we get all the details.

## 3. A Better Understanding of the Importance of Providing Motivation and a Focus for Listening.

It is very heartening to be able to note in a paper of this type in the year 2000, a very important change that we can see in the literature that has indeed been recognized by classroom teachers and by the writers of listening texts. The change that I am referring to relates to the issues of motivation for listening and a focus for listening. In recent years we have all come to accept that people do not "just listen" – they have a very specific motivation or reason for listening, and this reason dictates the way in which we listen. For example, when we listen to an announcement on the subway about a break-down and train delay, it is essential that we get all the details: After all, unless we know where the break-down is, which direction of traffic is affected, and how long the delay is expected to last, we will not know what action to take. On the other hand, when we switch on the radio in the car on the way to work, we have as our main purpose being entertained, and so we do not need to focus on every detail.

On the other hand, when we switch on the radio in the car on the way to work, we have as our main purpose being entertained, and so we do not need to focus on every detail.

In traditional listening materials for ESL, there was no acknowledgement of these differences in focus or motivation and as a result, the same "listen and answer the comprehension questions" activity was almost universally present. I am happy to report that today there is an acknowledgement that we need to listen to different things in different ways – something we have long recognized in reading comprehension - and that these different kinds of listening should be followed by very different types of activities. In fact, when we use materials of the "listen and answer the following questions" type for all listening, we often subvert the listening by the learner and cause them to listen to some texts *in the wrong or an unproductive way*.

## 4. A Better Understanding of the Listening Process

Over the past decade or so, in the literature we have seen the development of a much better understanding of the listening process itself. I am of the firm opinion that much of what I have criticized in the traditional way in which listening was taught, is a result of a lack of understanding of the listening process. We see this reflected in the materials and activities in the traditional ESL listening class - it was traditionally: "Listen - but we're not going to teach you how to listen or indeed what to listen for", followed by: "Answer the comprehension questions - but we're only going to focus on whether you got the answer right or wrong." This issue will be discussed in detail when I talk about the shift in focus from product to process.

i) We see in the literature a change in the notion of correctness. As I just said, traditionally, either a comprehension question was "right" or "wrong" – black or white. The goal was seen as decoding the text. Gillian Brown (1990) in particular has come to describe listening as an interpretive process, arguing that virtually all the listening we do is a matter of interpretation, and should be seen in shades of grey, rather than in blacks and whites. Gillian Brown points out that if we accept this notion, then we have to accept that context is crucial to meaning.

ii) Listening is acknowledged today as being an *active* process. It is no longer "politically correct" or acceptable to think or talk of listening as one of the "passive skills". I am happy to report that gone are the days of Dickensian notions of listening, in which our ears are receivers into which information is poured, and all the listener has to do is to passively accept the message. Today we recognize that good listeners are active listeners – fully as active as when speaking. This leads us to the situation of having to teach our students how to be the most efficient and active listeners as possible.

iii) Listening is often interactive and not the reception of sustained monologue as it would seem from an examination of traditional ESL listening texts. I will be developing this notion extensively a little later on.

## 5. A Better Understanding of the Factors that Affect Listening

It is very interesting to note, when examining the literature on listening comprehension, that very little attention has traditionally been paid to the factors that affect listening. And most notable for its absence, is the seemingly obvious and simple question: What makes a particular listening passage easy

or difficult for ESL learners? This question is addressed by Rubin (1994) and Lynch (1998) but is discussed most fully by Gillian Brown in her 1995 article.

Gillian Brown spells out the following "dimensions of difficulty" in listening: She begins by talking about the text - its length and its purpose. She points out that a text which is not intended to be the transferal of a heavy amount of information, but is rather chatty, conversational language, may not require of the listener much attention to details of content. She then goes on to spell out six principles that affect the "cognitive load" of a listening text. They are:

- A text is easier when there are fewer rather than more individuals and objects.
- A text is easier to understand when the individuals and objects are clearly distinct from one another. What she means is that the task is easier when it is easy to distinguish the characters involved either in terms of their names or what they look like. The same holds for following details if the features are distinct from one another – she cites the example of a report of a traffic accident and how sometimes we find it difficult to follow which car was doing what.
- A text is easier when the spatial relations are clear – again, using the example of an accident report, the description will only be clear if the spatial relations between the vehicles are clear.
- A text is easier when the order of telling the events matches the order of the events themselves. In other words, if you are telling a story and you jump around in time, it will be harder. Think of following a novel that jumps around in time. Yet, we can always refer back to the text!
- A text is easier when the inferences we are expected to make are more in keeping with what we would have predicted. She uses the example of : *He fell into debt (and) he married an heiress* as opposed to *He married an heiress (and) he fell into debt.* In the first sentence, we must infer that he married the heiress in order to get out of debt – fairly straightforward and fits our stereotype of such situations. In the second sentence, *He married an heiress (and) he fell into debt*, "there is no indication of any attitude to getting married and we could infer that he gets into debt as a result of his changing lifestyle." The inference in the second sentence is not, however, as easy to draw.
- A text is easier when it fits with the information you already have. This is consistent with our belief in the importance of pre-listening and the activation of existing schema – the activation of background knowledge.

You may be scratching your heads and saying, "But isn't that obvious?" And in a sense you would be correct. However, it is important to note that it had not been spelled out until recently. And more important than that is the realization of the implications of these factors for materials selection and grading in listening. This, unfortunately, brings us right back to the "BUT" at the end of the title of my talk: Yes, this is obvious, and yes, it is now present in the theoretical literature, BUT it is not yet evident in the classroom texts, nor, I would argue, is it in the forefront of the minds of teachers when deciding what text to use. Selection and grading of materials for listening still tends to be rather haphazard.

Yes, this is obvious, and yes, it is now present in the theoretical literature, BUT it is not yet evident in the classroom texts, nor, I would argue, is it in the forefront of the minds of teachers when deciding what text to use. Selection and grading of materials for listening still tends to be rather haphazard.

## 6. A Shift from "Focus on Product", to "Focus on Process"

Mendelsohn (1994), in his book describing his "strategy-based approach" to the teaching of listening, complains that most listening comprehension lessons, which claim to be *teaching* listening, take the form of simply having the students listen and then answer comprehension questions. What he feels is wrong is that students are not usually being taught *how to listen*. In other words, what claims to be *teaching listening*, in fact is *testing listening* – it is: "Listen and answer the questions, but I am not going to teach you how to do it." There is no attempt to examine what has gone wrong in the listening process. This means that it is highly likely that the next time the learner is confronted with this same type of listening, they will use the same unsuccessful techniques – they will not have improved as listeners.

In other words, what claims to be *teaching listening*, in fact is *testing listening* – it is: "Listen and answer the questions, but I am not going to teach you how to do it."

Mendelsohn proposes what he calls a "strategy-based approach", which teaches students how to listen better in a second language by teaching them a set of strategies. His strategy-based approach involves the designing of a listening comprehension course which will take the form of teaching different listening strategies as the core of the program.

Field (1998), in a somewhat similar vein, proposes what he calls a "diagnostic approach", in which a lesson would involve pre-listening, listening and then a lengthy post-listening session "in which

gaps in the learners' listening skills could be examined and redressed through short micro-listening exercises." Note that Field's "training activities" come as a result of the diagnosis of where listening breakdown has occurred, while Mendelsohn's strategy instruction comes *before the real listening* as a result of a needs' analysis and initial diagnostic testing. However, despite this difference, both are proposing a process approach, not a "testing-through-comprehension", product approach.

It is interesting, yet also a little upsetting to note that although, as Field (1998) says, "There has been a shift in perspective …", unfortunately, anyone who carries out a close examination of recent listening textbooks for classroom use, will quickly notice a huge gap between theory and practice. This is a clear example of why I say, "We've come a long way, BUT …" – textbooks are now "talking the talk" – the "Notes to the teacher" and "Introduction" clearly reflect the shift described by people like Mendelsohn and Field, but it is seldom manifested in the actual materials.

## 7. Redressing the Imbalance between Approaching Listening as a Top-Down and as a Bottom-Up Process

Bottom-up processing involves piecing together the parts of what is being heard in a linear fashion, so that ultimately the whole content will be clear. It is like joining together the links in a chain, one by one, in sequence. It goes from part to whole. Anderson and Lynch (1988) describe bottom-up processing as "listener as tape recorder".

Bottom-up processing involves piecing together the parts of what is being heard in a linear fashion, so that ultimately the whole content will be clear. It is like joining together the links in a chain, one by one, in sequence. It goes from part to whole.

Top-down processing, on the other hand is holistic. It goes from whole to part. It is built on the premise that listening is an interpretive process. Therefore, listeners should be actively formulating a hypothesis very early on in the listening and then modifying it where necessary. This hypothesis should be based on what is heard, and linked to the learner's background knowledge. While bottom-up processing is "listener as tape recorder", Anderson and Lynch call top-down processing "listener as active model building". Top-down processing includes such strategies as guessing – making inferences and predicting.

Top-down processing, on the other hand is holistic. It goes from whole to part. It is built on the premise that listening is an interpretive process.

Now, if I had been giving this paper five years ago, I would have been calling for less practice with bottom-up and more practice with top-down strategies. However, as I am careful to state in my 1994 book, there is a need for both. Moreover, particularly at the beginner level, top-down approaches are not available to the learner. Consequently, they have to do some bottom-up processing of what they hear at the acoustic level to facilitate subsequent top-down processing.

You will note that I have called this section of the paper "Redressing the imbalance between top-down and bottom-up. Ironically, what I am beginning to notice in the literature is a swing of the pendulum too much towards top-down, and too far away from bottom-up . If I may draw an analogy, it is like what happened to the explicit teaching of grammar when the Communicative Approach was introduced to the ESL classroom - the pendulum swung so far away from the teaching of grammar that many people ceased teaching grammar at all, and many people to this day believe that using the Communicative Approach means, "Do not teach grammar".

What I am trying to say is that we must be very careful not to go overboard with top-down at the expense of bottom-up. I spell out my solution to this problem on page 15 of my 1994 book as follows:

> The strategy-based approach that I am advocating makes maximum use of a top-down approach where feasible, but also uses bottom-up strategies where they are deemed useful to learners. For example, pre-listening and stressing the importance of hypothesizing, and predicting and guessing, are instances of top-down strategies, while listening for key transitions in a discourse is a bottom-up strategy.

## 8. The Need for Interactive or Two-Way Listening and Making the Listening Class More Closely Reflect Listening in the Real World

I would hardly be bringing you news if I were to focus this section on making the case for using authentic materials with authentic background noise, etc., in the listening class. Field (1998) does in fact identify this focus on authentic materials for listening as a recent change, but I would frankly call it a *fairly* recent change, and one that we are quite used to already, and see played out quite often in the textbooks. Consequently, I do not plan on spending a lot of time on this in this paper. However, I would like to make a few comments about the fashion of using authentic material.

I want to sound a word of caution, and to suggest that authentic material has its limits and our acceptance of its importance might indeed have caused us to go a little too far in this direction. Using authentic material does not guarantee that this is good material or appropriate or useful material for the task at hand. Just because it is authentic does not mean that it is good for our purposes, and we must be careful of the danger of using this cherished authentic material just because it is authentic and because we have it on tape. After all, if we endorse what I said earlier about the need to teach the process - that is, to teach students "how to" listen, then the students are going to have to be given lots of opportunities to practice the different facets of listening, and it is not always easy to capture this in authentic materials.

Let me give you an example. If you believe, as I do, that we need to teach students how to listen, then we need to provide exercises in using such strategies as listening to how interlocutors address each other as a cue to the interpersonal relations that exist between them. For example, do you hear words like "Dr. Larocque", "Professor Moross", or do you hear them addressing each other as "David" and "Penelope." Do you hear them addressing each other as "Davey" or "Dave" and "Penny" or "Pen", or "Sweetie Pie" and "My Poopsie"? Each of these forms of address helps us to determine the interpersonal relations that exist, and we use such features to help us determine the interpersonal relations when listening in our first language. What I see us having to do in the second language listening class is to convince the students to listen for these cues and to make assumptions based on them just as they do in their first language. And the way we will get this to happen is by developing exercises *for this, and the students will need a lot of practice*. But, the problem is that if we restrict ourselves only to authentic materials, fearing that we will be accused of being old-fashioned if we construct special training exercises which have more examples to practice than a piece of authentic material would, then I believe that we will fail to adequately teach our students "how to". The problem is likely to be that the authentic materials we use just do not have enough examples of such forms of address to help our students learn to use this very simple and useful strategy.

This reality has led me to argue on numerous occasions that there is a place for what I call "training activities" and what Field calls "subskill exercises" – not authentic material - along with lots of practice with authentic materials.

Let us now return to what *is*, in fact, a major innovation, and that is the call for Interactive or two-way listening. The strongest proponent of this is Tony Lynch at the University of Edinburgh, and I refer you particularly to his 1997 and 1995 papers listed in the *References* although he has written on this topic in a number of other places as well.

Lynch has pointed out that it is very rare for listening to be carried on as an isolated skill not interacting with other language skills. There are, of course, such situations, like in a lecture, at a movie or a play, or listening to the radio, but they are the exception. Moreover, in the real world, not only does most listening occur in conjunction with other language skills, but it is usually part of social interaction in face-to-face conversation and not monologue.

The obvious result of such an acknowledgement of the two-way, interactive nature of most listening, is to call for the integration of speaking and listening – the two most obvious skills to combine in our pedagogy. It is interesting to remember that when grouping the four skills into pairs traditionally, we liked to group listening and reading because they share a lot in terms of the processes in play, but it is clearly more useful pedagogically to integrate listening with speaking.

Oprandy (1994) makes a very explicit call for the integration of listening and speaking, pointing out that discourse processing is as much a social event as a cognitive one. Brown and Yule (1983) make ostensibly the same point when they talk of the functions of language of "transaction" – the transferring of information, and "interaction" – the maintenance of social relations, and suggest that virtually all communication involves both. Oprandy goes so far as to spell out the principles that should guide the planning of the speaking/listening part of an ESL course.

Lynch (1995) calls for the teaching of what he calls interactive listening strategies as part of listening comprehension courses, and specifically as part of EAP courses. He defines interactive listening strategies as "the ways in which a partner in a conversation may attempt to resolve a comprehension problem by seeking help from the speaker." Examples of these would be clarification requests and confirmation checks.

If you believe, as I do, that we need to teach students how to listen, then we need to provide exercises in using such strategies as listening to how interlocutors address each other as a cue to the interpersonal relations that exist between them.

In the real world, not only does most listening occur in conjunction with other language skills, but it is usually part of social interaction in face-to-face conversation and not monologue.

Kazu's one-way listening improved quite substantially during his course. However, Kazu did not do well in handling "the complex social processes of conversational two-way listening."

In his 1997 study of a student he calls Kazu, Lynch looks at how well Kazu copes with one-way listening – listening to lectures and the like, and with two-way listening – listening-speaking-reacting – in short, interacting. The fact is that Kazu's one-way listening improved quite substantially during his course. However, Kazu did not do well in handling "the complex social processes of conversational two-way listening", [which] requires more than … one-way listening skills: it also requires fine interpersonal judgement as to how far you can tax your interlocutor's tolerance for asking for repetition, clarification and all the other things we recommend as good two-way listening strategies."

The worrisome fact is that despite the work that has been done by people like Lynch, when we look at most textbooks and classrooms, that same "BUT" from the title of my talk remains – we know now what we should be doing, but we are not yet doing it! Very good suggestions have been made, for example, at the end of Lynch's 1995 paper. He proposes the inclusion of "modeling" of interactive listening strategies, using either native or non-native models. This, he suggests, should be followed by exercises which require interactive negotiation by the student – what Lynch calls the "performance" stage. And finally he proposes the "debriefing" stage in which there is feedback and evaluation of the student's efforts. It is heartening to note that this precisely fits my call for the teaching of "how to" that I spoke of earlier. He concludes by calling for the inclusion of the teaching of interactive listening strategies in all listening courses. However, coming back to the word "BUT", it still remains for us to see this being more broadly put into practice.

This brings us directly to the next issue that I wish to raise:

I would like to suggest that we are changing our sense of what it takes to become proficient in a second language, and that we are coming to acknowledge more and more that it takes a lot longer and there is a lot more to it than we used to acknowledge.

## 9. A Shift in Our Sense of what is Needed to Become a Proficient Second Language Listener

I would like to suggest that we are changing our sense of what it takes to become proficient in a second language, and that we are coming to acknowledge more and more that it takes a lot longer and there is a lot more to it than we used to acknowledge. The TESOL International Association in its official statement argues that mastery of social language skills takes two years, and for mastery of English for Academic Purposes they say: "To achieve parity with their native English language peers" takes from 6 to 9 years. Isn't that incredible when we see how little time is funded for ESL training by government and agencies.

If we bear in mind what I have just said, then we must acknowledge that it takes a lot longer and is a lot more complex to become a proficient listener, especially an academic listener, than we used to think. As we have already seen from the work by Tony Lynch on interactive listening, we need to adjust our sense of what academic listening comprehension comprises and incorporate the types of things Lynch was advocating.

A few years ago, I carried out a pilot study on the listening ability, needs and the note-taking ability of first year Economics majors at York University whose first language was not English. The reason for the study was that in the provision of ESL for undergraduates at York, we have always worked on the tacit assumption that the one skill that will "take care of itself" is listening – our logic being that the students are exposed to so much listening in their classes that we surely should not be teaching listening in our precious ESL class time. The findings of the study were that our students understand substantially less than we think of their lectures, and that the notes that they take on the whole are pitifully inadequate. One student in the study took no notes at all and when I asked him in a follow-up interview why that was, he admitted that he was too ashamed of what his notes would look like to be willing to share them with us.

The post-study interviews that I conducted with the informants revealed that there was a lot more going on than their ability or inability to cope with the one-way listening of the large lecture – all of the features that Lynch discusses in terms of interactive listening came into play and were very weak in many of these students.

I am currently conducting a large-scale study of the special needs of ESL students at university. This study asks the opinions of professors and students, and is not restricted to listening, but the pilot testing of the questionnaire would suggest that it will confirm much of what has been said in the previous two sections. The study will conclude with a series of recommendations, and these will not only include things the students and their ESL teachers can do, but also suggestions as to what their subject-professors can do from their end. Lynch (1994) deals with this very question in discussing how to train lecturers for international audiences.

## 10. Directions for Future Research

I would like to begin to conclude by spelling out some areas related to the teaching of Listening Comprehension that still need to be addressed. Several of these are suggested by Lynch (1998), and it is interesting to think about these in relation to what Berne found about the gap between researchers and classroom teachers, and what it is the teachers want researched. Lynch, like me, has one foot in each camp, and this is reflected in the fact that he does indeed write textbooks in addition to doing theoretical research. This is reflected in the similarity between what he is calling for and what Berne found the teachers were calling for. Here are some of the areas that Lynch feels need to be researched:

- the impact of the visual element on listening comprehension
- the influence of the metrical pattern of the L1 on L2 listening
- the link between level of listening and use of listening strategies
- misunderstandings when listening, as a window onto our understanding of the underlying listening process
- how social, cultural, and affective factors impinge on listening comprehension
- the desirable balance between top-down and bottom up processing in listening - because I fear that we may have thrown the baby out with the bath-water and begun to neglect bottom-up processing because of our new-found interest in top-down processing
- the integration of recent research and thinking by theorists into the classroom texts and methodology
- the need to examine ways in which *we* can help *students* with listening, particularly in academic settings such as schools, colleges and universities.

## 11. Concluding Comments

I have been very careful not to paint too rosy a picture of the state of the art in second language listening comprehension. However, neither should we be too pessimistic. We clearly have come a long way, and it would, in my opinion, be worrisome and arrogant of us not to add that we've come a long way, BUT …

It is my hope that in the next few years, and through symposia like these, there will be a renewed interest in research by classroom practitioners, who, in turn, will then drive the research agenda.

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- the link between level of listening and use of listening strategies
- how social, cultural, and affective factors impinge on listening comprehension

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# Language, Identity and ESL Pronunciation: an Integrated Approach

by Brian Morgan

## ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

Language, to a large degree, and pronunciation, to a smaller degree, express both our individuality and our social identity in many ways. We perceive someone to be happy or sad, nervous or confident, assertive or submissive, based on elements of spoken language such as pitch, tempo, and loudness (cf. paralinguistic components of style, Chaika, 1994). Cultural assumptions about masculinity and femininity are also expressed and supported through elements of pronunciation. In addition, many of us can accurately guess a person's geographical, cultural, racial or class background from the way he/she pronounces English. And of course, most ESL teachers can quickly identify an L2 speaker and that speaker's L1 through the sound system of language even when the content is fully comprehensible.

The varied intersections of language and identity have been an important focus of sociolinguistics for many years, and many of these studies have included pronunciation.

In studies on gender and language in the workplace, a number of researchers (Kohn, 1992; Tannen, 1995; Lakoff, 1990) have suggested that women's language at work often *appears* tentative, whereas men's language seems authoritative in comparison, and these effects are often achieved through pronunciation. A "tentative" person would be more likely to use rising tones as a way of softening assertions and of seeking confirmation of ideas from others. In contrast, a "confident" person might use more volume, stronger stress, and sharp, falling intonation patterns. The underlying reason for such differences, as Tannen (1995) indicates, is that women have been socialized towards more supportive roles in their conversational styles, in contrast to men, who are more likely to assume dominant roles, interrupting more often and steering conversations towards topics they're familiar with in order to demonstrate their knowledge.

Another example of identity and pronunciation comes by way of a familiar educational video called Crosstalk (Twitchin, 1991), which features the work of John Gumperz, a pioneering ethnographer of cross-cultural communication. In one memorable scene, an immigrant in England goes into a British bank and tries to deposit some money. As the scene unfolds, bad feelings soon develop because the teller wrongly assumes that the depositor is being overly pushy and rude. The source of miscommunication, as it turns out, are the patterns of sentence stress and intonation used by the depositor, a person who has lived and worked in England for over twenty years and whose post-secondary education in India was in English, the enduring language of power in his original home. In one national setting, India, these same prosodic features would be viewed as conforming to linguistic "standards," indicating both a national identity as well as one tied to social class and status. In a British bank, however, these same elements are no longer perceived as consistent with a variety of English known as Indian English. Instead, they suggest a "non-standard" or marked situation, one in which an individual customer is wrongly perceived as being agitated or rude towards the bank's employee.

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Other earlier studies established strong correlations between social class and pronunciation. Labov (1972), for example, provides data that shows a consistent pattern in which the voiceless, interdental 'th' in thick and thin is most commonly produced as a fricative (e.g. /ØIK/) by upper and middle class speakers and more commonly produced as a stop (e.g. /TIK/) by lower class speakers. Labov also examined correlations between race and language, particularly the defining linguistic features of African American vernaculars. More recently, educators and linguists have outlined the pronunciation, vocabulary and grammatical features that are indicative of Black English or Ebonics. Some defining features of BE pronunciation are postvocalic /r/ deletion (e.g. Sista, Brotha), greater sentence stress on *been* (Smitherman, 1998, p.31), and a tendency towards greater syllable-timed rhythm patterning as opposed to stress-timed rhythm, which is char-

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acteristic of dominant varieties of English (see Avery & Ehrlich, 1992; Jenkins, 1998).

Individuals who use non-dominant forms of language are not lazy, uneducated, or lacking confidence and motivation. Their varieties of English are products of socialization in the home and local community and are as consistent as those spoken by society's dominant groups.

Looking at the work of people such as Gumperz (see Twitchin, 1991), Tannen, and Labov, it is important to recognize that their intention was not to stygmatize or exoticize those who speak non-standard forms of English. In fact, their intention was quite the opposite. These sociolinguists wanted to alert people in positions of power – in education, government and business - to recognize that varieties of English based on identity are a fact in society and that fairness requires those in power to respect these differences. Individuals who use non-dominant forms of language are not lazy, uneducated, or lacking confidence and motivation. Their varieties of English are products of socialization in the home and local community and are as consistent as those spoken by society's dominant groups (see Corson, 2001, Chs. 3, 4; Cummins, 2000).

At the same time, there were limitations arising from the methods of data collection and interpretation in the studies noted above. Because these researchers wanted to establish norms and patterns of regularity, they tended to overlook individuality and creativity, which in turn seemed to reinforce stereotypes. Similarly, such studies tended to support an assumption that identity was somewhat permanent – something *in* us, rather than something *between* us, changing over time and place – and through interaction and dialogue with others.

Critical theorists emphasize that language is a social practice, rather than a neutral product of mind or nature. Language is used to *position* people, defining what is possible and desirable for individuals and communities.

More recently, in the social sciences, and also in ESL, many researchers have looked at identity in a far more dynamic way. Those inspired by critical, feminist, and poststructural accounts of language and identity (e.g. Amin, 1997; Ibrahim, 1999; Morgan, 1998; Nelson, 1999; Norton, 1997, 2000; Toohey, 2000) have emphasized the notion of *agency*, that is, the ability of individuals to take a more active role in negotiating the symbols and meanings that define their group identities. In diverse, multicultural, multiracial settings such as Toronto, people are exposed to an unprecedented range of lifestyles and values. And often, they choose to resist or transform the roles assigned to them by tradition.

We also think about language differently and in ways that parallel the dynamics of identity. Critical theorists emphasize that language is a social practice, rather than a neutral product of mind or nature. Language is used to *position* people, defining what is possible and desirable for individuals and communities. Critical theorists also talk about language as being fundamentally unstable; they talk about meanings as being indeterminate, multiple, and a site of struggle between competing social groups (see Janks, 1991; Pennycook, 1999, 2000). Let me provide a few pertinent examples: Think about the word *sovereignty*. What did it actually mean in 1995 – to federalists and to Quebec nationalists? Then there is the Ontario equivalent, *common sense revolution*, a startling contradiction in both meaning and application. On the national scene, the phrase *two-tier medicine* instantly arouses passions on the future of health care. And then there is a term that is often used to discriminate against our students: *Canadian experience*.

Note how all these words and phrases change over time, how they mean different things to different groups, and how some people go to great lengths to argue over what they mean, not because they are in the dictionary business, but because of the power of language to normalize particular ways of being and acting in society – not to mention access to resources such as jobs, housing, and health care.

Returning to pronunciation, very few critical researchers would seek to determine categories of identity directly through analyses of conversational data. Nor would they isolate pronunciation elements and assign meanings to them based on the identity of the speaker. Instead they would look more carefully at the contingencies of a speech act or utterance. What are the relative positions and power relations of the speakers involved at this specific moment? What prior experiences do they each bring to this interaction? How is pronunciation modified to reflect or bring about these developments?

At a personal, experiential level, this contingent and interactive approach to identity, meaning, and pronunciation makes sense. Think about the times you've found yourself modifying your language style in order to fit in with people you like or admire. Or, watch teenagers feed off of each other's enthusiasm: as one gets louder, so does the other, imitating each other's stress patterns and intonation contours as they go along. Similarly, think about a time that you've left a meeting, and someone who was with you comments, "I wonder why s/he [the supervisor or boss] was so mad." You reply that you didn't notice, and then you wonder how that per-

son was able to come to that conclusion in the first place. What on the surface appeared to be controlled, calm elements of style indicated anger to someone else. Prior experience, of course, would be a key factor in recognizing the anger/emotion, but also the status of the people involved would be a factor: people in positions of authority, for example, usually don't need to depend on volume, tempo, and focused stress, in order to impose reception of their ideas on others. They might still do so, but that would be more an element of personality or spontaneous choice. The main point here is that many of the meanings we get from pronunciation are not as systematic or as predictable as we'd like for teaching purposes. To a certain extent, such meanings are embedded in specific situations and experiences.

So, what does it all mean for L2 pronunciation pedagogy? What can we do with these theories about changing identities, multiple meanings, and power relations? Current researchers in this area want to emphasize that the issue of identity is always a part of learning; it's not something that gets left outside the classroom. It's active, and it's happening during our lessons whether we're conscious of it or not. The key question is, how can we *consciously* integrate identity into our pronunciation lessons? The following section offers a few suggestions and guidelines.

## CLASSROOM CONSIDERATIONS

1) Intelligibility

As pronunciation teachers, we usually ask the following types of questions: What should we teach, and what minimum goals should we expect in order to help our students to be understood or intelligible? But there is another important, identity-related question to pose here and that is: intelligibility for whom and between whom? In Toronto, for example, immigration and globalization have made it one of the most multilingual cities in the world. Living here, those L1 speakers who wish to or need to communicate with L2 speakers have become quite adept at understanding a wide variety of Englishes. Another point: A lot of English is also spoken *between* L2 speakers in Toronto - even people who share the same L1 but prefer to practice or demonstrate their knowledge. Another reality in Toronto is that many people can function quite well in their native language. So, when we look at the issue of intelligibility and goals, there simply isn't a "one-size-fits-all" approach. We need to think carefully about the identities of our students, and we need to remember that intelligibility is, in many ways, a shared responsibility, its accomplishment also requiring the good will of those who speak the dominant variety of a language in a particular setting.

Jennifer Jenkins (1998), writing in the context of English as an International Language (EIL), has a number of suggestions that may well fit Toronto's multilingual, cosmopolitan realities. Given the growth of World Englishes, and the diversity of sounds and norms this entails, Jenkins (1998) argues that our teaching energies should be focused on "three areas that appear to have the greatest influence on intelligibility in English as an International Language (EIL), i.e. certain segmentals, nuclear stress (the main stress in a word group), and the effective use of articulatory setting, to the extent that it underpins the first two areas" (p. 121). She elaborates by distinguishing between "core" sounds, which should approximate native-speaker norms as much as possible, and non-core elements, or "areas of acceptable variation," in which our expectations might be a little more flexible and our primary focus on reception (listening) in class.

Some "core" examples she identifies are: long-short vowels, most consonant sounds (voiced and unvoiced features), consonant clusters, sentence level stress and focused or contrastive stress. For "areas of acceptable variation," she mentions 'th' forms, word stress, features of connected speech (e.g. elision, assimilation, linking) and reduction on function or structure words in sentences (e.g. prepositions, articles, conjunctions, the verb to be, auxiliary forms, etc.) (Jenkins, 1998, pp. 122-123) (see Avery & Ehrlich, 1992).

Jenkins' reasons for choosing her specific core and non-core items are more detailed than can be covered in this article, but the general principle itself is one that I want to reiterate in relation to language and identity. Notions of intelligibility and the selection of "core" items should be based on the identities and communicative needs of our students. In Toronto such needs may change considerably from class to class and program to program.

### 2) Negotiability of Meaning

The teaching principle of negotiability draws inspiration from the critical perspectives on lan-

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guage mentioned above: the instability of language, social competition over meanings, the importance of context, and the role language plays in shaping our identities.

In any pronunciation activity that integrates form and meaning, we shouldn't be too quick to judge what students say based on our own assumptions of what is correct or appropriate for Canadians. In fact, by waiting, by listening a little longer, I have often found that students' ideas challenge many things I take for granted in Canadian society. Another point: challenging ideas about identity and community need time to develop – and they also need to be circulated and revised in relatively safe places such as classrooms. Teachers can select materials that encourage negotiation, and they can help create environments where people are willing to explore new ideas – but they also should be open to new ideas themselves.

I might have a small section that isolates a specific aspect of pronunciation: a minimal pair, word stress, or linking item. Another section might integrate this element along with vocabulary or grammar work. And another section may be focused strictly on meaning such as performance of a real-world task, or a critical reading of a text or current event.

### 3) Balancing a Focus on Form/ Focus on Meaning

In general, I tend to organize my teaching around short units with individual lessons or sections that shift focus in terms of skills, integrated language items, context embeddedness, and meaningful content. For example, I might have a small section that isolates a specific aspect of pronunciation: a minimal pair, word stress, or linking item. Another section might integrate this element along with vocabulary or grammar work. And another section may be focused strictly on meaning such as performance of a real-world task, or a critical reading of a text or current event. The order could be reversed, of course, going top down (a focus on meaning) rather than bottom up (a focus on an isolated or discrete element of form) (see Burgess & Spencer, 2000; Cummins, 2000).

There are two ways to think about the purpose of a focus on meaning in a pronunciation activity: One view is that "meaningful" practice is primarily useful as a way of providing indirect or incidental reinforcement of the target language structures or pronunciation forms involved. The other view is that students are adults, with adult issues and concerns, and that sometimes we need to treat their issues seriously and compassionately – in and of themselves and not in terms of the "comprehensible input/output" or "feedback" they might afford. The view we subscribe to at any given moment in class will strongly determine how we perceive intelligibility and what meanings we allow to be negotiated. The important challenge is knowing when to favour one view over the other, or knowing how to reach a balance between the two.

In which ways does pronunciation relate to describing or talking about these events? Are there existing materials that I can use or adapt for class? Ideally, topics and contexts developed in class should be intrinsically motivating – things students might talk about in their L1.

### 4) Choosing Meaningful Topics and Contexts

This point is inspired by critical theories on the dynamic notions of identity mentioned above. When selecting topics or materials for pronunciation activities, I usually think about the following types of questions: What is happening in students' lives? How do recent events covered in the media affect them? In which ways does pronunciation relate to describing or talking about these events? Are there existing materials that I can use or adapt for class? Ideally, topics and contexts developed in class should be intrinsically motivating – things students might talk about in their L1.

### 5) Reflect/Theorize/Modify "Works in Progress"

After a lesson or unit is completed, we should think about what seemed to work and what didn't in class. Researchers can only be partners – not experts – in determining the best way to proceed. As teachers, we need to reflect upon and theorize about our own classrooms and students. We can be inspired by other ideas and theories, but in the end, we are the most knowledgeable about our own students and settings. We have to use our experience to select what is appropriate for our classrooms and, sometimes, draw from our classroom experiences to challenge the assumptions and methods that academic researchers follow (see Morgan, 1998, Ch.7).

The following lessons are my own "works in progress." They have been used in adult ESL settings in Toronto and mostly with intermediate and advanced level students.

## INTEGRATING IDENTITY AND L2 PRONUNCIATION IN CLASS

### Lesson 1: From Beisbeir (1995)

Beisbeir's book, *Sounds Great*, is one of two books (along with Gilbert's *Clear Speech*, 1993) that I often use for pronunciation purposes. In the following activity, identity issues (i.e., negotiability) emerge naturally from the structure and sequencing (i.e., focus on form/focus on meaning) of the book. The pronunciation (form) focus of the following activity is a feature of connected speech, linking final consonants of words to initial vowels (C+V).

Beisbeir nicely sequences and balances her focus on form, combining linking practice along with material introduced earlier on rhythm groups, which had been preceded by several other suprasegmental elements (e.g. stressed words in sentences, pp. 45-47; combining stress and unstress – regular rhythm and rhythm groups, pp. 45-47; focus stress, pp. 50-51).

Balance between production and reception, and communicative activities that can be done in small groups are also consistent features of the book. For productive practice of C+V linking, Beisbeir first focuses on individual final consonants and places them in rhythm groups with rhythm groups separated by slashes and linking areas underlined for students (pp. 56-57): e.g. /p/ Stop over at 8/ and drop off my books. /t/ She's not at all tired/ but it's still early. /k/ When you back up,/ look out for other cars. /z/ When's (h)e coming/ and where's (h)e staying. Reception (listening) activities focus on discrimination of linked elements (e.g. 1a. She had a cold. 1b. She has a cold.).

The next activity shifts to a focus on meaning, identifying and connecting proverbs, while retaining elements of production by asking students to read them out loud. In terms of meaning negotiability, one of the most interesting aspects of the lesson always occurs when students interpret what the various proverbs mean and relate them to proverbs in their first language and culture. For some students, the memorization and appropriate application of proverbs is a highly valued social and cultural skill, so this part of the lesson can generate intense interest and discussion. Here are the mixed proverbs as they appear in Beisbeir's book (p. 58):

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Out of Sight/ | a. | flock together. |
| 2. | Where there's a will/ | b. | the mice will play. |
| 3. | Don't put all your eggs/ | c. | and everything in its place. |
| 4. | You can't lead a horse to water/ | d. | out of mind. |
| 5. | Birds of a feather/ | e. | and silence is golden. |
| 6. | Home is/ | f. | wasn't built in a day. |
| 7. | When the cat's away/ | g. | there's a way. |
| 8. | A place for everything/ | h. | in one basket. |
| 9. | Speech is silver/ | i. | where the heart is |
| 10. | Rome | j. | but you can't make it drink. |

The following student examples/interpretations come from a high intermediate class I teach at a Toronto Chinese community center:

#1: "Travel is better than reading." "Ten years of walking better than ten years of studying."

#3: "Don't put your money in one bank." "Don't buy just one stock." "Don't marry the first person you date."

#5: *ou iy lai jiu* (fourth, third, fourth, fourth tones, in Mandarin Chinese) class translation: "Same material comes together."

#7: "No boss, no work." "When the water king is gone, the ghosts take his place."

#10: "Step by step." "Be patient." "Everything has its beginning."

It was interesting for me to see the whole class interpret "Out of sight, out of mind" as pertaining to the value of practical experience, rather than its familiar romantic (or loss of romance) connotations. We spent a few moments talking about related English proverbs/expression on practical knowledge (e.g. Judge a person by what s/he does and not what s/he says. Show me, don't tell me). "When the water king is gone …" was my absolute favourite, a poetic, mythical notion from Chinese tradition. Of course, "Don't marry the first person you date" got the whole class roaring with laughter and approval.

The most interesting and perhaps most important response occurred around #8.

One of my students interpreted "A place for everything …" in the following way: "A husband and wife should be in their place." This response initially surprised everyone, and another student asked her, "Do you mean a wife must obey her husband?" The first student then replied, "No. If a husband has a lover, or the wife the same, they are not in their place." This was a thought-provoking idea in that "to be in one's place," or "to be kept in

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one's place" by tradition, connotes meanings of subordination, a loss of freedom and individuality, or patriarchal authority, especially when it is spoken by or about women. Indeed, this is why the second student was so quick to question the first, anticipating that she might have to challenge the assumption that "a wife must obey her husband." But in fact the first student was invoking tradition – to be in one's "proper" familial, marital place – as a means of asserting or claiming equality ("What's good for the goose is good for the gander," proverbially speaking).

One key component in this specific example was meaning negotiability: allowing students the time to discuss their ideas without the hyper-correction of a teacher who might be eager to keep the class "focused" or "on task."

Much of what followed in class was an open discussion initiated by this exchange. What made an impromptu discussion of "one's place" so vital for those in class are the many challenges to traditional identity and familial roles that these students are experiencing in Toronto. Questions about one's place, the continued validity of one's traditions, and the possibility – or desirability – of adopting the dominant values of one's new home are a big part of what identity negotiation is all about. To reiterate, one key component in this specific example was meaning negotiability: allowing students the time to discuss their ideas without the hyper-correction of a teacher who might be eager to keep the class "focused" or "on task."

**Lesson 2: Integrating Grammar, Intonation, Context, and Negotiated Meaning**

The following activity is one I put together several years ago and continue to tinker with. In contrast to the previous lesson, where issues of changing or conflicting identities emerged spontaneously, this lesson was designed to promote these types of discussions by making experiential meanings and contextual factors explicit aspects of task completion. As well, I wanted to design an activity in which aspects of pronunciation (sentence level intonation) and control of grammar structure (sentence tags) would also be integrated. Some prior work on these two elements is usually required, especially with intermediate level students. The following is a copy of the activity, including instructions:

I wanted to design an activity in which aspects of pronunciation (sentence level intonation) and control of grammar structure (sentence tags) would also be integrated.

In your group,

- Complete the question tag for each situation.
- Mark the tag with a rising arrow for a question.
- Mark the tag with a falling arrow for a statement.
- Pronounce your answer to your partners.
- Give reasons for your choices. More than one answer may be possible.

Situation 1: (John is lying in bed at 9:00 am.)
Tag:"John, you're not going to work,
_____.

Situation 2: (Susan doesn't know where John is.)
Tag:"John went to the store,
_____.

Situation 3: (Dirty dishes are in the sink.)
Tag:"John hasn't done the dishes,
_____.

Situation 4: (John doesn't know what Susan is doing after work.)
Tag:"Susan, you'll be home after work,
_____.

Situation 5: (John lost his job today.)
Tag:"I guess we're not taking a vacation,
_____.

Situation 6: (Susan is two hours late.)
Tag:"You weren't in an accident,
_____.

Situation 7: (There's a parking ticket on the car.)
Tag:"You forgot to put money in the meter,
_____.

Situation 8: (John and Susan's boat is sinking in the lake.)
Tag:"You can swim,
_____.

Situation 9: (Susan can smell beer on John's breath.)
Tag:"You've been drinking,
_____.

Similar to the activity adapted from Beisbeir (1995), negotiation of meaning is extremely important. I always emphasize that for some of the situations, a credible explanation, or elaboration of context, might change the intonation pattern from a statement to a question. In this regard, I have intentionally reduced context to a bare minimum, which allows greater flexibility for experiential and critical meanings to be inferred and applied to the specific pronunciation forms controlled by students (see Cummins, 2000, pp. 273-280). A similar aspect I have tried to include is that there are *levels of context* and coherence taking place. Collectively, the incomplete sentences establish a pattern of relationships between a couple, John and Susan. As

students progress through each sentence they continue to re-examine the prior ones and draw upon personal experiences that relate to this unfolding "bigger picture", in which effective or strategic language choices must be made.

As in the previous lesson, many students take the opportunity to draw upon their own lives to re-examine familial roles and gender norms during the course of the lesson. Issues of social class, as well, are often introduced into this activity. In situation 5, for example, when John loses his job, some students assert that a vacation is absolutely necessary, and that the opportunity or free time may not come again once John starts a new job. Others counter that John may not find a job and that the pay will probably be just enough to survive on, so a vacation is out of the question. Issues of patriarchal authority also find their way into student discussions. Situation 4, for instance, can become a context in which John's option of question or statement to Susan also infers the degree of authority he has in the household. Situations 2, 3, and 9, also lend themselves to similar perspectives.

In terms of pronunciation and grammar, there are a number of ways that this activity can be expanded or modified for more advanced levels. Focal or contrastive stress can be applied to various words in statements preceding tags. Also, in advanced settings, students could develop more examples for John and Susan. In this activity, they could look at how the statements that precede tags reflect the expectations of the speaker. For example, if the speaker expects a negative response, he or she will usually use a negative statement with an affirmative tag, as in situation 1. At the same time, tags can be used rhetorically and persuasively - to push someone towards a certain course of action. With advanced students, this can be discussed and included in the activity.

## CONCLUSIONS

The "works in progress" described above build on earlier lessons in other publications (see Morgan 1997, 1998). Much of the research and theory that has inspired me emphasizes that identity is a fundamental element of language use. Yet this perspective is rarely found in ESL pronunciation materials and articles. One reason, of course, is that it is not easy to produce relevant materials in this area. But another reason, in part, relates to the different practical and professional worlds occupied by academic researchers, usually the producers of such materials, and classroom practitioners, inevitably the implementers of the latest research. In many ways, these two "worlds" may be *incommensurable*, a term from the philosophy of science that refers to the coexistence of two or more separate groups of foundational assumptions that are without common measure. Or, as the popular expression goes, "You can't compare apples and oranges."

Let me elaborate by way of an anecdote. When I was first invited to participate on the oral skills research symposium, the thought struck me that it would be interesting if we split the various symposia up and see how we might interrelate our various areas of expertise in order to get a broader picture of our students and our profession. What could the oral skills people produce along with the computer specialists, and what might we all learn about language and methodology by working closely with experts in the area of refugee and immigrant settlement issues? Such a combined perspective or interdisciplinary dialogue is rare in our profession.

The point to consider here is that the pressures of academic life tend to encourage specialization, often requiring researchers in the university to focus on a restricted range of topics and isolated skill areas in order to produce original work that can be published and that might lead to invitations to speak as experts at conferences such as this one. Teachers, in contrast, are required to be linguistic generalists. Moreover, they must continuously balance and improvise around a whole range of issues, classroom personalities, administrative demands, etc. So in this sense, an integrative approach, where issues of language, identity and power (and L2 pronunciation) interconnect, is somewhat closer to the daily realities of practitioners. Perhaps in the future, we will have more "mixed" symposia. In the meantime, let me once again emphasize the importance I place on teacher inquiry, both in the classroom and in settings where decisions about our profession are made.

1. In terms of inspiration, outside of the critical theories already noted, this way of conceptualizing learning, meaning and levels of context draws on my partial understanding of the "recursive vision" of Gregory Bateson, an anthropologist and econoligst, whose life work has much to offer those of us interested in language and communication (see Clarke, 1999; Harries-Jones, 1995).

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# THEME 3: REFUGEE AND IMMIGRATION CONCERNS

## Introduction
## by Robert Courchêne

In this section, the four presenters focus on different aspects of the settlement process that either facilitate or create barriers to integration into Canada for immigrants and refugees. Hrubes, in his article *First Person Singular: Survivors of Torture, Self-Esteem and Language Acquisition* begins by outlining the mandate of the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture. He points out that the victims that arrive at the CCVT have been systematically stripped of their self-esteem by their torturers whose goal is the psychological destruction of the victims' mind. When they enter the L2 classroom, they do not react and learn in the same way the regular students do. Teachers who work with these students must use a number of strategies to allow them to rebuild their self-esteem: being patient with learners, counselling them that L2 acquisition will be slow, providing clear and specific feedback about the progress they are making in class (be it ever so small), offering praise, commendation, encouragement and affirming belief in their abilities, setting authentic but realistic goals and finally, involving students in the programme by using their expertise in class. Hrubes points out that the healing process is very slow and that patience and encouragement are essential if students are going to again become highly functioning members of society.

Bettencourt in her paper, *Recent Research on Newcomer Youth*, reports on studies that were conducted by the Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services (OASIS) of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). The studies focused on three of CIC's programs: Immigration and Adaptation Program (ISAP), HOST and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). The research projects grew out of a round of consultations in Ontario that indicated that immigrant and refugee youth faced a number of problems and barriers. OASIS wanted to clearly identify these problems to provide a more effective response. Bettencourt outlines the different projects, the research methodology and then reports the findings under the categories: Youth in general, Findings Specific to education, Sources of support for Newcomer Youth. She then lists the recommendations made and ends with a description of how CIC is going to act on the research results.

Goldberg, in her paper, *The Facts Are In: Newcomers' Experiences in Accessing Regulated Professions for Ontario,* reports on research conducted by her Ministry on the barriers faced by immigrants to Ontario in obtaining employment in their respective trades and professions. After providing the reader with statistics on the countries of origin and the breakdown of the immigrants in terms of their professions and trades, Goldberg outlines the barriers that these people face: information provision, fair assessment tools, supplementary bridge training, language and licensure. For each of the barriers mentioned, she describes the measures that the Ministry has taken to help new immigrants in Ontario.

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In *Race-ing the Gap: Identity, Identification, Émigrés, and the Politics of ESL Learning*, Ibrahim presents us with a narrative describing his own ongoing identity formation in Canada as a refugee, as well as the results of a research study he conducted on the identity formation process of a group of immigrant and refugee youths at an Ontario high school. In both cases, it is a journey into becoming Black. Ibrahim begins by discussing Bourdieu's concept of symbolic system-a set of norms, rules and regulations that are expressly operating together to create an entity, a form, a discourse. He sees language as being such a symbolic system (more than just an instrument of communication) where power is "formed and performed based on race, gender, sexuality and social-class identity". In and through language, we (de)construct and (re)construct our identity.

In narrating his encounter with the police in Toronto, Ibrahim demonstrates how others' perception of his being Black automatically triggered stereotypes, associations, concerning his identity and how their "gaze" impacted on his own perceptions of his identity. Their preconceptions of who Black people were and how they behaved led the police to assume he was guilty. In his research study, Ibrahim describes how young Black youths enter a *social imaginary* where they are already seen as black; however, to become Black within Canadian and North American society and to create a personal identity, they learned Black English as a Second Language (BESL) and associated with Black culture, principally hip-hop – "everything from music to clothing, choices, attitudes, language and approach to culture". They did not accept the Black identity assigned them by the dominant culture. In the remaining sections of the paper, Ibrahim uses the personal narratives of the students to discuss identity formation and possible applications of his research to L2 teaching.

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# First Person Singular: Survivors of Torture, Self-Esteem and Language Acquisition

Lawrence Hrubes, Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture

Survivors of torture and organized violence arrive in "safe" countries by the tens of thousands each year. In Canada, those who seek a new life in Toronto often make their way to the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, the oldest organization of its kind in North America. There, they find diverse yet integrated services designed to help them rebuild their identities, bodies, families, communities, and belief in their own futures. One of the CCVT's most dynamic programmes over the past 11 years has been the English Language (or ESL) Program. Small classes, composed entirely of adult survivors of torture or war, offer a safe, supportive, nonthreatening environment where traumatized refugee learners can attempt the vital and daunting task of learning English. The CCVT's ESL Program has adapted and modified teaching methodologies and curricula to suit the unique needs of its clients. One of the guiding principles of the ESL program is to aid survivors in the rebuilding of their self-esteem. Why is self-esteem so critical to a torture survivor's success in the classroom?

Yet the brutality of their recent experiences has left them fragile, distracted, detached. Constantly elevated stress levels, fatigue, and powerful intrusive memories make focusing on learning a tremendous strain on good days, and seemingly impossible on bad days.

Torture and organized violence, such as "ethnic cleansing", often have as a primary goal the degradation, fragmentation or destruction of the victim's identity or sense of self. As opposed to outright killing, torture deliberately leaves its victims as living symbols of the power of the state. The more thoroughly those victims have been stripped of their will, dignity and sense of self-esteem, the more they generate fear in their communities, and the more "useful" they become as deterrents to others the state wants to intimidate.

Without self-esteem, the inherent risks of learning language in a class of adults loom large: I will look foolish, sound foolish, say something foolish; I will not be able to express myself as I used to; I will be unable to learn quickly enough; I will discover that now I am "stupid", a failure.

Furthermore, by its very nature, the experience of torture typically shatters the victim's self-esteem. Those things the victim holds most dear or sacred -their family, intellect, religion, political convictions, status in the community, profession, sexuality, ethnicity- are specifically targeted by the torturer. They are mocked, taunted, threatened, degraded, abused, humiliated or destroyed, as the torture is administered physically. It is essential to remember, however, that the goal of torture is essentially, in figurative terms, to destroy the "spirit" of the victim, leaving them only a shell of their former self. The techniques of modern-day torture have been methodically designed with the psychological destruction of the victim in mind, and they are tremendously effective.

In the last year, Julieta was beaten on her family farm in Kosovo, as the militia set fire to the barn, then her home. Ali Reza was released, after a year, from a torture cell inside a prison atop the mountains overlooking Tehran. Irina witnessed the murder of her husband, then experienced rape at the hands of his killers, and finally got herself smuggled out of Azerbaijan. These three students, whose names are invented but whose stories represent many typical refugee experiences, suddenly find themselves in a classroom in North America. Their goal: to learn English. Yet the brutality of their recent experiences has left them fragile, distracted, detached. Constantly elevated stress levels, fatigue, and powerful intrusive memories make focusing on learning a tremendous strain on good days, and seemingly impossible on bad days. The teacher is asking them to participate in a strange community, to listen, to speak, to make new and unfamiliar sounds, to read an unfamiliar alphabet, to write. This new language is the key to doing things that only a few months ago were commonplace, things they had mastered decades ago: making a phone call, buying groceries, paying a bill.

Underlying all these challenges Julieta, Ali Reza and Irina are suffering from an almost total absence of self-esteem. They simply cannot imagine themselves a year in the future, having mastered essential elements of the English language, functioning independently, directing the course of their lives. Without self-esteem, the inherent risks of learning language in a class of adults loom large: I will look foolish, sound foolish, say something foolish; I will not be able to express myself as I used to; I will be unable to learn quickly enough; I will discover that now I am "stupid", a failure. In fact, during torture the torturers will sometimes tell their victims that, once the torture is complete, they will be unable to do things once taken for granted. Such morbid

prophecies seem to come true, when sex, laughter, parenting, political activism, prayer and even sleep become difficult, painful or impossible. Learning in general, and particularly learning the language of the host country, also appear insurmountable.

To learn a new language, especially when that language is the key to survival in a foreign country, students must believe in their own abilities, must be able to envision or project themselves forward into a future where they have mastered key elements of the language. Without a healthy degree of self-esteem, they lack the courage necessary to take the risks intrinsic to the ESL classroom. Without taking those risks –speaking publicly, sometimes answering incorrectly, not understanding, asking questions, mispronouncing words, sharing elements of yourself and your past with strangers – students never fully engage in the class. They never genuinely participate in the process of discovery of the language, and thus end up largely failing to acquire the new language. The torturer's prophecy becomes self-fulfilling: students believe that they cannot learn anything new, that the experience of torture or organized violence will forever determine the future opportunities open to them.

How can educators work to promote self-esteem in survivors of torture and war? At the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, the staff takes a holistic approach. First, students need to know that language acquisition will be slow. Patience is essential. Past academic success is not always a reliable gauge of future progress in mastering English. Teachers must continually readjust students' expectations, so the students will not set unrealistic and unattainable goals for themselves, then become depressed when those goals are not met. The issue of expectations may be further complicated by the fact that many survivors are well-educated and held positions of respect or prominence within their original communities or cultures. They have often mastered complex subjects, and frequently other languages (including ones they may consider more difficult than English) before going through the traumatic events that forced them to seek asylum elsewhere. Consequently, survivors may experience tremendous frustration when they encounter difficulties with English, or if they perceive their progress as being too slow. Specific, realistic, short-term goals need to be established, then regularly evaluated and adjusted, in open dialogue and consultation with individual students.

Second, survivors need to receive clear, specific feedback about the progress they are actually making, however limited. Teachers may need to take a longer view of progress for individual students, comparing current language abilities with those of six months earlier, or even with the previous year. Teacher-student conferences or interviews should be informal, but regular and encouraging. Survivors often come to expect a degree of failure in the things they attempt. One of the documented indicators of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among torture survivors is a sense of a foreshortened future, and failure in the ESL classroom simply adds to the sense that one is incapable of creating a meaningful future life. Teachers should point out the specific language skills that the student has mastered, even partially. If students appear pessimistic about their progress, try discussing weekly or even daily language learning goals. Goals need to be short, concrete, simple and attainable: memorizing five useful adjectives of emotion, asking four common yes/no questions to a bank teller, using the phone book to find a walk-in medical clinic close to your apartment, or even simply increasing listening skills while others speak. Achieving these will help students realize that they are indeed capable of learning and progressing, and will enhance their self-esteem.

Third, commendation, praise, encouragement, and statements affirming the teacher's belief in the student's abilities, are all tremendously helpful in promoting the confidence and self-esteem of torture survivors, and traumatized refugee learners generally. As educators, we are conditioned to note and respond primarily to academic progress, and we may overlook other significant social, community, emotional or personal victories the students achieve. Verbal recognition of the students' achievements in these non-academic areas, both in private or in front of their peers, fosters self-respect and encourages survivors to continue taking the social and emotional risks that will help them develop language skills. Again, such praise must be specific and genuine: false flattery will quickly be caught, and survivors typically react quite sensitively to any question of trust, especially when dealing with authority figures.

What, then, can we commend if academic progress is limited? Some students are skilled as moderators during class debates and group discussions. Some are logical, some humorous, while others are quietly helpful, to their peers, new stu-

Without taking those risks –speaking publicly, sometimes answering incorrectly, not understanding, asking questions, mispronouncing words, sharing elements of yourself and your past with strangers – students never fully engage in the class.

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dents or the teacher. Do we express our appreciation for these qualities? Can we praise our students for their perseverance, or for their courage to speak out in front of the class, perhaps when we know they are shy? Do we encourage them to give us constructive feedback on the quality and content of our programme? Do we tell and show them that we respect their opinions and experiences as adults? When decisions need to be made that will affect the class (new staff, changing classrooms, fees, schedules, public transportation assistance), do we consult the students and enter into a constructive dialogue with them, treating them as mature, capable "stakeholders" whose insights and opinions genuinely matter to us? Do we provide opportunities in class time for the students to demonstrate their unique abilities? Torture survivors had full, rich lives before their traumatic experiences and, although those experiences overshadow much of the present, they need to have healthy opportunities to share aspects of their pasts within the context of the ESL classroom. Teachers should encourage students to do presentations on subjects in which the students feel they are "experts". These suggestions will help to promote the gradual rebuilding of a survivor's self-esteem.

Teachers should encourage students to do presentations on subjects in which the students feel they are "experts". These suggestions will help to promote the gradual rebuilding of a survivor's self-esteem.

Another area where ESL teachers can play an important role is working with victims of torture who are also parents. As a result of torture, parents are emotionally destroyed and may abandon their traditional roles as caregivers, listeners, security providers, family heads, leaders, organizers. Kids try to fill some of these roles, and parents come to rely on this pseudo-support, but this often leads to additional, complicated problems within the family dynamic. Kids come to resent the burdens, and may *act out*, dominating or manipulating the family. Really they are trying to "demand" a return to the proper order of things. ESL comes into the picture in that kids master the language faster and with greater intuitive understanding of cultural nuances than parents (in many cases). Parents often exacerbate this reversal by depending on their kids for language related tasks, which are often also "responsibility" tasks – talking to doctors, student-teacher conferences at the kids' schools, dealing with immigration issues, setting up job interviews or speaking to welfare/social workers. Parents' self-esteem is further damaged by this unnatural dependency, while kids also feel anger/depression/resentment at the role-reversals. Adult ESL teachers can try to address these complex issues in conversations, role-playing or journal writing assignments, always considering the value of providing concrete language tools to the parents to help them cope more independently in the above environments. Also, support can be offered by providing relevant vocabulary/language units to aid parents in the vital area of emotional self-expression, to describe the experience of the role-reversal.

Parents often exacerbate this reversal by depending on their kids for language related tasks, which are often also "responsibility" tasks – talking to doctors, student-teacher conferences at the kids' schools, dealing with immigration issues, setting up job interviews or speaking to welfare/social workers.

The process of healing is long and complex, and unique to each individual survivor. Self-esteem is affected by various factors, many of which are beyond the scope of the English language classroom. However, many aspects of the lives of the students may, if they are willing, be brought into the classroom for discussion or in the form of daily journal writing. In that sense, then, most factors that influence self-esteem may be examined and expressed using English as a common tool. Educators, and particularly English language instructors, have a vital and powerful role to play in fostering a sense of self-esteem in their students. Self-esteem is certainly instrumental to the success of all students, children and adults, native citizens, immigrants and refugees. But for refugees suffering from the complex and extreme effects of torture and organized violence, the promotion of self-esteem within the context of the ESL classroom is an essential ingredient, one that can make or break the learning experience and set the tone for many years to come.

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# Recent Research on Newcomer Youth

by Elisete Bettencourt, Citizenship and Immigration Canada

## Introduction

To begin, I would like to thank my colleagues Sharon, Bob, Lawrence, Michelle and Awad for their presentations. Many of the issues, concerns and examples that they have presented and shared with us today compliment and further support the research findings that I will be sharing with you today. I will be talking to you about some of the recently funded research on newcomer youth in Ontario.

## Background Information on CIC, OASIS

I am not sure how many of you are familiar with the settlement and integration programs that are administered by CIC, through OASIS to assist newcomers when they first arrive in Ontario. For those of you that already know a bit about these programs, please bear with me as I provide an overview of them.

The Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services (OASIS), is a part of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) that administers and funds settlement programs and services for newcomers in the Ontario Region. The three programs that I will highlight today are the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), HOST, and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). I suspect that many of you will be familiar with the latter language related settlement program.

## ISAP

The ISAP program funds organizations to provide immigrants with essential bridging services to facilitate access to community services and resources. These services include reception, orientation, translation and interpretation, referral to community resources and mainstream services, paraprofessional counseling, general information and employment-related services, and other activities to improve settlement prospects.

ISAP also funds projects that are designed to enhance or improve the delivery of settlement services. These projects might include research projects like the ones I will be talking about later in this presentation, seminars and conferences to share information about settlement and integration activities, training of ISAP workers, and audio/visual materials.

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## HOST

The HOST program provides funds to organizations for the recruitment, training, matching and co-ordination of volunteers to help newcomers adapt, settle and integrate into Canadian life. This program helps newcomers overcome the stress of moving to a new country by having a volunteer help them to learn about available services and how to use them, practice English or French, make contacts in their employment field and participate more fully in community activities. Volunteers receive many benefits from this program, as well, including meeting new friends, learning about other cultures and strengthening community life.

## LINC

The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program provides basic language training in one of Canada's official languages to adult immigrants as soon as possible after their arrival in Canada so that they may acquire the necessary language skills to integrate into Canadian society. This is the program that many of you are probably most familiar with. LINC training can be taken full or part-time, in the workplace or in a community-based setting, and can include alternative training methods such as home study. Where necessary, transportation and childminding assistance may be available to LINC students for whom language training would be otherwise inaccessible.

In addition, to the basic language training, there is a linguistic eligibility determination component to LINC where the Canadian Language Benchmarks are used to determine client eligibility and the assessment of the current language skills of adult immigrants. As many of you may already be aware, the assessment process allows the language needs of immigrants to be matched with appropriate

The HOST program provides funds to organizations for the recruitment, training, matching and co-ordination of volunteers to help newcomers adapt, settle and integrate into Canadian life.

language training options.

There is also a delivery assistance component that is used to obtain expertise or specialized help to assist in the delivery of LINC activities for the direct benefit of our clients. This component might include activities such as the analysis of the language needs of particular client groups, research, development of audio/visual materials or related products; and professional development training.

By asking newcomer youth for their opinions and experiences of settlement, the research provided an opportunity for these young people to speak directly about their settlement and integration experiences. Often the information that we receive is provided by parents, professionals and other adults.

## Overview of Presentation

I would like to begin by giving you an overview of my presentation. To set the context, I will provide you with the rationale for why this research was funded. I will then share with you some descriptive elements of the research projects, their findings, and recommendations that are specific to education and that may be useful for the work that you do. Lastly, I will talk a bit about how CIC/OASIS plans to use the research in future settlement initiatives.

## Why fund research on newcomer youth?

There are many reasons why CIC/OASIS decided to research the settlement and integration needs of newcomer youth.

## Province Wide Consultations

During the summer of 1998, CIC/OASIS held province wide consultations with newcomers, community agencies and other interested stakeholders. The goal was to identify settlement needs and priorities. The findings identified three key areas of greatest need including the need to serve the diverse needs of family members, with an emphasis on youth.

Some of the benefits of the collaborative approach included the ability of CIC/OASIS to fund a greater diversity of projects by reducing the duplication of information and work.

## Response to One-Time Call for Proposals

Following the consultations, a call for proposals was developed for One-Time projects that would develop innovative ways to respond to emerging newcomers' needs. The result was that several research proposals were submitted to CIC/OASIS that focused on research that would identify the settlement-related needs of newcomers 16-20 years of age. Many of these proposals highlighted the lack of research information that was available on the settlement and integration needs of newly arrived immigrant youth. Traditionally, research on new immigrants has focused on adult needs.

## Lack of Research in this Area

CIC/OASIS' own review of existing research also indicated that there was very little researched information on the settlement and integration experiences of newcomer youth. There was a lot of anecdotal information from front line staff and agencies but no documented information that could be used to better understand the experiences of youth. The panels of experts that reviewed the various proposals received, identified a need for research in this area.

## Useful Information for Settlement and Integration Programs

In addition to responding to the identified needs from the consultations, CIC/OASIS undertook the research because we wanted to gather data and information that might improve our current settlement programs and initiatives that relate directly to the needs of newcomer youth and their families.

## Giving a Voice to Newcomer Youth

By asking newcomer youth for their opinions and experiences of settlement, the research provided an opportunity for these young people to speak directly about their settlement and integration experiences. Often the information that we receive is provided by parents, professionals and other adults.

## Collaboration

Undertaking this youth research provided a unique opportunity to adopt a collaborative and coordinated approach to the research, analysis and dissemination of the findings. The collaboration brought together representatives from government, academia, community agencies, parents, and immigrant youth to speak about the settlement and integration experiences of youth. Some of the benefits of the collaborative approach included the ability of CIC/OASIS to fund a greater diversity of projects by reducing the duplication of information and work. Additionally, the collaboration provided an opportunity to bring together the various strengths of each of the groups while supporting each other in areas where weaknesses might have made the research challenging.

The group partners in the research collaboration included the Centre for Refugee Studies, the Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement, Centre for Research and Education in Human Services, the Coalition of Visible Minority Women Ontario Inc., Family Services Association of Toronto, the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians, the South Asian Women's Centre, Pinecrest-Queensway Health and Community Services and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

## Description of the Research

For the purposes of this presentation, I will be focusing on six of the research studies that directly relate to the settlement and integration experiences of immigrant youth. The following is a list of the research reports and a brief summary of each of their studies:

1. "Working for Youth Research Project Final Report" prepared by Pinecrest-Queensway Health and Community Services (PQCHS). The research looked at barriers to employment for newcomer youth in the Ottawa-Carleton Region and how these barriers affected their integration and adaptation.
2. "Factors Affecting the Settlement and Adaptation Process of Canadian Adolescent Newcomers 16-19 Years of Age", prepared by Family Services Association of Toronto (FSA). The study looked at the psychological factors that affect the settlement, adaptation and integration processes of newly arrived immigrant youth.
3. "Colour, Culture and Dual Consciousness: Issues identified by south Asian Immigrant Youth in the Greater Toronto Area", Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) and the South Asian Women's Centre (SAWC). The project documented the cultural and racial differences that have an effect on the settlement and integration of South Asian youth and their families who settle in the greater Toronto area.
4. "Enhancing Services and Supports for Immigrant Youth in Waterloo Region Final Report", prepared by the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services (CREHS). The research used a participatory action research approach to examine the challenges faced by immigrant youth and their families in the Kitchener/ Waterloo area.
5. "The Needs of Newcomer Youth and Emerging Best Practices to Meet Those Needs Final Report", prepared by the Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement (CERIS). The needs and concerns of newcomer youth and the "emerging best practices" used by service providers to meet those needs were examined in this research.
6. "English Language and Communication: Issues for African and Caribbean Immigrant Youth in Toronto", prepared by the Coalition of Visible Minority Women Ontario, Inc. (CVMW). The research focused on issues around English language communication for African and Caribbean newcomer youth and how this impacts on their settlement and integration.

## Methodologies
## Qualitative and Quantitative Research

The research on newcomer youth employed both qualitative and quantitative methods of gathering data.

## Advisory Committees

Most of the research projects had advisory committees that provided input and feedback into the various stages of the research. The advisory committees often included representatives from school boards, ESL teachers, immigrant youth and their parents, service providing organizations, community groups, other funders and levels of government.

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## Methods

All of the research reports contain literature reviews. Some of the literature reviews were specific to the research being undertaken and some of them were more general. For example, the literature review by the CVMW focuses on issues related to Caribbean and African youth, while the literature review completed by CERIS is more general.

Other methods of gathering data included the use of focus groups with youth, family and service providers; key informants; individual interviews with youth, families and service providers; surveys and psychological tests.

## Target Populations

The research looked at the needs of immigrant youth between the ages of 16-24, and represented

a diverse range of ethno-cultural groups and languages. Additionally, the number of groups and individuals that participated in the research across Ontario are impressive. More than 700 newcomer youth across Ontario participated in the six studies, 200 parents, and approximately 300 agencies. The latter group included agencies and organizations related to education, employment, mental health, settlement, social services and health.

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## Ethno-Cultural Groups

The ethno-cultural groups represented in the combined studies included youth from Russia, Somalia, Iran, Korea, Philippines, Portugal, Jamaica, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Barbados, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago, Ghana, Zambia, Nigeria, Poland, Tanzania, Afghanistan, Romania, Sudan, Iraq, Nicaragua, Chile, China (mainland China and Hong Kong), Botswana, Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Finland, Hungary and the Former Yugoslavia.

## Languages Spoken

The languages spoken by the youth other than English and French included Arabic, Spanish, Farsi, Serbo-Croatian, Serbian, Portuguese, Edo, Twi, Fanti, Akan, Beni, Assyrian, Gujarati, Dari, German, Slovak, Romanian, Hungarian, Bravan, Polish, Hindi, Punjabi, Mandarin, Cantonese, Urdu, Tamil, Katchi and Sindhi.

## Common Findings for Youth in General

Because many of you work with newcomer youth, have children, friends or neighbours who are youth, and were a youth at some point yourself, you will probably be able to relate to a lot of the issues identified by newcomer youth. Many of their issues are similar to those of other youth. However, these issues are often intensified because of their settlement and immigration experiences. The experiences are further differentiated by gender, age, country of origin, length of stay in Canada, ethnicity and other factors.

When the youth and their mothers are finally reunited in Canada, they often experience many difficulties adjusting to each other, their new roles and their expectations of one another.

The following are some of the issues identified by the youth. I will not have an opportunity to go into any great detail for any of the points. However, I will try to give you a flavour of each of them by quoting from the youth themselves whenever possible. The quotes are taken from the various research reports.

## Intergenerational Tensions and Conflicts

The newcomer youth identified issues and concerns around things like curfew, dating, clothing, and succeeding academically. For many of us, these issues are similar to those experienced by other youth. What is different for newcomer youth is that these issues are compounded by their immigration and settlement experience.

## Lengthy Separations

This issue is probably not as common to most youth and can often create friction and tension in families. For example, it is not unusual for some newcomer youth, especially for Filipino and Jamaican newcomer youth, to have been separated for long periods of time from their mothers. The separation can sometimes contribute to feelings of resentment between the newcomer youth and their mothers. When the youth and their mothers are finally reunited in Canada, they often experience many difficulties adjusting to each other, their new roles and their expectations of one another.

## Isolation and Loneliness

For many of the youth, immigration to Canada has been an isolating experience. They have left their friends and extended family behind. They often shared stories of having difficulty in finding friends and in "fitting in". One of the youth commented, "In my country, everyone wanted to be friends with the new student, but that is not true here". Another youth stated, "you have to dress a certain way and be like the people you want to fit in with".

Additionally, some of the youth identified Canadian culture as isolating. One youth was quoted as saying, "in my country our houses are more open so you can see and talk to people".

## Policing

For some youth, there were concerns around policing. In many of the studies, Somali and Portuguese male youth, for example, identified being constantly harassed by police.

## Poverty and Lack of Resources

For many newcomer youth, poverty and lack of resources also impact on their settlement and integration experiences. One youth stated " …parents

want you to work and make money for the family and help out…it's hard because you can't be successful at school and then have a part-time job working 5, 6, 7 hours a night, plus coming home and doing your homework".

## Bullying and Violence

Bullying and violence were also a concern for immigrant youth. The bullying and violence identified was not restricted to mainstream "Canadian" youth but included youth from other newcomer groups.

## Racism, Sexism and Discrimination

Racism, sexism and discrimination were also identified as issues that newcomer youth experienced regularly. For example, Serbian youth described the discrimination they experienced during the recent Kosovo crisis. The portrayal of Serbs in the media impacted on how other youth treated them. One Serbian youth explained that a group of other youth teased and yelled the following at him during the bombing of Yugoslavia. "You Serbs kill people. We don't like to be friendly with you!", "Go home Serbs!" Youth from other cultural groups shared similar stories. "We recall frequently hearing us Asians being referred to as "chinks" or "gooks".

## Traumatic Pre-Migration Experiences

Traumatic pre-migration experiences, as mentioned earlier by Lawrence, also have an impact on newcomer youth and their experiences in settling and integrating into Canadian society. Many of the youth witnessed injuries to members of their families as a consequence of ethnic cleansing, combat and/or constant gunfire. The groups of youth that identified these types of experiences included youth from Somalia, Afghanistan and the former Yugoslavia.

## Role Reversal

As mentioned by Lawrence, immigrant youth often experience situations in which their roles are reversed and/ or different from what they were in their previous country. Many of them have additional responsibilities. Some of them become translators for their parents, write bills and correspondence for their parents, do adult chores and care for younger siblings.

## Discipline

Another issue that was often mentioned was the tensions that arose around discipline. For some immigrant youth physical punishment may have been accepted and used as a way of discipline in their previous country. However, many of the youth quickly learned that that physical punishment is not allowed in Canada. One youth stated, "When you do something bad back home, your parents can beat you. But when you come to Canada, when parents shout at them, they call the police. That's the Canadian way."

## Common Findings for Newcomer Youth Specific to Education

The newcomer youth who participated in the research study identified several issues that are directly related to the educational system. These issues included the challenge of language, grade and level placements, racism, sexism and discrimination, school violence, lack of respect for teachers, expectations of teachers, discipline, religious tensions in schools and ESL programs. Additionally, the research strongly supported the school as one of the best locations to provide support to immigrant youth and families with their settlement and integration needs.

## Language

Language was a source of tension, crisis and struggle for most immigrant youth. As mentioned earlier by Lawrence and Awad, in some cases, difficulty in acquiring the language impacted on other aspects of the youth's life including their education, employment, health and well-being. In some cases it contributes to a loss in self-esteem.

Jamaican youth, for example, found that language presented a challenge because they were routinely placed in ESL classes, despite the fact that English is their first language. "I already knew English, but it was like when I come here I could understand them but they could not understand me. They wanted to put me into an ESL program. Probably because I had an accent and I spoke fast."

## Grade and Level of Placement

There was also a general frustration amongst some of the youth around the grade and level of placement they were put in within the school system. Many of the youth felt that they were often placed in lower levels and grades of course work than they were capable of handling. One South

One Serbian youth explained that a group of other youth teased and yelled the following at him during the bombing of Yugoslavia. "You Serbs kill people. We don't like to be friendly with you!"

One youth stated, "When you do something bad back home, your parents can beat you. But when you come to Canada, when parents shout at them, they call the police. That's the Canadian way."

Asian youth commented, "they see a brown person who doesn't speak English well and think that all brown people can't speak. They'll stick them in ESL".

Amongst the younger youth, fights were often initiated because they were teased about their inability to speak English or their accent.

## Violence in the Schools

For many newcomer youth school violence was a great concern. The Somali and Filipino youth for example expressed concern over bullying and extortion by other youth. Amongst the younger youth, fights were often initiated because they were teased about their inability to speak English or their accent.

## Religious Tensions

In some instances, newcomer youth experienced religious tensions. For example, some Somali Muslim youth shared their experiences of trying to get prayer time approved in schools. Many teachers did not support their desire to pray during school time. Youth were sometimes not permitted a prayer room in the school and in some cases penalized by teachers for leaving class to pray. Additionally, different faith practices were often not understood by other youth, for example, fasting during Ramadan.

## Lack of Respect for Teachers

Many of the newcomer youth were surprised at the lack of respect they witnessed in Canada for teachers. For example, Filipino, Jamaican and Korean newcomer youth reported that in their countries teachers are treated with great respect. Additionally, many of the youth indicated that they often felt intense pressure from their peers to talk back to teachers in order to gain respect and "fit in".

## Perceptions and Expectations of Teachers and Counsellors

Although for many newcomer youth, teachers had a positive impact on them, some of the youth indicated that the teachers' perceptions and expectations of them often impacted on their self-esteem and how they performed academically. "They took my tests in math and English, my scores were well above average. The counsellor told me "you should go to community college and maybe handy-work would be good for you."

"In the West Indies we have some words in our dialect which is different from plain English. The Jamaican dialect that we have, the Canadians don't understand. It's not that we don't speak English."

## Discipline in the Schools

In terms of discipline, many of the youth were astonished at what they perceived as the lack of discipline in schools. "In my country if you disrespect the teacher, and the teacher calls your mother, your mother will tell the teacher to beat you. And after, when you get home, your mother will beat you too!" Another youth stated, "Kids here get punished by timeout or you're grounded. What kind of punishment is that?"

## ESL Programs

Some newcomer youth were frustrated with ESL programs and in some cases resented them. This was especially true for youth that did not perceive that they had language difficulties. "In the West Indies we have some words in our dialect which is different from plain English. The Jamaican dialect that we have, the Canadians don't understand. It's not that we don't speak English."

## Common Findings for Sources of Support for Newcomer Youth

The research provided an opportunity for many of the newcomer youth to identify some of the supports that they felt were useful for their settlement and integration into Canadian society. These supports included friends, extended families, ESL programs, religious institutions, settlement and other community agencies.

## Same Ethnic Group Peer Networks

One of the supports that many youth identified that was helpful in their settlement process was a peer network from the same ethnic group. "… You're new in the country and you have no one, if you have someone who talks your language and then could translate stuff for you then it's much easier for you to communicate with other people. And you have some kind of support rather than being alone."

## ESL Programs

While some immigrant youth found ESL programs to be frustrating, others identified them as a support. Similarly, while some immigrant youth identified their teachers as a hindrance to their integration, other immigrant youth found teachers, especially ESL teachers, to be very supportive. "I had a nice teacher. He was really nice- he doesn't look like he was going to come after you- he tells you everything word by word so we could understand". "ESL teachers are helpful - they understand. They don't laugh. They spend time with you. They

don't embarrass you because you don't know the language."

### Common Recommendations for Education

The youth had various recommendations for the educational system that they felt would make their settlement and integration experiences easier.

### Mentoring Programs

Some of the immigrant youth indicated that it would be useful for them to have mentoring programs in schools where more established immigrant youth could be paired up with newcomers.

### Accurate Assessments of Placements

The youth that were frustrated with what they perceived was an inaccurate assessment of their language ability and skills identified the need to have more accurate ways of assessing their knowledge and skill level. They felt that schools should develop aptitude tests that are less discriminating. "Just because I don't speak English well doesn't mean I'm stupid."

### Promotion of Anti-Discrimination Policies

The newcomer youth identified a need for greater promotion of anti-discrimination and greater cultural sensitivity. They felt that cross-cultural training for all members of the school community was necessary.

### Partnerships Between Community Organizations and Schools

Some of the newcomer youth felt that there should be more partnerships between community organizations and schools. Some youth felt that it was important to invite community educators and leaders from various ethno-cultural groups to present at the schools. This would allow other youth to better appreciate their culture and communities.

### Links Between Parents and Schools

Newcomer youth also identified the need to have better links between parents and schools. This would allow their parents to better understand what is expected of them in the school system, especially if the expectations were different from their previous country. "I think parents need to understand what you are going through in school. You are going through different stuff from there, that they need to change their ways too, a little". Some youth suggested that their parents be encouraged to be on parent councils, as this would provide an opportunity for their parents to become familiar with the school and have input into policies.

### Designated Prayer Areas

For some newcomer youth, it was important that they be able to practice their faith at school. If there were designated prayer areas, it would be less difficult for them to practice their faith and would reduce some of the stress that they experienced.

### Multicultural Curriculum

Various newcomer youth found it difficult to understand the curriculum because it was very focused on North American content. One youth was quoted as saying, "And you know that people don't have any respect for people they don't learn about….". At the same time it was mentioned that teachers and other school staff needed to be careful of what kind of information they shared with students. For example, Muslim youth expressed their concerns that they were often represented as terrorists, violent and evil. This type of information made it difficult to fit in with other youth.

### Homework Clubs and Co-op Opportunities

Some newcomer youth sighted the need for more opportunities for social interaction that also allowed them to gain help with their studies. Homework clubs enabled some youth to keep up with their schoolwork while meeting new friends. Additionally, for some youth it was difficult for their parents to help them with their homework assignments because they were not familiar with Canadian curriculum. The newcomer youth also identified the need for greater co-op opportunities where they could learn more about the Canadian work place and get job experience at the same time.

### What is CIC/OASIS doing with the research?
### Dissemination and Sharing of Information

CIC/OASIS is in the process of disseminating and sharing the research information regionally,

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Muslim youth expressed their concerns that they were often represented as terrorists, violent and evil. This type of information made it difficult to fit in with other youth.

nationally and internationally. For example, my presentation to you here today.

The research findings were just recently presented in Vancouver at the Fifth International Metropolis conference. The conference included representatives from across Canada and other countries around the world. These findings have also been shared with various communities across Ontario. Recently, the research was displayed in Ottawa, London and Toronto at the "Putting the Pieces Together" interactive exhibits, that were attended by representatives from various levels of government, community and settlement agencies, academics and other stakeholders interested in settlement and integration issues. The information has also been shared with our National Headquarters in Ottawa and with other funders.

The research conducted by CREHS in the Waterloo Region was presented to other funders. The result was that funds were approved by the United Way for a youth worker position that will address some of the needs identified in their research report.

The research findings strongly support the need to have supports for newcomer youth and their families in educational settings where they can most easily be accessed. These kind of findings serve to reinforce the need to continue to fund and possibly expand the initiative of placing settlement workers in the schools.

## Support for the Settlement Workers in the Schools Initiative

The research findings strongly support the need to have supports for newcomer youth and their families in educational settings where they can most easily be accessed. These kind of findings serve to reinforce the need to continue to fund and possibly expand the initiative of placing settlement workers in the schools.

This initiative was originally piloted and started in Ottawa several years ago and has since been expanded to Toronto schools. In the next year, CIC/OASIS plans to expand the program in Toronto to the Toronto Catholic District School Board and the French school boards.

This initiative was originally piloted and started in Ottawa several years ago and has since been expanded to Toronto schools. In the next year, CIC/OASIS plans to expand the program in Toronto to the Toronto Catholic District School Board and the French school boards. Over the next couple of years, CIC/OASIS plans to develop and implement similar initiatives in Kitchener-Waterloo, Peel, London, Windsor, York Region and Hamilton.

## Development of Tools and Resources That Respond to the Settlement Needs of Immigrant Youth and Their Families

CIC/OASIS will continue to develop tools and resources that address some of the needs related to the settlement and integration of newcomer youth. For example, CIC/OASIS recently funded "Stranger Becoming Us", a teacher's resource kit for use in grades four to eight that includes a CD, lesson plans and student worksheets. The resource kit provides information on immigration that is accessible to teachers and students.

CIC/OASIS is also planning to fund some additional research that will study parenting issues of newcomer families in Ontario and the needs of immigrant youth who may be at risk.

Another example of a recently funded tool that will help the settlement and integration of newcomer youth and their families is the LINC Parenting Program: Manual and Curriculum Guidelines.*

## Conclusion

I wanted to close my presentation with a few words that were quoted from Max Keeping and highlighted on the cover of one of the youth research projects. I think the quote reinforces the importance of providing support to newcomer youth and their families as they settle and integrate into Canadian society.

"The children of the world are all our children, and regardless of skin colour, regardless of class, we will all profit or pay for the way we treat them."

## Endnotes

1 View the curriculum online at the AlphaPlus Centre Website at www.alphaplus.ca. Additionally, all of the research can be viewed at www.settlement.org.

"Putting the Pieces Together" Resource Catalogue, containing information on the research studies and other products developed recently for use in Immigrant Settlement Programs Across Ontario, can be obtained from CIC.

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# The Facts Are In: Newcomers' Experiences in Accessing Regulated Professions in Ontario

by Michelle Goldberg, Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Access to Professions and Trades

Each year more than half of all immigrants to Canada choose Ontario as their home. More than 60 percent of those of working age have some post secondary education or professional or trades training. Of these, 28% are highly skilled professionals and tradespeople (see Tables 1, 2 & 3 below). Everyone benefits when newcomers can put their skills and experience to work in the provincial economy. Yet many skilled immigrants have difficulty getting licensed and employed in their field.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Access to Professions and Trades (APT) Unit, is working to address barriers faced by foreign-trained individuals. The mandate of the unit is to promote fair and merit-based registration and employment practices for foreign-trained professionals and tradespeople and to enhance their social and economic contribution to the province.

Economic Importance of APT

- Cuts social and economic cost of unemployment, underemployment, social assistance
- Reduces unnecessary retraining and education
- Increases foreign-trained individual's contribution to the economy and ensures Ontario benefits from immigrant's skills and expertise

More than 60 percent of those of working age have some post secondary education or professional or trades training. Of these, 28% are highly skilled professionals and tradespeople.

## Demographic Characteristics of Highly Skilled Immigrants in Ontario

**Table 1**
**Top Intended Professions to Ontario**

| PROFESSION | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Engineers | 3,513 | 5,031 | 6,208 | 5,268 | 6,737 | 29,303 |
| Engineering Technicians / Technologists | 2,391 | 2,951 | 3,085 | 1,601 | 806 | 12,783 |
| Accountants | 809 | 1,304 | 1,606 | 700 | 364 | 5,362 |
| Teachers | 328 | 367 | 285 | 212 | 246 | 1,849 |
| Medical Laboratory Technologists | 270 | 345 | 390 | 161 | 112 | 1,481 |
| Nurses | 307 | 210 | 194 | 88 | 47 | 1,268 |
| Pharmacists | 223 | 221 | 258 | 162 | 85 | 1,104 |
| Architects | 126 | 154 | 172 | 111 | 139 | 838 |
| Physicians/Surgeons | 123 | 148 | 119 | 77 | 68 | 683 |
| Land Surveyors | 63 | 87 | 67 | 28 | 18 | 312 |

Yet many skilled immigrants have difficulty getting licensed and employed in their field.

**Table 2**
**Top Intended Trades to Ontario**

| TRADE | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cooks/Bakers | 849 | 954 | 1,002 | 671 | 509 | 4,909 |
| Industrial Millwrights | 259 | 356 | 406 | 258 | 162 | 1,627 |
| Automotive Service Technicians | 212 | 276 | 208 | 78 | 44 | 1,079 |
| Hairstylists/Barbers | 251 | 225 | 203 | 70 | 34 | 1,22 |
| Tool & Die Makers | 127 | 126 | 140 | 111 | 137 | 758 |
| Machinists | 141 | 149 | 115 | 66 | 47 | 638 |
| Electricians | 96 | 83 | 92 | 64 | 56 | 479 |
| Plumbers/Steamfitters | 45 | 45 | 76 | 44 | 16 | 302 |
| Autobody Repairer/ Painters | 41 | 30 | 23 | 26 | 15 | 180 |
| Refrigeration/ Air Conditioning Mechanics | 29 | 41 | 25 | 19 | 19 | 168 |

Table 3
Top Countries of Origin of Foreign-Trained Immigrants, 1998

| | |
|---|---|
| China | 2,022 |
| Pakistan | 1,025 |
| India | 994 |
| Iran | 687 |
| Russia | 518 |
| Romania | 390 |
| Ukraine | 345 |
| USSR | 334 |
| Yugoslavia | 273 |
| Korea | 207 |
| Philippines | 199 |
| Bangladesh | 185 |
| Egypt | 177 |
| Hong Kong | 163 |

## Landing Destinations

- The majority of foreign-trained professionals and tradespeople choose the Greater Toronto Area as their intended landing destination in Ontario.
- This number is increasing each year.
  - In 1994, 74% chose the GTA.
  - In 1998, the number rose to 81%.
- In 1996 immigrants made up 41.9% of Toronto's population, and 17.4% of Canada's population.

Access to professions and trades is a complicated issue involving many stakeholders with different interests and responsibilities. While the federal government is in charge of the recruitment and selection of immigrants from abroad, the provincial government has responsibility for education, training and the regulation of professions and trades. There are also occupational regulatory bodies established under provincial law which have the legal authority to set and maintain standards and entry-to-practice requirements in areas such as education, experience, language proficiency, exams and Canadian internship.

As such, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities works with all stakeholders as partners in the access to professions and trades area. These partners include:

- 34 Occupational Regulatory Bodies (ORBs)
- Ministries With Legislative Responsibility For Regulated Professions
- The Federal Government
- Educational Institutions And Trainers
- Community Agencies Serving Immigrants/Non-Governmental Agencies
- Employers
- Trade Unions
- Municipalities

## Barriers

Research has identified a number of barriers foreign-trained individuals face as they seek to enter their occupations in Ontario. These include the lack of:

- Information for new and prospective immigrants about professional standards, licensing, certification requirements
- Reliable tools for assessing and recognizing academic qualifications and prior learning and work experience
- Appropriate licensing and language tests
- Supplementary bridging education
- An accessible review and appeals mechanism in the licensing/registration process for some professions and trades

The Ministry works in partnership with the above mentioned stakeholders on initiatives that address these barriers.

## Information Provision

The lack of accurate information prior to immigration is a major barrier for foreign-trained professionals. Research has shown that immigrant professionals who get helpful information are more likely to be working in their exact occupation.

Foreign-trained professionals have asked for Job Market Information (e.g., labour market conditions), Occupational Information (e.g., licensure information) and Education Information (e.g., for upgrading).

The use of the Internet is becoming more common world wide. More foreign-trained professionals have access to the Internet in their home countries and increasing numbers are using it to obtain information prior to immigrating. Foreign-trained professionals also mentioned the Internet as a place where they believe more information should be made available.[1]

Another ministry initiative implemented to address the information barrier is the development of a series of occupational fact sheets. These sheets provide up-to-date information for new and prospective immigrants on entry-to-practice requirements and labour market conditions for specific regulated occupations in Ontario. To date, fact sheets have been produced for eleven professions: Chartered Accountants, Dental Technologists, Dietitians, Massage Therapists, Nurses, Occupational Therapists, Pharmacists, Physiotherapists, Veterinarians, Teachers and Radiation Therapists. Additional fact sheets are in process for four regulated trades and the engineering profession. The fact sheets are available overseas through visa offices, and the International Organization of Migrants (IOMs), and through settlement agencies in Ontario. The occupational fact sheets can also be downloaded from the *Gateway to Diversity* website as well. Work is also progressing to make the fact sheets an interactive, on-line resource that will permit users to access the specific information they need.

Ontario is also an active member of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on APT. The

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objective of the group is to work toward greater coordination of federal and provincial initiatives and a specific focus of the group is on information provision. The Working Group organized the Qualification Recognition Conference that took place in Toronto in October 1999.

PLA/R can be particularly important for foreign-trained professionals who return to university or college to upgrade their qualifications in order to be licensed in their occupations.

## Fair Assessment Tools

Due to the lack of reliable tools for assessing and recognizing academic qualifications and prior learning and work experience, the education and experience that foreign-trained professionals bring to Ontario is not always recognized. If they go back to university or college to get Canadian degrees, few get credit or exemption for courses already taken or are aware of prior learning assessment and recognition options.

Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLA/R) is a process used by some universities and colleges or occupational regulatory bodies to evaluate what a person already knows and can do, to award credit or exemption from a requirement or a course. For example, in some cases the individual may have to prepare a portfolio, or pass an interview or exam instead of taking a course.

PLA/R can be particularly important for foreign-trained professionals who return to university or college to upgrade their qualifications in order to be licensed in their occupations. These individuals may have to repeat entire academic programs because of the lack of appropriate tools to assess their knowledge and experience and to allow exemption from some portion of their professional program.

PLA/R tools such as an occupational specific language test and skills station are used successfully to increase access for foreign-trained midwives.

Within the occupational regulatory system, the APT unit has funded two PLA/R projects in the health care sector. The College of Midwives completed the first project. In this project, PLA/R tools such as an occupational specific language test and skills station are used successfully to increase access for foreign-trained midwives. In the second project, the College of Physiotherapists developed a best-practice manual as a model for other occupations to be used for developing PLA/R tools.

Aside from assessing prior skills gained through work experience, tools are needed to assess foreign academic degrees and diplomas and to compare them to Ontario standards. Fair, accurate and consistent assessments can help employers understand foreign educational qualifications. To meet this need, the Ministry recently announced the establishment of an academic credential assessment service for Ontario. Operated by World Education Services (WES), the new service evaluates secondary and post secondary educational qualifications from more than 180 countries.[2]

The service does not assess skills and experience or professional qualifications for licensing purposes. However, occupational regulatory bodies may choose, on a voluntary basis, to use it to assist in assessing a candidate's academic diplomas and degrees

## Supplementary Bridge Training

The lack of Canadian Experience is identified by foreign-trained professionals as the most common barrier to employment. The "Catch 22" situation is often cited: 'I cannot gain Canadian experience because I cannot find employment in Canada, and I cannot find employment in Canada because I cannot gain Canadian experience.' Courses that assist foreign-trained professionals obtain Canadian experience are seen as one of the most helpful types of training courses offered in Ontario. Furthermore, computer training and occupation specific training were also helpful in assisting them to obtain jobs in their occupations.

Current partnership ventures to address the need for bridge training include the Sector Specific Terminology, Information and Counselling project (STIC). This initiative is composed of a unique series of workshops and resources designed to speed up entry of foreign-trained individuals into four sectors of the labour market: accounting, engineering, health care, and automotive service. Participants learn about their occupation in a Canadian context, including licensing and certification requirements and labour market conditions.

Human Resources Development Canada funded the STIC pilot project, developed by the Access to Professions and Trades initiative and the Skills for Change agency in Toronto. Skills for Change, which successfully delivered the first pilot workshops in 1998, continues to offer the program to clients.

A consortium in Hamilton, Ontario recently completed a successful program that provides a model for a collaborative approach in smaller communities where services for foreign-trained individuals may be more limited. The partners in this initiative that contributed their particular area of expertise were the Settlement & Integration Services Organization

(SISO), Mohawk College, St. Charles Adult Education Centre, and the Hamilton-Wentworth Local Training Board.

In addition, the Ontario College of Pharmacists and the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Toronto, in partnership with a community agency, Accessible Community Counselling and Employment Services (A.C.C.E.S.) developed and delivered the Pharmacy STIC, a unique bridging program driven by the licensing body to familiarize foreign-trained pharmacists with pharmacy practice in Ontario. The success of this pilot has led to the development (in progress) of a broader program that also includes distance education and mentoring.

"How-to" manuals that could assist other organizations to develop their own programs will shortly be available on the Gateway to Diversity Website for all three completed projects.

Finally, $3.5 million over 3 years in the Ontario budget was allocated for bridge training for foreign-trained nurses and other professionals to meet Ontario licensing standards. The Ministry is funding the development of the CARE (Creating Access to Regulated Employment) for the Nurses' bridging project and the International Graduate Bridging Program for Pharmacists.

## Language

Language can be a major difficulty in finding employment even for highly educated and trained foreign-trained professionals. While the assumption is that foreign-trained professionals arrive in Ontario with good or excellent language ability, some still arrive with only poor or fair English speaking skills. Foreign-trained professionals themselves were more likely to rate their English reading and writing ability higher than their oral skills. Given that speaking skills are more often tested in job interviews, it is easy to see why these professionals experience difficulties in finding employment.

Most foreign-trained professionals immigrate to Ontario in the independent class. Consequently, there is an assumption that their language skills have already been assessed for immigration purposes, thus these professionals should be arriving with good language skills. However, some principal applicant immigrants selected as independent immigrants, who have been assessed and given points for their language ability, are still arriving with poor or fair English language ability. Some foreign-trained professionals who were educated in English also rate their English-speaking ability upon arrival as poor or fair.

Language skills are not formally assessed in the visa application process. Most often, language skills are assessed informally by the visa officer by conducting the interview in English or French. Given that language fluency is usually assessed informally, foreign-trained professionals are given little feedback on their official language ability and their chances of finding employment upon arrival in Ontario. If foreign-trained professionals are given a positive assessment of their language ability (albeit based on an informal assessment) their expectations are raised. Many foreign-trained professionals do not realize until they get to Ontario the extent to which they need to improve their language ability. Had they realized this, they might have studied English during the time they were applying/waiting for their visa, and thus been able to arrive in Ontario more job ready.

As length of time in Ontario increases, foreign-trained professionals' language abilities improve. Nearly all foreign-trained professionals who have been in Ontario for 4-5 years rated their official language ability as good or excellent.

Immigrant professionals feel language training is critical. Many take English-as-a-second language courses upon arrival in Ontario in an effort to improve their language ability. While many find these courses helpful or very helpful for general purposes, several indicate that general courses do not meet their specialized needs. They want more focus on oral communication including pronunciation and occupation-specific language training at an advanced level.

To address the language barrier, the Access to Professions and Trades unit has supported several language projects. The first was an Occupation-specific Language Test that was developed by the Ontario College of Midwives. The second was an ESL Pharmaceutical Project. This project was developed by Innovations Media in collaboration with the UofT Department of Pharmacy. It is an interactive on-line course geared toward ESL students to develop clinical communication skills.[3]

## Licensure

Having a licence is one of the most important factors enabling foreign-trained professionals to find employment in their occupations. When foreign-trained professionals apply for licensure, they must meet the requirements set out by the licensing body for their profession. This may involve a variety of

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things from degree evaluations to work experience evaluation and/or the completion of exams, to the testing of language and/or occupational competency. Few foreign-trained professionals obtain licensure in the first five years after arrival.

Few foreign-trained professionals obtain licensure in the first five years after arrival.

Foreign-trained professionals applying for licensure have identified a number of barriers that make this process difficult: time requirements, lack of Canadian experience, expense, lack of necessary language skills, and lack of information about the process.

## Conclusion

Ontario receives many highly skilled and educated immigrants. Research indicates there are many barriers that foreign-trained professionals face as they attempt to be licensed and find employment in Ontario. Research also reveals many factors that can help them. This research can inform policies and programs in the access to professions and trades area.

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Ontario is committed to working with partners to ensure that qualified individuals who come to Ontario will have an equal opportunity to enter and practise the occupations in which they have been educated and trained, and thereby contribute to the overall growth and health of the provincial economy and society.

1. The Ontario Government's Gateway to Diversity website http://www.equalopportunity.on.ca/english_g/apt/ provides information on access to professions and trades and useful links for potential and recent immigrants to Ontario.
2. WES is a not-for-profit agency with an international reputation for high quality service. It is based in New York. WES-Canada opened its Ontario office in Toronto on October 2, 2000, and recruits staff locally. World Education Service website: http://www.wes.org.
3. For more information contact Mark Collings, the Project Manager at (905) 949-0049 (x 2347) or by e-mail at mcollings@tcet.com.

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# Race-ing the Gap: Identity, Identification, Èmigrés, and the Politics of ESL Learning

by Awad Ibrahim, Bishop's University

*The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that a speaker gets his words!) but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's concrete contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word and make it one's own.*

*Mikhail M. Bakhtin*[1]

**T**he narrative in this paper is as much personal as it is theoretical or "objective," as much about my research subjects as it is about the present researcher/writer. It looks at the impact of desires, investments, identity, and identification on the process of language learning. It is about how the act of language learning, namely learning English as a Second Language (ESL), is turned into a symbolic act of identity negotiation and translation, an act which forms and simultaneously performs a subject formation project where Blackness is central. This paper, in short, is about the process of *becoming Black*. It examines the interrelation between race, culture, identity and language learning. It is anchored on two premises. The first is that, in North America, youths from 11 to 20 years old do not learn ESL inside the ESL classroom. This is not to suggest that youths do not learn at all in the ESL classroom. We know they do. I wish, however, to argue that youths will go extensively beyond what we teach in our ESL classrooms to learn everyday idioms and the conventional ways of using them. After all, as Bakhtin (1981) argues, it is not out of a dictionary that a speaker/learner gets her words. If this were so, what are these outside classroom sites where youths learn English and how do they learn from them? What implications would this situation have for what we teach in our ESL classrooms and how we teach it? Put simply, what are we doing and what should we be doing in our ESL classrooms? The second premise of the paper is that youths' gendered, sexualized, abled, classed, and racialized social identities are directly implicated in the ESL learning process. Indeed, they are its foundations (cf. Ibrahim, 1999, 2000a,b&c; Norton, 1997; Toohey, 2000; Morgan, 1998; Cummins, 1996), and no learning would be made personal, Bakhtin argues, unless the learner populates the word with his/her own intentions, his/her own accent; hence, appropriating the word and adapting it to his/her own semantic and expressive intentions.

In North America, youths from 11 to 20 years old do not learn ESL inside the ESL classroom.

The paper argues that a group of French-speaking immigrant and refugee continental African youths who are attending an urban Franco-Ontarian high school in southwestern Ontario, Canada, enters a social imaginary – a discursive space in which they are already imagined, constructed, and thus treated as Blacks by hegemonic discourses and groups. This imaginary is directly implicated in whom they identify with (Black North America), which in turn influences what and how they learn linguistically and culturally. They learn Black Stylized English (BSE), a subcategory of Black English (BE), which they access in hip-hop culture and rap lyrical and linguistic styles. For them, BE becomes as much a site of language learning as a symbolic space of identification and desire; and the act of learning is not a neutral act. In fact, it raises a number of critical questions. First, why would continental African youths need and want to learn, appropriate, re-produce, and re-perform these symbolic systems (Bourdieu, 1991), and, second, what does it mean for a Black ESL learner to acquire Black English as a Second Language (BESL)? That is, at a time when North American Blackness is governed by how negatively it is located in a race-conscious society (Ibrahim, 1999; 2000a&b; Wright, 2000, West, 1993; among many others), what symbolic, cultural, pedagogical, and identity investments would learners have in locating themselves politically and racially at the margin of representation?

First, why would continental African youths need and want to learn, appropriate, re-produce, and re-perform these symbolic systems (Bourdieu, 1991), and, second, what does it mean for a Black ESL learner to acquire Black English as a Second Language (BESL)?

By symbolic system, I am referring to a set of norms, rules, and regulations that are expressly operating together to create an entity, a form, a mode, a structure, or what Foucault (1984) calls discourse – an ensemble of discursive formations or frameworks forming and re/transforming who we are and determining what we can and must say (Hall, 1996). They are symbolic because they are misrecognized or least visible (Bourdieu, 1991); yet they constitute the deep infrastructures of any material system. In a dialectic sense, they are constituents of and at the same time constituting these infrastructures. Put otherwise, symbolic systems need material systems (authorized or not) – what Bourdieu (1991) calls champs or fields – in order to exist and function; however, they also constitute the very grounds upon which the material system depends and indeed where the latter expresses itself. I have an identity, for example, but my identity would not exist outside the linguistic field where it expresses itself.

Whereas all male students articulated and performed a strong identification with and a complete appropriation of hip-hop and rap through their dress, posture, walk, and talk, female students, depending on their age, tended to be more postmodernly eclectic.

Being symbolic, Bourdieu (1991) continues, contrary to its conventional use, does not put it in opposition to the material. A symbolic field or capital can very easily, indeed, be converted into a material capital. The French language in Canada, for instance, may represent a symbolic capital – though highly valued; learning it, however, can be the key for accessing material capital – job, business, and so on. Language is a symbolic system, with its infrastructures, history, and grammar (in its broad semiological sense) and is directly implicated in our everyday material life. Indeed, it is where we express our feelings, who we are or what we have become, and where we invest our desires. Here, language is not, and has never been, just an instrument of communication, as I have argued elsewhere (Ibrahim, 1999). It is also where power is formed and performed based on race, gender, sexuality, and social-class identity. In what follows, I first explore the idea of becoming Black and, then, look at my research site, subjects and method. This is followed by a discussion of the research findings and a conclusion on the need to bridge the gap between what we do in our ESL classrooms and the world activities taking place outside it.

For example, they combined hip-hop with "traditional" dress without any sense of contradiction.

## The Day We Became Black

In her classic *La révolution du langage poétique*, Kristeva (1974) offers a notion that is central to this paper: *sujet en procès* or subject-in-progress. It is a becoming of being, or being as a continuous act of becoming (see also Sartre, 1980; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). It is a notion which assumes not fixity, but performativity (Butler, 1999); not being in thetic and static sense, but being as being which is never complete; and for this project, it assumes a being that is becoming Black. The process of becoming Black was on the one hand marked by an identification with and a desire for North American Blackness; and it was, on the other, as much about gender and race as it was about language and cultural performance. In the case of the African youths, for example, which will be detailed later, although both young women and men verbalized a strong identification with Blackness during interviews, the situation was different when it came to the intensity of bodily performance. Whereas all male students articulated and performed a strong identification with and a complete appropriation of hip-hop and rap through their dress, posture, walk, and talk, female students, depending on their age, tended to be more postmodernly eclectic. The younger girls (12 to 14 years old) had the same linguistic and cultural practice and performance as the boys in their appropriation of rap and hip-hop, while the older girls tended to be more eclectic. For example, they combined hip-hop with "traditional" dress without any sense of contradiction (see Ibrahim, 2000a, for further analysis).

Borrowing from Butler (1999), the idea of performativity is central to my research. Again, it is a concept which assumes not fixity but repetition, parody and continual act of becoming. Butler offered gender or the category *woman* as an example. She argues that one is not born a *woman*, one in fact becomes a *woman*. Hence, gender for Butler is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of recurrent acts, words, gestures, or what Roland Barthes (1983) calls complex semiological languages. These are signs that are open for signification and different readings since they cannot produce verbal utterances, yet they are ready to be spoken. For Butler, these complex languages are produced and performed on the surface of our bodies: in and through our modes of dress, walk, hairstyle, *maquillag*e, lip gloss; and also in architecture, photographs, and so on. I am contending, accordingly, that we perform our identities, desires, and investments, at least in part, in and through the complex semiological languages of our dress, walk, and talk.

Being is being distinguished here from becoming. Being is an accumulated memory, an understanding, a conception and an experience, upon

which individuals interact with the world around them, whereas becoming is the process of building this memory of experience. As a continental African, for example, I was not considered Black in Africa; other terms served to patch together my identity, such as *tall*, *Sudanese*, and *basketball player*. In other words, as Stuart Hall (1997) would argue, my Blackness was not marked, it was outside the shadow of the dominant Other. However, as a refugee in North America, my perception of self was altered in direct response to the social processes of racism and the historical representation of Blackness whereby the antecedent signifiers became secondary to my Blackness, and I retranslated my being: I became Black. Chronologically, Sunday May 16, 1999 was a culminating date in my accumulative memory and experience of what it means *to be* Black (in Canada); it was the day I was officially declared Black. The following is an extract from my diary. At the time, I titled it *Being Under Surveillance: Who Controls My Black Body?* It is cited here to further our understanding of the everyday racism, human degradation, and the general annihilation of Black people in North America. It is a way of acknowledging how the present researcher is implicated in the research, and the questions I am asking.

> I know that experience can be a way to know and can inform how we know what we know. [And that] personal testimony ... is such fertile ground for the production of liberatory [praxis] because it usually forms the base of our [knowledge and] theory making. (bell hooks, 1994, p. 70)

Today, was the last day of my trip to Toronto after an absence in Ottawa for almost 5 months. I had, to say the least, a wonderful time during my sojourn in Toronto: visited friends, had flavoured meals, and yes saw *The Mummy* too. It was 1: 10 p.m. on a sunny and an unexpectedly hot Sunday. I was more in mood for poetry than for prose and was bicycling on St. George Street which had never been as light. However, it is frightening how lightness can so easily whirl into an unbearable heaviness, and how heaviness can cause so much pain. It all began when I had just crossed the yellow light of Bloor Street West. I saw a white car curving into the bicycle lane and I heard hereafter a siren coming from it. Since I was bicycling, I was neither able to fully verify the car nor who was driving it nor why it was requesting me to stop. However, when it was fully halted before my bicycle, I realized it was a police car. From it came veering a rangy White man with full gear and a pair of sun glasses, along with a clean and handsome gun. My immediate thought was that it must be the bicycle helmet, since I was not wearing one; and seeing that there will always be a first time for our social experiences, I whispered to myself 'oh God, this is my first ticket of my life.' I was deadly mistaken.

He approached my bicycle and said "Have you ever been in trouble with the law before?" Shocked beyond any imaginable belief, "No," I said, and "Can I know why am I asked the question?," I added. "You fit the description of a man we are looking for, who just snapped a bag from Yorkville; and I just saw you around the Yorkville area," he said. Could I have avoided Yorkville, since to buy a muffler or a bandanna in Yorkville one needs at least a few hundred and I had only fourty two dollars in my pocket? Coincidences have their own logics, which are beyond my humble understanding. At this point, he began a walkie-talkie conversation with a dispatcher; and I realized when he said "I am talking to him right now" that it was a continuation to a previous dialogue. The phrase "I am talking to him right now" was however traumatic. Involuntarily, it triggered and brought alive my unforgettable political imprisonment memory in the early 1990s with the all-punishing dictatorial règime in Sudan. When memories are so deep, all they need is a match to find oneself burning and unwillingly shaking. The phrase was that match. It signified that I was already under surveillance; I was already 'talked' about. Panopticism, somehow, keeps surfacing in my mind now. It was a situation where the marginalized and the invisible was becoming visible, if not the center of surveillance; where the 'fictions' I was immersed into came alive into 'reality.' Looking sternly into his eyes, I repeated, "Can I know why I was stopped?" In a panoptic règime, I now understand, like all totalitarian règimes, the true opponent or enemy, if you like, is the person who asks questions. Squirmingly, his face turned red and he loudly regurgitated "I told YOU Sir that you fit the description of a man we are looking for."

Calmly but unaloofly, "And what is that description?," I wondered. "We are looking for a dark man with a dark bag," he said. First, I was curious about the "we." Who are "we?" I can hazard answers, but I am still not sure about the answer. Secondly I looked at my backbag which I was carrying, since I was leaving Toronto at 3:00 p.m., and it occurred to me that my bag was light blue with one very small

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"We are looking for a dark man with a dark bag," he said.

black (or as he said "dark") stripe at the edge. More with my eyes than with my voice, I repeated after him "A DARK man?" Self-consciously, but pesteringly, he exclaimed "A Black man with a dark bag!" He insisted on my bag being "dark;" now I was significantly metamorphosed from "dark" into "black." Not that it matters either way, I reflected after, but it seems that some people can either not see or have a "color problem." "Do you live around here, Sir?," he asked. "I don't," I responded. Up until now, I have no idea why his eyes steered out and his face changed when I said I do not live in Toronto. "Where do you live, Sir?"; the appellation "Sir," at this point, was voiced with such an unease that I questioned the merit of its utterance. "Ottawa," I said. "What are you doing in Toronto?" What (indeed) are you doing in Toronto? I repeated to myself. Some questions, I guess, are meant to be repeated for their banality, if not stupefaction. I told him none of these; "I am visiting friends", I said. With an unconvinced face he murmured "Ahha!".

With no apologies, I was ordered to collect my affairs and my bag and, as he uttered it, "You are free to go now."

During this conversation, I saw another police car stopping behind the first; and from it came another White policeman. I was then asked for a piece of identification. I gave the first policeman my citizenship card. Before doing so, he asked me to lay down my (dark?) bag, which I did. With his order, I widely opened my bag for anyone in the street to see. Since it was a tourist area, near a well-attended Bata Shoe Museum, everyone was looking into my bag. Some, I observed, were pitying my plight and one White woman was smiling. I was not only pitying my situation, which was abtrusely absurd, I was pitying also that Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, Maragaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* and Julie Kristeva's *Reader* had to endure the same humiliation. These books were on top of my clothes. (Not that these books mattered in and for themselves, because they didn't. Disrespecfulness for the authors was what pestered me.) Anyway, it was getting closer to 2:00 p.m. and my ride for Ottawa was to leave at 3:00 p.m. At this point, I decided to use my University of Ottawa professor identification. I am still debating whether it was a favorable or unfavorable decision not to use it from the offset. After writing down my name and date of birth, he then announced to the dispatcher telling her "All is OK now."

I am also curious if my hip-hop dress, my emerging dreadlocks and my youthfulness did not form part of the reasons why I was stopped.

With no apologies, I was ordered to collect my affairs and my bag and, as he uttered it, "You are free to go now." Given its inhumane nature, being under siege, believe me, is a feeling which should be avoided using all measures. Somehow, nonetheless, I pondered if the reasons for which I was stopped could or would be enough to stop any White man, should he be the suspect? Who among white men will be stopped? Most probably unsmartly dressed, with long pony-tail hair? Again, I kept wondering, what if I could not look at the policeman in the eye and asked with a calm manner, which was not an evoked personae but a natural character, why I was stopped? What if I was just a shy man who was genuinely frightened by the police? Given my panic, terror, and fright, what would have happened should I have run? The wrath I have seen in that man's eyes, I would be ready to say, and it would certainly not be a random assumption guess given the historical relationship between the police and the Black body, was not assuring.

I am also curious if my hip-hop dress, my emerging dreadlocks and my youthfulness did not form part of the reasons why I was stopped. To provide in depth answers to these questions is irrelevant; but I can say the following to those (including an not-so-negligible number of my students) who address and think of racism as a problem that exists only south of the 49th parallel. First, to declare a problem, a reality, as non-existent can only be a disavowal, a denial of its material existence, which does certainly nothing by way of finding an ultimate solution. Hence, it is significantly productive to admit that racism is rampant in our Canadian society; denying its omnipresence does not help. Second, no one should ever go through what I went through since it can only create distrust, melancholy and a lot of anger. Finally, at a recent French-language conference where I presented a paper, there was a professor who is the head of a very prestigious center that deals with pedagogy (what an irony!) at the Universitè Laval. In subtle and convoluted philosophical terms, he questioned the merit of speaking about and of racism. Maybe waking up and smelling the coffee would not be such bad advice; and should he care to know: the coffee is no longer just French.

Nietzsche (1977) once asked, *"Muss es sein?"* - "Must it happen?" – and I might add: "Must it have happened?" I would like to offer below a theoretical proposition which links my vignette with the research I will soon discuss; it will also constitute a response to Nietzsche. It is a framework connected to the *gaze*: How am I perceived or imagined and what impacts does this imaginary have on how I am gazed at, consumed, and related to? Even if – as

Rousseau would have argued – we "live very much in the public gaze" (Taylor, 1994, p. 86), what nature does this "public gaze" have and how much of an impact does it have on our identities, identification, investments, and desires? Returning to the above incident, since it was written in my diary, the wordings might have been forcible, if not undiplomatic, but then writing as a healing does not require apologies. Also, the description of "everyday racism" (Essed, 1991) and discrimination might have been too diametrical, while we know that everyday racism is obscure enough to talk about let alone be graphically detailed. What, might you ask, has the above personal recitation to do with the research I am about to present. It is instrumental to realize that this is the very world in which my research subjects are socialized, inside and outside the school.

## The Study

This research constitutes part of the larger critical ethnographic research[2] conducted at Marie-Victorin[3] (Ibrahim, 1998) between January and June 1996. In it, I asked the following questions. First, what are the roads taken by African youths in their journey of integration in the Canadian society, the journey of *becoming Black*? What is the role of race and racism in their identity formation? How are continental African youths positioned and constructed in and out of school? What are the implications of this construction in youths' social identity formation? And what are the outcomes of this journey?

The research made use of my newly developed methodological approach, *ethnography of performance*. This is an ethnographic approach/method which builds on Butler's (1999) notion of performativity. As I already contended, if we perform our identities, desires, and investments in and through the complex semiological languages of our dress, walk, and talk, then they become our best access as researchers to our research subjects' inner-identity, what they think and desire, and how they long to represent themselves and to be represented. In other words, the inner-selves/identities are best accessed in and through observing what people do and perform on the surface of their bodies. And to have a complete picture of our research subjects' identities, if ever this is possible, we need to follow them extensively in different places, at different times, and over an extended period of time and ask them to verbalize and reflect upon their own performances/actions.

At the time of the research, I was well acquainted with the school and its population since I worked in another research project in the same school for almost two years. With permission from the school administration, I restarted to visit the school and to "hang out"[4] with African students at least once a week, and in most cases, two or three times from January to June of 1996. I took the role of a participant-observer, keeping regular notes and diaries. Having determined what they could offer to my research, I chose for extensive observation 16 students – ten boys and six girls – between the ages of 14 and 20. The girls were Somali-speakers from Somalia and Djibouti. Of the ten boys, six were Somali-speakers – from Somalia and Djibouti, two Senegalese, one Ethiopian and one Togolese. I observed them in and out of the classrooms as well as in and out of school. With the consent of students and their parents, I interviewed them, individually or in-groups, for an hour to three hours, at the school or at their residences. Interviews were either in English or French; the majority however were in French. I also videotaped and on two occasions handed over the tape recorders to students to capture their 'natural' interactions among themselves when I was not present. I attended soirées, plays, basketball games, and graduations, and was delighted to be invited to their residences. I transcribed and translated the interviews and some of the videotapes, and analyzed the data by grouping them by theme, category and subject.

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The site of the research was a Franco-Ontarian intermediate and high school (grades 7 to 13), Marie-Victorin (MV), a small school of approximately 400 students from various ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. Though it is a French-language school, the language spoken by students in the school corridors and hallways was predominately English; Arabic, Somali, and Farsi were also spoken at other times. For over six months, I attended classes at MV, talked to students, and observed curricular and extracurricular activities two or three times per week. Being the only Black adult – with the exception of one Black counselor – and being a displaced subject, a refugee, and an African, gave me a certain familiarity with the students' experiences. I was able to connect with different age and gender groups through a range of activities, initially hanging out with the

students and later playing sports with various groups. I was also approached by these students for both guidance and academic help. Because of my deep involvement in the student culture, at times my status as a researcher was forgotten, and the line between the students and myself became blurred; clearly, we shared a *safe space* of comfort that allowed us to open up, speak and engage freely.

Notably, MV had a high immigrant population at the time of this research. In fact, students who were or had parents who were born outside Canada made up 70% of the entire school population; continental Africans constituted the majority within that figure. Despite this situation, the school continued to emphasize the theme of unity within this multicultural and multiethnoracial population. The slogan that the school advertised, for instance, was *unité dans la diversité* (unity in diversity). This discourse of unity, however, had little material bearing on the students' material lives – the absence of people of color among the school personnel being a case in point. One could argue that it was the Frenchness of the school that seemed to be the capital (Bourdieu, 1991) of its promotion. And given its symbolic value, most African youths come to MV with a highly valued European linguistic norm of French: *le français parisien* (Parisian French).

My research subjects formed part of a growing continental francophone African population in Franco-Ontarian schools, which I have referred to elsewhere as *Noirs franco-ontariens* (Black Franco-Ontarians) (Ibrahim, in press). Their numbers have grown exponentially since the beginning of the 1990s. The participants varied in their length of stay in Canada, their legal status (some were immigrants, but the majority were refugees), gender, class, age, and their linguistic and national backgrounds. They came from places as diverse as the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), Djibouti, Gabon, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, and Togo. Without exception, all of the African students in MV were at least trilingual, speaking English, French, and their mother tongues, with various postcolonial histories of language learning and degrees of fluency in each language.

The research tells the stories of a group of continental Francophone African youths and the formation of their social identity in an urban, French-language high school in southwestern Ontario. Besides their gendered and racialized experience, their youth and refugee status was vital in their *moments of identification*, that is, where and how they saw themselves reflected in the mirror of their society (cf. Bhabha, 1994). Put differently, once in North America, I contend, these youths were faced with a *social imaginary* in which they were already Blacks. This social imaginary was directly implicated in how and with whom they identified, which, in turn, influenced what they learned, linguistically and culturally. What they did learn is Black Stylized English (BSE), which they accessed in and through Black popular culture. They learned by taking up and repositing the rap linguistic and musical genre and, in different ways, acquiring and rearticulating the hip-hop cultural identity.

To explain, BSE is a subcategory of Black English (BE). BE is what Geneva Smitherman refers to as *Black talk* (1994), which has its own grammar, morphology and syntax. BSE, on the other hand, refers to ways of speaking that do not depend on a full mastery of the language. It banks more on ritual expressions such as *whassup, whadap*, *whassup* [what is happening] *my Nigger*, and *yo, yo homeboy* [cool friend], which are performed habitually and recurrently in rap. These rituals, I explain elsewhere are more an expression of politics, moments of identification, and desire than they are of language or of mastering the language *per se* (Ibrahim, 1999). It is a way of saying, "I too am Black" or "I too desire and identify with Blackness."

Here, Black popular culture refers to films, newspapers, magazines, and more importantly music, such as rap, reggae, pop, and rhythm and blues (R&B). By *hip-hop* I am referring to "… everything from music, to clothing choices, attitudes, language, and an approach to culture and cultural artifacts positing and collaging them in an unsentimental fashion" (Walcott, 1995, p. 5). More skeletally, I use hip-hop to describe a way of dressing, walking, and talking. The dress refers to the myriad shades and shapes of the latest *fly gear*: high-top sneakers, bicycle shorts, chunky jewelry, baggy pants, and polka-dotted tops (Rose, 1991, p. 227). The *walk* usually means moving the fingers simultaneously with the head and the rest of the body while walking. The *talk*, however, is BSE. In patterning these behaviors, African youths enter the realm of becoming Black. In sum, becoming Black is a *subject-formation project* (i.e., the process and the space within which subjectivity is formed) that is produced in and simultaneously produced by the process of language learning – BESL learning in this case. More specifically, becoming Black means learn-

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ing BESL; yet the very process of BESL learning produces the epiphenomenon of becoming Black.

The primary tenet of my research was that, once in North America, continental African youths enter a *social imaginary*: a discursive or a psychic formation in which they are already constructed, imagined, and positioned – and thus treated by the hegemonic discourses and dominant groups – as Blacks. Here, I address the White (racist) everyday communicative state of mind: "Oh, they all look like Blacks to me!" This space of (mostly subconscious) psychic formation does not acknowledge the differences in the students' ethnicities, languages, nationalities, and cultural identities. Fanon (1967, p. 116) sums up it brilliantly in writing about himself as a Black *Antillais* coming to the metropolitan center of Paris:

> I am given no chance, I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance .... I *progress* [italics added] by crawling. And *already* [italics added] I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am *fixed*. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality. I am laid bare .... When people like me, they tell me it is in spite of my color. When they dislike me, they point out that it is not because of my color. Either way, I am locked into the infernal circle.

Hence, I contend, continental African youths[5] find themselves in a racially conscious society that, wittingly or unwittingly and through fused social mechanisms such as racist representations, asks them to racially fit somewhere. To fit somewhere signifies choosing or becoming aware of one's own being, which is partially reflected in one's language practice. Choosing, however, is also a question of agency, which itself is governed and disciplined by social conditions. For example, to be Black in a racially conscious society, like the Euro-Canadian and U.S. societies, means that one is expected to be Black, act Black, and so be the marginalized *other* (Hall, 1991; hooks, 1992, 1990). Here, Blackness is obviously seen as a "problem" to be reckoned with. Boris Becker, the three-time White Wimbledon tennis champion, expresses this contention almost shockingly when talking about his wife: "I have a black wife and [three] black children (sic) and I'm not just talking about it, I live with *this problem* [italics added] day to day" (*National Post*, Wednesday, December 6, 2000, Section A20). Soon after understanding these abject social conditions of Blackness, continental African youths express their moments of identification in relation to African American and African Canadian cultures and languages, thus becoming Black. Here, noteworthy, taking up rap and hip-hop and speaking BSE are performative acts of their desire to belong to a location, a politics, a memory, and a history.

## Signifying BESL Learning: A Subject Formation Project

Except in Quebec, as we know, the English language is normally the medium of everyday interaction in the rest of Canada. This creates a situation where African youths would want to learn English rapidly. Popular culture, especially television, as well as friendship and peer pressure are three mechanisms that hasten the speed of learning the language (Ibrahim, 1999). The African students felt peer pressure particularly in their early days at the school when they were denigrated for not speaking English. The pressure was even greater since, as Heller has explained, Franco-Ontarian students use English in their everyday interaction, especially outside class (1994, 1992). If African students want to participate in school activities, they have no option but to learn English. Once it is learned, English becomes as much a source of pride as it is a medium of communication. This allows African students to make friends and fully participate in North American public life.

However, making friends, and even learning English, is influenced by the popular imaginary, projected through the dominant source of representation: television. I asked students in all of the interviews, *"Où est-ce que vous avez appris votre anglais?"* (Where did you learn English?). *"Télévision,"* they all responded. However, within this *télévision* is a particular representation – Black popular culture – seems to *interpellate*[6] (Althusser, 1971) African youths' identity and identification. Because African youths at first have few African Canadian/American friends, they access Black cultural identities and Black linguistic practice through Black popular culture, especially rap music video-clips, television programs, and Black cinema. When Najat (14, F, Djibouti)[7] was queried about the most recent movies she had seen, she responded:

> Najat: I don't know, I saw *Waiting to Exhale* and I saw what else I saw, I saw *Swimmer*, and I saw *Jumanji*; so wicked, all the movies. I went to

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*Waiting to Exhale* wid my boyfriend and I was like 'men are rude' [laughs].

Awad: Oh believe me I know I know.

Najat: And den he [her boyfriend] was like "no women are rude." I was like we're like fighting you know and joking around. I was like, and de whole time like [laughs], and den when de woman burns the car, I was like "go girl!" You know and all the women are like "go girl!" you know? And den de men like khhh. I'm like "I'm gonna go get me a pop corn" [laughs]. (individual interview, English)

After the show, the boys' code switched between French, English, and Somali as they exchanged observations on the best music, the best dance, and the cutest girl.

Najat's response is of particular interest for two reasons. First, it shows the influence of Black English in the use of *de*, *den*, *dat*, and *wicked* as opposed to, respectively, *the*, *then*, *that*, and *really really good*. Secondly, it shows that youths do not read and relate to a text unsubjectively. Indeed, it is their social subjectivities, embedded in history, culture, and memory, that influence what they read and how they read it. For example, Najat's reading of *Waiting to Exhale* was interpellated by her race and gender identities. She identified with the Black woman in burning her husband's car and clothes.

The following is another example (a videotaped moment) demonstrating the impact of Black popular culture on African students' lives and identities. Just before a focus group interview I had with the boys, *Electric Circus*, a local television music and dance program that plays mostly, if not exclusively, Black music (rap/hip-hop, reggae, soul and R&B) began. *"Silence!"* one boy exclaimed in French. The boys started to listen attentively to the music and to watch the different fashions of the young people on the program. After the show, the boys' code switched between French, English, and Somali as they exchanged observations on the best music, the best dance, and the cutest girl. Rap and hip-hop music and the corresponding dress were obviously at the top of their list.

For African youths, rap was one site that emerged as more than just a cultural site of entertainment. It was also an influential site for language learning.

These moments of identification point to the process of identity formation which is, in turn, implicated in the linguistic norm to be populated (using Bakhtin's term). A significant aspect to note about identification is that it works over a period of time and at the subconscious level. Omer (18, M, Ethiopia), in the following excerpt, addresses the different ways in which African youths are influenced by their identification with Black representations.

Black Canadian youths are influenced by the Afro-Americans. You watch for hours, you listen to Black music, you watch Black comedy, *Mr. T.*,[8] the *Rap City*. There you will see singers who dress in particular ways. You see, so. (individual interview, French)

Mukhi (19, M, Djibouti) explored identification by arguing that:

We identify ourselves more with the Blacks of America. But, this is normal; this is genetic. We can't, since we live in Canada, we can't identify ourselves with Whites or country music, you know [laughs]. We are going to identify ourselves, on the contrary, with people of our color, who have our life style, you know. (group interview, French)

Here, Mukhi's identification with Blackness is clearly pronounced. For Mukhi and all the students I spoke to, this identification is linked to their inability to relate to dominant groups, the public spaces they occupy, and their cultural forms and norms. Alternatively, Black popular culture emerged not only as a site for identification, but also as a space for language learning.

## Populating BESL

For African youths, rap was one site that emerged as more than just a cultural site of entertainment. It was also an influential site for language learning. Yet, importantly, rap was more recurrent in the boys' narratives than in the girls', which raises the question of the role of gender in the process of identification and learning. The boys, for instance, seemed to populate more gangster rap language and style, which surfaced on their bodies and in their linguistic style. The following excerpts are two of the many occasions on which students performed their investment in Black North America through the recitation of rap linguistic styles.[9]

Sam: One two, one two, mic check. A'ait [alright], a'ait, a'ait.

Juma: This is the rapper, you know wha 'm meaning? You know wha 'm saying?

Sam: Mic mic mic; mic check. A'ait you wonna test it? Ah, I've the microphone you know; a'ait.

Sam: [laughs] I don't rap man, c'mon give me a break. [laughs] Yo! A'ait a'ait you know, we just about to finish de tape and all dat. Respect to my main man [pointing to me]. So, you know, you

> know wha 'm mean, 'm just represen'in Q7. One love to Q7 you know wha 'm mean and all my friends back to Q7... Stop the tapin boy!
>
> Jamal: Kim Juma, live! Put the lights on. Wordap. [Students talking in Somali] Peace out, wardap, where de book. Jamal 'am outa here.
>
> Shapir: Yo, this is Shapir. I am trying to say peace to all my Niggers, all my bitches from a background that everybody in the house. So, yo, chill out and this is how we gonna kick it. Bye and with that pie. All right, peace yo.
>
> Sam: A'ait this is Sam represen'in AQA [...] where it's born, represen'in you know wha 'm mean? I wonna say whassup to all my Niggers, you know, peace and one love. You know wha 'm mean, Q7 represen'in for ever. Peace! [Rap music]
>
> Jamal: [as a DJ] Crank it man, coming up. [rap music] (group interview, English)

These excerpts are significant for many reasons. First, because they demonstrate the influence of Black Stylized English, particularly the language of rap: "Respect for my main man," "represen'in Q7," "kick the free style," "peace out, wardap," "'am outa here," "I am trying to say peace to all my Niggers, all my bitches," "so, yo chill out and this is how we gonna kick it," "I wonna say whassup to all my Niggers," "peace and one love". Second, when Shapir offers "peace to all" his "Niggers," all his "bitches," he is indeed repossessing the term *Nigger,* a signifier common in rap/hip-hop culture. It is common, for example nowadays, to call a Black friend, especially young people, *Nigger* without its traditional racist connotation. However, Shapir is using the sexist language that might exist in rap (Rose, 1991, Ibrahim, 2000a,b,&c). These forms of sexism have been challenged by female rappers like Queen Latifa and Salt 'n Pepa and were critiqued by fellow female and male students. For example, Samira (16, F, Djibouti) expressed her dismay at the sexist language found in some rap lyrics:

> OK, hip-hop, yes I know that everyone likes hip-hop. They dress in a certain way, no? The songs go well. But, they are really really, they have expressions like fuck, bitches etc. Sorry, but there is representation. (group interview, French)

The question of representation raised by Samira needs further exploration. It is concerned with the female body and here, it seems to me, Samira is addressing the impact that rap/hip-hop expressions might have on the way society at large relates to, consumes, and perceives the Black female body, which in turn influences how it is represented both inside and outside, rap/hip-hop culture. One may even argue that these narratives, which express a psychic representation and mentality, are in part responsible for Samira's precarious relation with rap and hip-hop. Some boys also cited similar language of critique: "Occasionally, rap has an inappropriate language for the life in which we live, a world of violence and all that." (Hassan – 17, M, Djibouti – individual interview, French)

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In the above excerpts, there are clear indications of rap style, where one starts a performance by "checking the mic": "One two, one two, mic check." Then the rapper either recites an already composed lyric or otherwise "kicks a free style," displaying the spontaneity that characterizes rap. The rapper begins the public performance by introducing herself or himself with a true or made-up name - "yo this is Shapir" - and thanks her or his "main man," or best friend, who often introduces the rapper to the public. Specific to gangster rap, one represents not only oneself but a web of geophysical and metaphorical spaces and collectivities that are demarcated by people and territorial spaces: "represen'in Q7," "a'ait, this is Sam represen'in AQA." At the end of the performance, when the recitation or freestyle is completed, again one thanks the "main man" and "gives peace out" or "shad out" (shout out) to the people.

In its broader semiological sense, the language of rap was obviously an influential site of identification and language learning for the boys, especially gangster rap. Depending on their age, the girls, on the other hand, had an ambivalent relationship to rap, although both boys and girls used the same three strategies in learning ESL in general, and BSE in particular, through music: listening, reading and reciting. Jamal, in the above cited extract, for instance, was listening to the tunes and lyrics while reading and following the written text. Acting as a DJ, he then repeated not only the performer's words and expressions but also his accent. The girls also used similar strategies to Jamal's. During a picnic organized by a mixed group of males and females, for example, they listened to music while following the written text and reciting it (complete with accents) along with the singer. The girls' choice

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of music (e.g., Whitney Houston and Toni Braxton) differed in that it was softer than that chosen by the boys and contained mostly romantic themes.

Hassan indicated in an individual interview that it would be awkward to see Blackness allied with rock and roll or heavy metal, as they are socially constructed as White music.

As I have indicated, for the most part, the older girls/women (16 - 18 years old) tended to be more eclectic in how they related to hip-hop and rap. Their eclecticism was evident in how they dressed and in the language they populated, engaged and learned. Their clothing was either elegant middle class, partially hip-hop, or traditional, and their learned language was what Nourbese Philip (1991) calls *plain Canadian English*. The younger girls (12-14 years), on the other hand, like the boys, dressed in hip-hop style and performed BSE. Nonetheless, I was able to detect three features of BE in both the older and the younger girls' narratives: the absence of the auxiliary be, BE negative concord, and the distributive be (for further details, see Ibrahim, 1999).

## Language, Identity and Acts of Desire

African youths' narratives show that they were quite volitional in their identification with Blackness and that race had directly impacted their choices. As Amani (16, F, Somalia) contends:

> We have to wonder why we try to really follow the model of the Americans who are Black? Because *when you search for yourself, search for identification, you search for someone who reflects you, with whom you have something in common* [italics added]. (group interview, French)

Amani was supported by Mukhi in the following conversation where he reflected on the impact of rap (as just one among many other Black popular cultural forms) on his life and others' lives around him:

> Awad: But do you listen to rap for example? I noticed that there are a number of students who listen to rap eh? Is ...
>
> Sam: It is not just us who listen to rap, everybody listens to rap. It is new.
>
> Awad: But do you think that that influences how you speak, how ...
>
> Mukhi: *How we dress, how we speak, how we behave* [italics added]. (group interview, English)

African youths would have every reason to invest in basketball – constructed as a Black sport – but not hockey, for example.

These linguistic patterns and dress codes that Mukhi is addressing are, on the one hand, accessed and learned by African youths through Black popular culture and, on the other, as I have already noted, do not require mastery and fluency. Indeed, they are performative acts of desire and identification. Agreeing with both Mukhi and Amani, Hassan contends:

> Hassan: Yes yes, African students are influenced by rap and hip-hop because they want to, yes, they are influenced probably a bit more because it is the desire to belong may be.
>
> Awad: Belong to what?
>
> Hassan: To a group, belong to a society, to have a model/fashion [he used the term *un modèle*]; you know, the desire to mark oneself, the desire to make, how do I say it? To be part of a rap society, you see. It is like getting into rock and roll or heavy metal. (individual interview, French)

As I concluded elsewhere, "one invests where one sees oneself mirrored" (Ibrahim, 1999, p. 365); an investment that is as much linguistic as it is cultural. Hassan indicated in an individual interview that it would be awkward to see Blackness allied with rock and roll or heavy metal, as they are socially constructed as White music. At the same time, he argued emphatically that African youths would have every reason to invest in basketball – constructed as a Black sport – but not hockey, for example.

## The Return of Identity into Language

> Though they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, identities are actually about questions of using the resources of history, language, and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. …not the so-called return to roots but a coming-to-terms-with our 'routes.' (Stuart Hall, 1996, p. 4)

It is these "routes" that I tried to walk through in this paper. In so doing, I explored the roads taken by African youths in their journey of becoming Black and the outcomes of that journey. Here, rap and hip-hop were identified as influential sites of identification in African students' processes of becoming Black, which in turn affected what and how

they learned. I have argued that the desire on the part of African youths, particularly the boys, to invest in basketball is analogously no different from their desire to learn BESL. Learning is hence neither aimless nor neutral, nor is it without the politics of identity. As I have shown, a second language learner can have a marginalized linguistic norm as a target, depending on who is learning what, why and how. I have also discussed how these youths are becoming Blacks. Becoming Black, I have contended, is a subject formation project produced by and producing the very process of BESL. To become Black is to become an ethnographer who translates and looks around in an effort to understand what it means to be Black in Canada, for example.

Choosing the margin, then, is simultaneously an act of investment, an expression of desire, and a deliberate counterhegemonic undertaking. Choosing rap must be read as a special act of resistance. Historically, rap has been formed as a voice for voicelessness and performed as a prophetic language that addresses silence, the silenced, and the state of being silenced. My incident with police was introduced to delineate the socio-political context in which African youths and I circulate and form our identities, as well as to show everyday racisms, human degradation, and the impact of being under the hegemonic gaze. Elsewhere, I have discussed the significance of linking the students' world with their word, their identities with what we teach and how we teach it (Ibrahim, 1999). I have also proposed rap and hip-hop as pedagogical sites that can be used in ESL classrooms (Ibrahim, 1999, 2000a).

Here, I want to take a different turn by offering this paper, retrospectively, as a methodological paper – an example where micro and macro analyses are used simultaneously and where language is linked, if not returned, to identity and where identity is the governing apparatus of language learning. By return I am not suggesting that identity can never be separated from language. It is, however, made invisible in our search for "objectivity," in our search for the learner's individual characteristics (age, intelligence, aptitude, motivation, learning styles, and so on) and their effects on internalization of linguistic 'input' (Toohey, 2000).

I agree with Hall and Eggington (2000) who maintain that the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is still dominated, if not colonized, by cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics. I also agree with their remarks that "[w]e often find that public discussions on the teaching of English as an additional language typically focus on such aspects of pedagogy as the latest teaching methods and techniques, multimedia materials and resources available for student use, and the "how to's" of managing student behavior" (Hall and Egginton, 2000, p. 1). Pennycook (2000, p. 90) wondered about how "[can] we relate … classrooms and the students in terms of social class …, age…, ethnicity …, gender …, and location … to broader social, cultural, and political contexts." I offer this paper as a response to this question.

Hall and Eggington (2000) are quite insightful in their edited volume *The Sociopolitics of English Language Teaching* in attempting to bridge the micro and the macro. They offer a highly recommended selection of readings that raise teachers' awareness of the sociopolitical nature of, particularly, Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). The micro, for me, is best represented in the Chomskyan framework, where micro cognitive and linguistic analysis are at the center; and the macro is best articulated by Bourdieu (1991), where language is not a neutral instrument. It is, on the contrary, an apparatus of power where people are subjected to certain rules and regulations. However, the weakness I see in Hall and Eggington's volume is that it offers hardly any empirical studies that attempt to phenomenologically show how this bridging of the micro and the macro can be achieved, nor did the volume satisfactorily answer Pennycook's question. Instead another discursive framework was created calling for the need to seriously engage macro and micro analysis in TESL pedagogies.

This critique is neither to suggest that I possess the Solomonic wisdom – hence have all the answers – nor does it indicate that I am against Hall and Eggington's discursive framework; rather, my work is an attempt to do precisely what Hall and Eggington are calling for: bridging the micro and the macro. In reality, my work is a small contribution to an ever-increasing body of literature (cf. Amin, 1997; Cummins, 1996; Goldstein, 1997; and Gumperz, 1982; Heller *et al*., 1999; Ibrahim, 1999, 2000a,b&c; Morgan, 1997, 1998; Nelson, 1999; Norton, 1997, 2000; Pennycook, 1999, 2000; Toohey, 2000; Wong, 2000; among many others). What I attempted to show in this paper is the impact of the macro on the micro; that is, how the larger social identities form and transform our subject-or-selfhood which, in turn, influence our language learning processes and the linguistic norm we populate and eventually

My incident with police was introduced to delineate the socio-political context in which African youths and I circulate and form our identities, as well as to show everyday racisms, human degradation, and the impact of being under the hegemonic gaze.

We need to return and reposition these subjectivities and social identities back into language learning mechanisms and techniques and link the cultural, the social, the political, the stylistic, with the linguistic.

learn. We need to return and reposition these subjectivities and social identities back into language learning mechanisms and techniques and link the cultural, the social, the political, the stylistic, with the linguistic. I hope I have done precisely that. Central to this repositioning, however, are notions of identification, desire and investment. We are yet to desire "the true word" to be spoken, Paulo Freire argued. Only then can we desire "the world" differently (1993).

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1. Bakhtin, 1981, cited in Toohey, 2000, p. 13.
2. For Simon and Dippo (1986, p. 195), *critical ethnographic research* is a set of activities situated within a project that seeks and works its way towards social transformation. This project is political as well as pedagogical, and who the researcher is and what his or her racial, gender, and class embodiments are necessarily govern the research questions and findings. The project, then, according to Simon and Dippo, is "an activity determined both by real and present conditions, *and* certain conditions still to come which it is trying to bring into being " (p. 196). The assumption underpinning my project was based on the assertion that Canadian society is

"inequitably structured and dominated by a hegemonic culture that suppresses a consideration and understanding of why things are the way they are and what must be done for things to be otherwise" (p. 196).

3. All names are pseudonyms.
4. Staying somewhere to familiarize oneself with the place, its people, and their ways of 'being' in that space. In the school, these sites are informal, such as hallways, the schoolyards, the school steps, the cafeteria, and the gymnasium, where the people in them are comfortable enough to speak their minds.
5. Based on my incident with the police, I would also include myself here, hence would respond positively to Nietszche's *"Muss es sein?"*.
6. The subconscious ways in which individuals, given their genealogical history and memory, identify with particular discursive spaces and representations and the way this identification subsequently participates in the social formation of the Subject (identity).
7. Each participant's name is followed by his/her age, gender (F=Female, M=Male), and country of origin; and each extract is followed by the type of interview (individual or group) and the language in which it was conducted. The following transcription conventions are used:

   <u>underlined text</u> English spoken within French speech or French spoken within English speech

   [ ] Explanation or description of speaker's actions

   [...] Text omitted
8. Mr. T. is an M.C. of a local Canadian rap music TV program called Rap City which airs mostly American rap lyrics.
9. The participants cited in the extracts are Sam (19, M, Djibouti), Juma (19, M, Senegal), Jamal (18, M, Djibouti), and Shapir (17, M, Somalia).

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# THEME 4: TECHNOLOGY

## Introduction
## by Robert Courchêne

In this section, Hubbard, McGarrell and McDougall discuss the role that technology can play in enhancing second language learning and teaching in both L2 and more general learning contexts. In the first paper, *The Use and Abuse of Meaning Technologies,* Hubbard examines the role of meaning and meaning aids (e.g., CD-ROMS), dictionaries, DVDs) in language learning. Hubbard points out that when students are confronted with text that they do not totally comprehend, they look for means or aids that will make the text comprehensible. He calls these meaning aids and sees their role as making the meaning of language more accessible. While most agree that such aids can improve comprehension, it is not clear how effective they are at improving language learning. He sees them as being two-edged swords.

Hubbard next relates meaning aids to meaning technologies – "features of language learning materials that are based on technology and make the meaning of a language accessible to learning". He describes two types of meaning technologies: (1) dedicated technologies that are programmed into the text (e.g., closed captioning, online transcripts) and (2) automated technologies which are general applications which can be used by the software developers and language learners without additional programming. He presents examples of four automated technologies: hyper-linked dictionaries, machine-translation applications, auto-summarizers and text-to-speech applications. Hubbard concludes his presentation with a call for more research into the area of meaning aids and meaning technologies and offers developers advice on how they can foster proper use and avoid abuse.

McGarrell in her article, *The Internet in the ESL Classroom: Help or Hindrance? The Case of Grammar*, explores the interface of new world-wide web technologies and their contribution to language learning with a specific focus on grammar. She examines whether the grammar sites found on the www have incorporated the latest theoretical and practical research in L2 learning and teaching and how they might be used to help L2 learners. She begins by reviewing Pica's four conditions for successful language learning - engaging in meaningful communication, attending selectively to form and meaning, producing meaningful output and receiving direct or indirect feedback on comprehensibility. She then presents four different sites found on the web for both native and non-native speakers; for each site the reader is provided with sample material along with a description of its strengths and weaknesses. McGarrell states that in terms of Pica's criteria, these sights do not make the grade although they do have certain advantages over text-based grammars. She concludes with a discussion of advantages that certain types of websites such as *Dave's ESL Café* and *Grammar Queen* can offer students in terms of individualized learning.

In the last paper in this section, *Teaching a new "Language" through Distance Education: Examples from Greece, Cuba and China*, McDougall examines three different contexts in which technologies were used to help learners acquire new knowledge and skills, to learn new languages. The paper begins with a discussion of distance education and a review of the different theories and philosophies: symbol-processing (traditional view) and situated cognition (based on constructivist principles). In his paper, McDougall adopts the constructivist approach with its emphasis on the student's role in constructing, organizing and constantly modifying his/her knowledge through interaction with the environment. Following a discussion of the role of technology in education, McDougall draws on three different contexts to show how computer technology was used to facilitate learning under often very challenging learning conditions.

In Cuba, courses on the global economy for the Ministry of Economic Planning were prepared and delivered by distance education to students. In Greece, this new technology was used first to train teachers to use computers in education and, then, for them to become teacher trainers in other schools across the country. The third experiment involved the integration of technology into a pre-service education program in Ontario. In presenting these contexts, McDougall draws parallels between using new technologies to acquire knowledge and skills in learning a new subject matter – its syntax, vocabulary and grammar – to that of learning a L2. He maintains that the modelling of new skills, contextualized practice, practical applications of new knowledge are exactly what is required in learning a L2 . He suggests, therefore, that as ESL teachers we can learn from experiences in other areas where technologies are used to teach new "languages".

Hubbard concludes his presentation with a call for more research into the area of meaning aids and meaning technologies and offers developers advice on how they can foster proper use and avoid abuse.

McGarrell examines whether the grammar sites found on the www have incorporated the latest theoretical and practical research in L2 learning and teaching and how they might be used to help L2 learners.

# The Use and Abuse of Meaning Technologies

Philip Hubbard, Stanford University, USA

It is generally accepted that meaning aids can improve the comprehension of items within a specific text and therefore the text as a whole. However, research does not tell us much directly about how to use meaning aids effectively to improve language *learning*.

Any view of comprehension-driven second language acquisition, whether it is primarily unconscious (Krashen, 1985), or acknowledges the need for conscious attention and awareness (Schmidt, 1995) relies on not just comprehending meaning, but also somehow linking that meaning to an unacquired L2 rule or form.

In simple terms, meaning technologies are features of language learning materials that are based on technology and make the meaning of a language item accessible to a learner. This paper begins by discussing the general relationship of meaning and meaning aids to language learning. It then introduces the concept of meaning technologies and explains why they are becoming increasingly important in computer-assisted language learning. It concludes by offering guidelines for using these technologies appropriately.

We can begin by asking how learners extract meaning from language forms, including live conversations, lectures, audio or video recordings, and written texts. We know that like native speakers, language learners use their linguistic knowledge for this. They then integrate context and background knowledge, and use inferential strategies to link that knowledge to the language forms. Given their lack of familiarity with many of the forms they encounter, learners also use ***meaning aids* when they are available and circumstances allow it.**

Meaning aids are tools that serve to make the meaning of language items accessible. Traditionally, they include dictionaries and glossaries, which help make the meaning of words clear; summaries, paraphrases, and explanations, which assist in the interpretation of larger texts; audio and text translations, which link the target language back to the native equivalents; and scripts for spoken forms, which make their meaning more accessible to those whose reading proficiency outstrips their listening proficiency.

It is generally accepted that meaning aids can improve the comprehension of items within a specific text and therefore the text as a whole. However, research does not tell us much directly about how to use meaning aids effectively to improve language *learning*. In other words, we do not have a clear answer to the key question: How can a learner use a meaning aid on one text in a way that will improve comprehension of some subsequent one?

Still, research can provide us with some important generalizations to guide practice in this area. SLA researchers appear to be in general agreement that comprehension is a necessary, though probably not sufficient, condition for acquisition (Long, 1990). Any view of comprehension-driven second language acquisition, whether it is primarily unconscious (Krashen, 1985), or acknowledges the need for conscious attention and awareness (Schmidt, 1995) relies on not just comprehending meaning, but also somehow linking that meaning to an unacquired L2 rule or form. It appears to be the case, however, that normal language processing involves *automatic* linking of form to meaning, with the original form then lost and only elements of the semantic content retained (Clark & Clark, 1977). Further, psycholinguistic research on cognitive capacity limitations cited by Skehan (1998) suggests that multi-channel input (such as text and sound simultaneously) may actually put a greater burden on a learner's limited processing capacity than a single channel would, particularly if the material itself is cognitively challenging.

Additionally, since a certain rate of processing appears necessary to maintain text coherence, the use of meaning aids, such as dictionaries, can interrupt the flow of sentence and discourse comprehension. Recent studies using MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) are adding support to the theory of the brain being highly modularized with systems that collaborate in processing language in parallel but may be in competition for processing resources when dealing with material that has not become automatized (see Grodzinsky et al. (2000) for a collection of relevant articles). In particular, work by Smith & Geva (2000), though not directly connected to acquisition, shows that the traces of phonological processing necessary for creating a form-meaning link for new items last only a few seconds in working memory. It is thus common to hear a new form and lose its memory trace almost immediately.

The results cited from these various research disciplines are somewhat tentative and open to other interpretations. However, taken together they are consistent with the following assumptions which inform the discussion in the remainder of the paper:

- Meaning aids can allow learners to access meanings of unfamiliar language items, making input comprehensible.

- Meaning aids can get in the way of overall comprehension by interrupting the flow of processing.
- Meaning aids can disable the desired form-meaning connection by causing the learner to focus on a form that is different from the original.

The preceding can be summed up in a statement that most ESL teachers already know from experience: meaning aids can be either useful or not for the learner depending on how and when they are used.

Having established that meaning aids represent a two-edged sword, let us now turn back to the topic of meaning technologies. *Meaning technologies* are meaning aids that use technology to help make the meaning of a language item accessible on demand. For the most part they are representations of the more traditional meaning aids, but they can typically be accessed instantaneously through the click of a button, increasing their convenience and efficiency significantly. We can recognize two types of meaning technologies: dedicated and automated.

*Dedicated* meaning technologies are those which are deliberately programmed into text, audio, or video material. They include such features as closed captioning in videos and multi-media computer programs, online transcripts for audio and video materials on the web, hypertext glossaries and explanations, translations (including multilingual soundtracks for DVDs), and slower or otherwise simplified audio options. Besides the closed captioning for videotapes, these dedicated meaning technologies can be found in large numbers of CD-ROMs for language learning, and they are appearing increasingly in programs on the web (see the appendix for web-based examples).

*Automated* meaning technologies are general applications which can be used directly by software developers and language learners without additional programming. This further increases both their power and their appeal. As they are less familiar to many than the dedicated technologies described above, I will present them in a bit more detail. I will focus on four of these, though there are others which are likely to appear in the not-too-distant future.

Hyper-linked dictionaries are applications that automatically link the words in a text to one or more dictionary entries, similar to the way word processor-dictionary or word processor-thesaurus combinations allow writers to highlight a word and then lookup automatically. A promising commercial application in this area is Sentius Corporation's RichLink (see Appendix), which is a web-based technology that allows a single click on a word to bring up entries in linked dictionaries or other data sources. The entries appear in a small pop-up box instantaneously so text coherence is less affected. The dictionaries can be monolingual (they have licensed the *American Heritage Dictionary*, for example) or bilingual. While the pages themselves must be processed by the Sentius servers, once processed they can be read on the web by anyone with a recent version of Netscape or Internet Explorer. Two currently free applications in this category are Voycabulary and Babylon (see Appendix). Vocabulary works by allowing users to type in a URL from the Voycabulary site which then indexes all words there for lookup by clicking on them. Babylon is the most powerful of these applications in that it allows users to instantly look up words in web pages, electronic texts, emails, and word processing documents without separately processing them, and it is also available offline.

*Dedicated* meaning technologies are those which are deliberately programmed into text, audio, or video material.

Machine translation applications represent a dream that is still far from practical realization if the goal is something approaching native-like output. However, machine translation sites do exist on the web, and it is easy to demonstrate that they can still be useful in helping learners comprehend the gist of advanced texts. The most common translation engine on the web is Systran, which was developed by Xerox. The Alis and Systran sites (see Appendix) are good places to check translations from English into other languages and vice versa. All that is necessary is to copy and paste text into their translation box and click the "translate" button.

*Automated* meaning technologies are general applications which can be used directly by software developers and language learners without additional programming.

Auto-summarizers are a little-known meaning technology in language teaching circles, but they are used increasingly in the business world. These applications scan a text and pull out phrases or sentences based on routines that look for keywords and tag locations most likely to contain information about the main ideas of a text. They can be set to a specified limit (e.g., 10 sentences) or a percentage of the whole (e.g., 10%). This is actually embedded as a feature in recent versions of Microsoft Word. To see if it is installed, go to the Tools menu and look for AutoSummarize.

Text-to-speech applications represent the final automated meaning technology to be discussed. Just as captions can aid more literate learners in accessing audio texts, text-to-speech programs can aid those whose spoken language skills are stronger in developing reading proficiency by speaking the words out loud. While the synthesized voices typical of text-to-

speech applications remain noticeably artificial at best, they can still aid some students in their comprehension of the printed word, particularly in light of the vagaries of English spelling. Lucent Technologies has a text-to-speech demonstration site for English and other langauges (see Appendix). Additionally, most speech recognition software and some versions of the Macintosh operating system have text-to-speech features.

Closed captioning can be used when watching a video for the first time to make more of the material comprehensible and then turned off for a second listening to push a focus on the spoken forms.

The uses of meaning technologies are similar to those for the more traditional meaning aids. The following are a few examples.

- Closed captioning can be used when watching a video for the first time to make more of the material comprehensible and then turned off for a second listening to push a focus on the spoken forms. Alternatively, it can be off during a first viewing to determine what can be comprehended naturally and then turned on for a second viewing to help the learner become aware of unknown forms.
- Hypertext links can be used during a close reading to look up a word meaning, though ideally after attempting to determine it from the context.
- Translations of individual words, sentences, or even whole texts may help learners access material that would otherwise be beyond their reach, particularly if they are working with authentic documents and their proficiency is low. It is also possible to take a "bad" machine translation from the students' native language into the target language to see if they can determine the mistakes and infer their source.
- Text-to-speech can be used to support literacy development, and can even be turned around to assist more proficient readers with the pronunciation of familiar words they have only read and not heard.

Text-to-speech can be used to support literacy development, and can even be turned around to assist more proficient readers with the pronunciation of familiar words they have only read and not heard.

The key to using meaning technologies appropriately is to understand clearly what the objective of reading or listening to the text is. If it is only comprehension to serve some other purpose, then anything which makes the meaning accessible is good, including the free use of accompanying meaning technologies. If, however, the goal is to improve language proficiency, then one or more of the following should be considered.

1. Use the meaning technology as part of a pre-reading or pre-listening activity. After getting the meaning, return to the original form and read (if printed text) or listen (if audio or video) without the meaning technology's support.
2. Read or listen for the first time without any meaning technology, processing as much as possible of the target text. Then, access the meaning technology selectively in the second pass.
3. Use the meaning technology for the first part of the text, e.g., turn on closed captioning for the first half of a video segment or allow lookup of hypertext-linked words in the first half of a reading. Then read or listen without the technology's support for the second part.
4. If there are grammatical structures, phrases, or words to be learned, try to capture the direct form-meaning relationship for focused attention, rehearsal and review. For example, get learners to make a list of some or all of the words looked up with a hypertext glossary for a personal dictionary.

The abuses of meaning technologies occur when learners use them in a manner that subverts the objectives of the task or undermines the long-term language learning goals of the curriculum (and presumably of the learners themselves). For example, learners who are significantly better at reading than listening may overuse captioning in videos and software. Cognitive capacity theory suggests that the processing of the printed word, particularly if it lags behind the spoken word, may replace the native spoken forms in working memory. Learners who have translations readily available to them may continue to rely on them at the expense of building automaticity in going directly from form to meaning in the target language. Similarly, learners who feel the need to look up unfamiliar words rather than develop strategies for inferring their meaning from context will find the ease of using hypertext glossaries and dictionaries an even stronger temptation.

Finally, it is unfortunately the case that not all learners understand or care about the learning objectives of an activity, especially when the language course is a requirement and motivation is therefore extrinsic. In these situations, meaning technologies may represent appealing shortcuts to the completion of in-class exercises and homework.

Clearly, there is a need for more research in the use of meaning aids in general and of meaning technologies in particular. Realistically, however, we can not depend on such research to appear anytime soon in a form comprehensive enough to determine practice. This is especially true given that the structure

and power of meaning technologies changes so rapidly. However even without direct guidance from research, there are several steps that software developers and language teachers can take to support appropriate uses and limit abuses.

Developers need to abandon the view that dedicated meaning technologies are automatically useful additions to any piece of software and every activity within that piece. To the extent that tutorial software embodies good teaching, learners should be encouraged by the structure of the program to utilize meaning technologies in ways similar to those an experienced human tutor would promote. Similarly, teachers need to be aware of the meaning technologies available to learners and design both in-class and homework activities that are not easily and obviously done more quickly, but less effectively, by using these aids.

Most importantly, both developers and teachers need to train learners in appropriate uses of meaning technologies. Software with dedicated meaning technologies should have tutorials designed to give both examples and explanations of learning strategies using those features. Teachers should spend time not only introducing effective uses of the features but also observing learner use and then retraining as needed. If learners are to be given the kinds of power that meaning technologies afford, they should also be given enough understanding of learning processes to be able to use them in an informed manner.

Meaning technologies are still in their infancy, but there is a tremendous amount of time and money currently being spent on developing some of these for large-scale commercial purposes. We can expect the technologies mentioned here to become more accurate and less expensive in the next few years. We can also expect some of the current dedicated technologies, such as closed captioning, to become automated as more reliable speech-to-text dictation systems are devised. It may be common a decade or two from now for a learner to query an automated teaching agent with the question "What does that mean?" and get an instant, useful, and accurate response. We need to begin now to learn how to control these technologies so that the answer to that question leads not just to meaning but to learning.

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Appendix: Links for Examples of Meaning Technologies

## DEDICATED MEANING TECHNOLOGIES ON THE WEB (checked as of 3/11/01)

www.englishbaby.com

EnglishBaby includes weekly dialogues with characters in a college campus setting, with sound, transcripts, and a hyperlinked glossary of key words and idioms. There is an archive of previous weeks, and it is free at the moment.

www.englishlistening.com

This commercial site has a listening section with transcripts and comprehension questions. There are some free samples, but after that there is a charge.

www.pbs.org/newshour/media

This has the video and transcript of the daily PBS program "The News Hour with Jim Lehrer." It


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We can also expect some of the current dedicated technologies, such as closed captioning, to become automated as more reliable speech-to-text dictation systems are devised.

works best for learners with advanced listening skills and an interest and background in the stories the show focuses on.

www.learnenglish.org.uk

This is a British Council site with a lot of useful material. Learners can click on "stories" to get both text and audio of stories online.

www.trstone.com

This site has free online demos of Fairfield's The Rosetta Stone, language learning software for English and many other languages with a number of dedicated meaning technologies. In particular, it has examples of using slowed versions of example sentences.

## AUTOMATED MEANING TECHNOLOGIES ON THE WEB

www.bell-labs.com/project/tts/

The site of Lucent Technologies text-to-speech system demonstration.

www.richlink.com

This site has samples of Sentius Corporation's RichLink technology, a commercial system for embedding dictionaries and other databases directly into web pages for hypertext linking.

www.voycabulary.com

This site allows users to type in URLs and then processes the requested page to provide automatic hypertext links.

www.babylon.com

Babylon is a very popular and powerful hypertext linker. After a short download of a resident application, it is possible to click on words in almost any text format and get a pop-up definition. Babylon has both a free ad-supported and inexpensive ad-free version.

www.alis.com

Alis presents their version "gist-in-time" machine translation using Systran.

www.systransoft.com

This is the homepage for the web version of Systran, the most widely used of the machine translation applications.

cnniw.yellowbrix.com

This is CNN's industry watch page—a good example of using autosummaries. You can view the summaries and the whole articles they're attached to. CNN uses Inxight's Summary Server www.inxight.com

www.copernic.com/products/summarizer/

This is an example of a consumer-level autosummarizer with more functionality than the one in MS-Word.

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# The Internet[1] in the ESL Classroom: Help or Hindrance? The Case of Grammar

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## Introduction

Over the last few years, a broad range of new technologies has become progressively more available and accessible. Some of these technologies and related applications are being explored in supporting the study and teaching of language. One example in particular is the Internet or worldwide web (or web), with its ability to accommodate text, graphics and sound with increasingly greater ease. Many web sites support the development of English language skills, by design or accident, either as a first or a subsequent (ESL) language, with many offering a grammar focus. The grammar focus coincides with language professionals' renewed interest in the place and form of grammar in teaching and learning ESL. Despite this synergy between emerging web technology and language professionals' interests, little attention has been paid to exploring how web sites devoted to grammar teaching and learning reflect insights into successful language learning.

## Background

This paper explores to what extent one application of technology, the Internet with its web sites, relates to language professionals' renewed interest in grammar. More specifically, it focusses on two objectives. The first is to determine whether this relatively new resource takes into consideration recent insights from theory and practice into language learning and teaching, especially for grammar learning and teaching. The second is to suggest how it might be used to meet the needs of learners and teachers in ESL/EFL classes. In the past, language learning and teaching materials related to new technologies have generated great expectations among language professionals and learners alike, but their expectations have generally not been met. Careful consideration of the foundations and offerings of this new resource might prevent similar disappointments in the future.

Research and practice on the place of grammar in the classroom have changed frequently over the past century and, as Ellis (1998) points out, may be one of the most studied topics in subsequent language acquisition[2]. Traditional grammar practices reflected the notion that all languages fit a basic framework, although specific rules within each were expected to vary. These rules could, however, be mastered through explicit study, likely based on exemplary texts found in each language's literature, which also provided the vocabulary. The realisation that many graduates from programs that follow these practices were unable to speak the language they had studied led to a new view of language learning, one that decreed that languages should be learned through verbal repetition, without explicit study of grammar rules, until its patterns became second nature to the learners. After a strong focus on explicit grammar rules in traditional approaches to language learning and teaching, the trend evolved to pay little or no attention to explicit grammar in audio-lingual, audio-visual and communicative approaches. Language laboratories, the new technology at the time, were expected to make possible rapid and successful subsequent language acquisition with ease. When it became clear that these expectations were not being met, the approach to language learning changed once again. This time, mastery of a language was seen to be the result of meaningful communication, which suggested that learners should be exposed to endless meaningful communication without explicit attention to underlying structure. However, research shows that the language ability achieved by graduates of communicative programs falls short of expectations, a realisation that seems to have led to a new wave of enthusiasm for grammar teaching and learning. This new interest is likely welcomed by many learners, and those teachers of subsequent languages who never ceased to believe that language learning is primarily a question of learning the grammar rules of that language. One recurring issue to be resolved is to discover what conditions enhance efficient and comprehensive internalisation of these rules, i.e. whether rules should be learned implicitly or explicitly.

Despite this synergy between emerging web technology and language professionals' interests, little attention has been paid to exploring how web sites devoted to grammar teaching and learning reflect insights into successful language learning.

The first is to determine whether this relatively new resource takes into consideration recent insights from theory and practice into language learning and teaching, especially for grammar learning and teaching. The second is to suggest how it might be used to meet the needs of learners and teachers in ESL/EFL classes.

## Current insights

Insights from research suggest that a focus on explicit grammar learning rarely leads to fluency, while an exclusive focus on the process of communication, at the exclusion of all explicit grammar teaching, does not appear to lead to accuracy. At the same time, there are strong indications that the real issue is not *whether* or not grammar should be taught but, instead, how grammar should be taught. Research strongly suggests that learners' attention needs to be focussed on grammatical constructions at certain points in their language learning. A combination of focus on grammar and focus on communication is thought to lead to improved subsequent language skills, but it is not clear what the appropriate proportions are, or what specific activities will lead to successful language acquisition. The regular changes in approaches to language teaching and learning summarised above reflect the relative lack of success with each preceding approach.

Insights from research suggest that a focus on explicit grammar learning rarely leads to fluency, while an exclusive focus on the process of communication, at the exclusion of all explicit grammar teaching, does not appear to lead to accuracy.

Pica (2000) suggests that recent research has become sensitive to some of the conditions that underlie the input, feedback, and production that are part of successful subsequent language learning. These key conditions, she continues, are under addressed in many currently popular approaches to language teaching. They fall into four broad conditions.

First, learners need opportunities to engage in meaningful communication that gives them comprehensible input. Where the input is not entirely comprehensible, meaningful communication provides a forum for learners to seek clarification through questions and further discussion. This process of negotiation is expected to help make input comprehensible.

A combination of focus on grammar and focus on communication is thought to lead to improved subsequent language skills, but it is not clear what the appropriate proportions are, or what specific activities will lead to successful language acquisition.

A second key condition requires opportunities that allow learners to attend selectively to form and meaning. Grammar rules presented to language learners typically offer a simplified reflection of what happens in communication. They relate to form, without giving much insight about their effect on meanings conveyed through them in communication (as illustrated, for example, in the rules found in most ESL texts on modals, or passive constructions). Learners need opportunities to notice how individual forms affect meaning in context, or how meaning expressed in a particular context relates to form. Such noticing may be difficult to achieve without supplemental and often enhanced input (e.g. Ellis, 1998).

A third condition Pica (2000) outlines requires opportunities for learners to produce output in their subsequent language, again as part of meaningful communication. Although isolated practice of form may help learners gain initial control over forms in decontextualised utterances, they need varied opportunities to produce these forms and manipulate them in meaningful interaction. (Swain, 1993; Swain & Lapkin, 1995).

Finally, language learners need opportunities that give them direct or indirect feedback on the comprehensibility, accuracy and appropriateness of their spoken or written output (Pica, 2000) and encourage them to modify their output to become closer to native speaker norms. Pica (2000) also points out that more advanced learners rarely receive feedback on lexical and morphosyntactic aspects of nonstandard constructions, which may prevent them from incorporating new grammatical features into their developing language abilities. Supplemental and enhanced input, as mentioned above, could give them this feedback.

In summary, the four key conditions for successful second language learning outlined by Pica (2000) require opportunities for learners to receive comprehensible input in the context of meaningful communication, to notice how their output differs from that considered native-like, to produce output as part of meaningful interaction, and to receive direct or indirect feedback on their subsequent language productions. An initial assessment of how grammar web sites reflect insights from research might be made based on the above "requirements", in particular to reveal what strengths and weaknesses individual sites have concerning these basic requirements. The results of such an assessment might then be used to assist teachers wishing to incorporate grammar web sites into their classroom activities to determine how to use the strengths and what activities might be needed to compensate for the weaknesses.

## Characteristics of English grammar sites on the Web

Current web sources offer dozens of sites that address English grammar[3] in one of several ways. For the purposes of this paper, discussion will be limited to six of these sites. Four were selected to illustrate how web sites focussed on grammar learning and teaching tend to approach the topic, although the level of detail in each site varies. Three

are aimed primarily at native speakers of English: *The Internet Grammar of English, HyperGrammar*, and *Guide to Grammar and Writing*, while a fourth, *NetGrammar*, is aimed specifically at learners of English as a subsequent language. An additional two sites were included for discussion to suggest potentially useful alternatives to the traditional presentation of grammar typically seen in grammar focussed web sites. All of the web sites included show clearly who their creators are, making their authority verifiable, and have been available and relatively stable for six months or more in a medium that changes daily. Also, the sites included are entirely or almost free of advertising, the presence of which often slows transmission[4], consumes additional resources on users' computers, and is often considered distracting or annoying by many users.

The first four grammar sites mentioned share several similarities. They focus on descriptive grammar organised around traditional word classes, phrases, and clauses within sentences. Some also offer limited discussion of paragraph level material. Similar to more conventional book versions, these electronic grammars offer a "Table of Contents" and sometimes an "Index". Items listed in the "Table of Contents" are usually hyper-linked to the appropriate sections of the web site, which means that, instead of physically turning pages, users select an item by clicking on it with the mouse to get to the section or topic selected. Items in the "Table of Contents" and their presentation in relevant sections, however, appear very similar to those in conventional grammar books except, in some sites, for the appearance of a navigation bar. The latter is typically on the left-hand side of the screen and facilitates movement around – or navigation of – the different pages of the web site, usually by listing main sections and providing hyper-links[5] to them. For example, selecting "Auxiliary Verbs" from the "Index" of *The Internet Grammar of English* brings users to the page illustrated in Figure 1, the fourth of seven pages devoted to the topic of "Verbs".

[Figure 1: The Internet Grammar of English – Auxiliary Verbs]

Figure 1 illustrates the characteristic look and layout of individual pages available from *The Internet Grammar of English* with its explanations, rules and examples. Users read these materials as they scroll (move) down the page. When they get to the bottom of the page, they can complete an exercise about the material presented to test their understanding of the main points covered. For the section illustrated in Figure 1, the exercise consists of six questions, the first screen of which is illustrated in Figure 2.

[Figure 2: *The Internet Grammar of English* – Exercise on Auxiliary Verbs]

A click of the mouse enables users to choose one of two or more potential answers for each question. Once completed, the exercises can be submitted for evaluation before users click on the number "5" in the top right-hand corner to continue work on "Verbs". Alternately, they select another topic from the "Table of Contents".

The presentation of individual grammar items on the site *HyperGrammar* is similar in that, like the *Internet Grammar of English*, it also presents explanations, rules, and examples. One noticeable difference, however, is that *HyperGrammar* uses more hyper-links. On every page, hyper-linked key terms are underlined. If users click on one of these underlined terms, they are taken to the relevant page that explains and illustrates the term underlined, making it easy for users to move back and forth to collect the information they need without having to go back to the Index page. The section on "Verbs" in *HyperGrammar*, for example, starts with the screen shown in Figure 3

[Figure 3: HyperGrammar – What is a Verb?]

Although the layout and presentation again look very similar to that found in a printed textbook, users can click on one of the underlined terms, e.g. "compound verb", which then takes them to the screen where this term is discussed, as shown in Figure 4.

[Figure 4: HyperGrammar – Examples of Hyper-linked Terms]

Having read the material presented, users then have the option of returning to the previous screen or selecting a new topic through a click of the mouse. Review sections allow users to test their understanding of the material presented through short exercises. Typically, these consist of decontextualised sentences, each presented with two potential answers, as shown in Figure 5.

[Figure 5: HyperGrammar – Illustration of Exercise]

Users select what they consider to be the "correct" response by clicking on the item. This takes

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A third grammar site, the *Guide to Grammar and Writing,* is the most extensive site discussed so far. Beyond word, phrase, clause and sentence level grammar items, it offers material on text construction beyond the sentence level, especially texts relating to formal writing conventions.

An exercise designed to help users understand the difference between different types of nouns shows a painting. Users are asked to imagine what they might be able to see or touch if they could physically enter the picture. Additional questions ask them to examine the painting for eight nouns that have a plural form, or to identify collective nouns, etc.

them to a new screen, which gives the correct response. Both correct and incorrect responses contain a brief explanation, again with key words or phrases underlined and hyper-linked to their respective explanations.

A third grammar site, the *Guide to Grammar and Writing*, is the most extensive site discussed so far. Beyond word, phrase, clause and sentence level grammar items, it offers material on text construction beyond the sentence level, especially texts relating to formal writing conventions. Background colours and images enhance its visual appeal and make it readily identifiable. Nevertheless, they are not an integral part of the discussions or explanations offered. Like *HyperGrammar*, this site offers explanations and examples through extensive use of hyper-links that give users quick access to explanations of terms used in the text and easy navigation from one topic to another. In addition, *Guide to Grammar and Writing* includes links to materials that illustrate a given topic beyond the sentence level, often in an authentic text. Figure 6 below shows the main options available to users from the main page of the *Guide to Grammar and Writing*. Each main option contains a selection of topics.

[Figure 6: Guide to Grammar and Writing - Main Grammar Selections]

For example, within the option "Word and Sentence level" the unit on "Nouns" starts with an illustration of nouns in an adaptation of Oscar Hammerstein's "My Favourite Things" from the Sound of Music (Figure 7). Nouns are shown in red for easy identification, which should help draw non-native speakers' attention to the way in which verb forms change to reflect singular and plural nouns. After reading the lyrics, users may scroll down for details on "nouns" or select a link for another topic.

[Figure 7: Guide to Grammar and Writing – Introduction of Nouns]

Beyond reference materials, the *Guide to Grammar and Writing* includes several exercises for each topic, created by different authors. Although many of these follow the format illustrated in the two grammar web sites already discussed, some exercises offered in the *Guide to Grammar and Writing* engage users to a greater extent. For example, an exercise designed to help users understand the difference between different types of nouns shows a painting. Users are asked to imagine what they might be able to see or touch if they could physically enter the picture. Additional questions ask them to examine the painting for eight nouns that have a plural form, or to identify collective nouns, etc. Users type their answers in the space provided, then compare them against suggested answers by clicking the mouse over the appropriate button.

*NetGrammar*, the fourth grammar web site included in this discussion, offers material selected to suit low to intermediate level ESL learners. Fifteen units, each of which includes a "Preview", a "Grammar Focus", a "Listening", a "Speaking", and a "Writing" segment, represent the materials offered at this site. The "Preview" introduces the grammar focal point of the unit through typical examples, brief explanatory notes, and a short warm-up quiz. The "Grammar Focus" provides brief explanations and examples on the selected grammar point, which is contextualised through the listening, speaking, and writing material. Unit 1, for example, presents key features of the verb "to be", as illustrated in Figure 8.

[Figure 8: *NetGrammar* - Grammar Focus in Unit 1]

*NetGrammar*'s exercises (called "tasks") require users to select the best of three options, as shown in Figure 9 below. A pull-down tab activated with the mouse then reveals whether their selection is considered to be the "correct" one. Task items consist of decontextualised sentences similar to those found in the warm-up quiz. Users can check their responses immediately but the format might also encourage them to look at the "correct" answer before they have tried to complete each task.

[Figure 9: NetGrammar – Illustration of Grammar Tasks]

## Analysis and Discussion

The preceding brief overview of four grammar web sites suggests that the central characteristics of how web sites present grammar material is explicit and decontextualised, i.e. not markedly different from similar material in conventional printed textbooks. Reflections of Pica's (2000) four key conditions are difficult to find in these grammar sites. In particular, opportunities for meaningful communication are not a feature of these web sites, where materials are limited to information and a few practice items related to form. The *Guide to Grammar and Writing* offers users an opportunity to submit grammar related questions to the web site,

which might provide an opportunity for meaningful communication. However, an extensive FAQ[6] file is available already limiting the number of questions students might wish to submit. The lack of opportunities for meaningful communication means that the web sites also lack opportunities for output as part of meaningful interaction. The web sites discussed elicit minimal output from users. Most of the output elicited involves little more than a click of the mouse or typing of a word. The *Guide to Grammar and Writing* includes a few exercises that expect users to provide slightly more output, but even those could not be claimed to represent meaningful interaction. Similarly, the four grammar web sites offer few opportunities to attend selectively to form and meaning. Most explanations and practice opportunities included are presented out of context and typically at the phrase or sentence level, facilitating a clear illustration of the grammatical form involved. However, they lack opportunities to observe the effect a specific form might have on meaning in different contexts. The few practice opportunities available give users direct feedback. This feedback, however, is limited to variations of "right" or "wrong", without elaboration or explanation of why a given form is considered to be more appropriate than another. This reinforces the image of the computer as a "drill sergeant" or the "knower of all answers" (as discussed in, e.g. McGarrell, 1998) and misses a potential opportunity for users to focus on how their output differs from that of native speakers. Although the web sites discussed provide helpful reference materials, they lack important features thought to lead to successful language learning.

As already pointed out, most of the grammar web sites are quite similar in their conception and presentation to printed books, but instead of turning pages, users click the mouse to move from page to page (or screen to screen). Despite the large number of studies into the teaching and learning of grammar, web sites designed for grammar learning do not seem to incorporate these insights. In addition, the type of web site discussed does not fully exploit the available technology to maximise learning opportunities. For example, although some sites use colour or graphics to provide visual interest, they do not use these visual aids systematically, e.g. to draw attention to similar or different constructions or to highlight specific grammar categories. Where graphics are used, their main function may be to provide visual interest and variety. So far, there is little use of the media's ability to incorporate movement. Text that moves could, for example, graphically illustrate changes in word order necessary for question formation, changes in verb forms, and similar constructions to help visual learners grasp the concepts involved. Low levels of interactivity in these web sites result in exercises that closely resemble established paper and pencil exercises, which require learners to respond by circling or checking a selection. Similarly, few web sites offer an explanation of the "right" selection. *HyperGrammar*'s brief statement of the relevant rule(s) as part of the feedback available is an example of how feedback might be incorporated to lead learners to reexamine their understanding of a concept or rule. Ideally, such feedback would refer users to relevant further activities, examples in longer texts, and explanations. Success in exercises submitted and feedback might be stored to track users' evolving ability and to provide relevant feedback when users submit subsequent work.

Few grammar web sites examined exploit the possibilities offered by hyper-text beyond linking different sections to the "Table of Contents" and the "Index". The relative infrequent use of hyper-links within the body of these materials encourages users to follow a linear progression and makes navigation cumbersome. Extensive availability of hyper-links, on the other hand, might enable users to pursue questions they may have quickly, as they work with the material. More extensive use of hyper-links could also link the form illustrated at the phrase or sentence level to the function of this form in larger bodies of text. Conversely, individual forms in texts could be hyper-linked to take users to explanations of a particular form. Such exploitation of the potential of the web would provide an innovative learning tool for students of grammar, one that goes beyond the electronic book format currently presented.

The above discussion shows currently available web sites for grammar are readily available and show some promising features. However, these features rarely reflect the basic requirements considered essential to successful language learning. Opportunities for meaningful interaction, motivation to attend to form and meaning selectively, and direct or indirect feedback are the requirements most often missing in web grammar sites. Teachers and learners need to find other opportunities to incorporate exercises that successfully meet the requirements. Like conventional grammar texts,

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Such feedback would refer users to relevant further activities, examples in longer texts, and explanations. Success in exercises submitted and feedback might be stored to track users' evolving ability and to provide relevant feedback when users submit subsequent work.

currently available grammar web sites provide basic reference information without relating it to actual language use. The next section will suggest how classroom teachers might provide an environment for learners to supplement the use of web grammar through activities that exploit their strengths and compensate for their weaknesses.

Despite their shortcomings, English grammar web sites are an important addition to the resources available to teachers and learners. One of their strengths is the potential for individualisation when learners try to master the form of specific constructions.

## Implications for the ESL classroom

Despite their shortcomings, English grammar web sites are an important addition to the resources available to teachers and learners. One of their strengths is the potential for individualisation when learners try to master the form of specific constructions. Teachers familiar with what individual sites offer can direct learners to web pages that suit each learner's level of ability and individual learning style[7]. A site that offers more than sixty links to grammar exercises is Dave's ESL Café, while an example of a specific site with a broad range of grammar exercises is offered by Jones (2001). Classroom activities, however, will likely need to be designed to incorporate the key conditions for successful language learning outlined by Pica (2000). For example, most ESL/EFL students beyond the initial stages regularly have questions about usage that even well-prepared teachers might find difficult to answer spontaneously. Teachers might exploit such questions to provide an opportunity for data-driven learning, i.e. an environment in which learners try to find answers for their own questions. Two types of web sites may be particularly suitable in filling this void. First, sites that offer users answers to their grammar questions are helpful, and second, web sites that offer concordancers offer considerable great potential.

The second type of web site teachers might explore to encourage a fruitful learning environment offers a concordancer. Concordancers can be used to search a data bank that consists of texts, oral or written, collected from native speakers.

Web sites that offer a grammar question & answer feature are widely available on the web. One example mentioned above, the *Guide to Grammar and Writing,* keeps a log of questions asked, a log that can be searched to find out whether a particular question has been asked before. Another site that responds to grammar questions is the *Grammar Queen*, a site that approaches inquiries with a sense of humour, as shown in Figures 10 and 11.

[Figure 10: Grammar Queen - Introduction]

[Figure 11: Example of a Question & Response]

The *Grammar Queen* responds to questions native and non-native speakers have about the use of English. For non-native speakers of English, the site has at least two useful aspects: first, non-native speakers see that native speakers are not always sure about certain aspects of grammar. Second, non-native speakers can send their questions and receive a specific answer. This site was recently used very effectively by adult ESL learners in an intermediate level grammar class. The students were organised into small 'grammar consultancy groups'. Their task was to receive and respond to questions that arose within other groups. The students took their consulting work very seriously and spent considerable time outside the classroom researching answers to the questions the group received, clearly gaining valuable insights about aspect of grammar in the process. Although they could check with their instructor and a few native speakers of English if the need arose, they were unable to find satisfactory answers to all of the questions posed. Such "problem questions" were sent to the Grammar Queen or a similar feature at Dave's ESL Café[8]. While trying to answer these questions, the learners discussed the material at length and tried to understand or explain what was involved. They consulted both electronic (i.e. web grammars) and print grammars extensively. In addition, they gained valuable practice in giving and justifying their view, a context that gave them opportunities for meaningful interaction, input and output, with opportunities to attend to form and meaning in a targeted manner. Members of the different groups gave each other feedback, as did the teacher and the native speakers who were consulted. Finally, on selected questions they received "official" feedback in the form of an e-mail through the question & answer forum they had contacted. Thus, a question & answer site can meet all the requirements identified as essential to successful grammar learning, although its attractiveness is likely to lie in its novelty and other options need to be explored.

The second type of web site teachers might explore to encourage a fruitful learning environment offers a concordancer. Concordancers can be used to search a data bank that consists of texts, oral or written, collected from native speakers.

Concordancers can be used to search a data bank that consists of texts, oral or written, collected from native speakers. In contrast to the grammar web sites discussed earlier, concordancers do not offer reference material but allow users to investigate how a particular construction or word is used by native speakers, both for written and for oral usage. The user can submit a query on a screen to receive, within seconds, multiple examples of how the queried

item is used in a large body (corpus) of written and oral text collected from native speakers. If the concordancer returns no examples, the indication is that the query needs to be reformulated or that native speakers do not use the word or construction submitted. A rapidly expanding literature (e.g. Burnard & McEneary, 1999; Johns, 2000) explores how concordancers can be used in ESL classrooms to provide relevant learning opportunities.

ESL learners and their teachers can benefit from concordancing through Cobuild's free demo concordancer that can be queried in many different ways. For example, ESL learners are often confused about the difference between "good" and "well", a difference many native speakers of English are often at a loss to explain. They might be asked to investigate this difference based on data from native speakers. A relevant query for each would give them data such as illustrated in Figures 12 and 13 below.

[Figure 12: Cobuild Concordancer – Results for "well"]

[Figure 13: Cobuild Concordancer – Results for "good"]

In small groups, they can then go on to organise the data into groups and identify the rules that apply for each group. Based on the samples they find, users might then formulate relevant rules and present their findings to their peers. Similarly, Kettemann (1996/2000) discusses the construction "if + would", a construction that many ESL learners use, yet grammar texts suggest is not "correct" English. A relevant query submitted to a concordancer will show that native speakers rarely use this construction. The Cobuild Concordancer finds two such constructions in its huge data base. A revised query asking for "if" and "would" might help develop their understanding of how the construction works. Sample results for such a query allowing up to two words between "if" and "would" are shown in Figure 14.

[Figure 14: Cobuild Concordancer – Results for "if - - would"]

As these brief suggestions show, activities around using a concordancer can again provide many opportunities for meaningful interaction and the requirements suggested by (Pica, 2000) for learners beyond the beginner levels.

## Summary and conclusions

The preceding discussion shows that current web sites designed for the learning and teaching of grammar do not strongly reflect recent insights into grammar learning. Based on recent insights from research into language learning and teaching, several key conditions need to be available in the learning environment to result in successful language acquisition. These conditions involve opportunities for meaningful communication entailing comprehensible input and output, learners' selective attention to form and meaning, and direct or indirect feedback on their output. Like traditional print grammars, electronic grammars are not generally designed to elicit meaningful interaction (input, output and feedback). They tend to focus on specific constructions, which they present in isolation, without relevant follow up in context. In addition, they lack feedback features that allow learners to work out where their language production might differ from that of native speakers. In many ways, they are similar to more established print materials, although they offer a new medium for delivery of these materials. Expecting that they could do much more than the earlier grammar texts on which they are based is reasonable. To achieve this, however, the available technology needs to be applied more fully and through closer collaboration among language teachers, researchers, and technology specialists. Electronic grammars do, however, represent an important additional resource that helps meet individual needs and learning styles. In addition, many language learners are keen on using new technologies to develop their language skills, giving them more exposure to their target language.

From the teacher's perspective, English grammar web sites might provide a means of spending little or no class time discussing the form of various constructions, allowing more time for activities that meet language learning requirements not easily addressed through web sites. Reflection on their teaching style might also allow them to incorporate these web sites into their teaching to provide additional variety. For example, those whose teaching style does not tend to include formal presentations (or who face time constraints that do not allow them to do so) of specific grammar points might refer those students who wish to do so to consult a relevant web site. The grammar web sites discussed above represent a viable alternative to conventional grammar texts about the quality and quantity of material they present.

ESL learners and their teachers can benefit from concordancing through Cobuild's free demo concordancer that can be queried in many different ways. For example, ESL learners are often confused about the difference between "good" and "well", a difference many native speakers of English are often at a loss to explain.

Like traditional print grammars, electronic grammars are not generally designed to elicit meaningful interaction (input, output and feedback). They tend to focus on specific constructions, which they present in isolation, without relevant follow up in context.

Figure 1: *The Internet Grammar of English* – Auxiliary Verbs

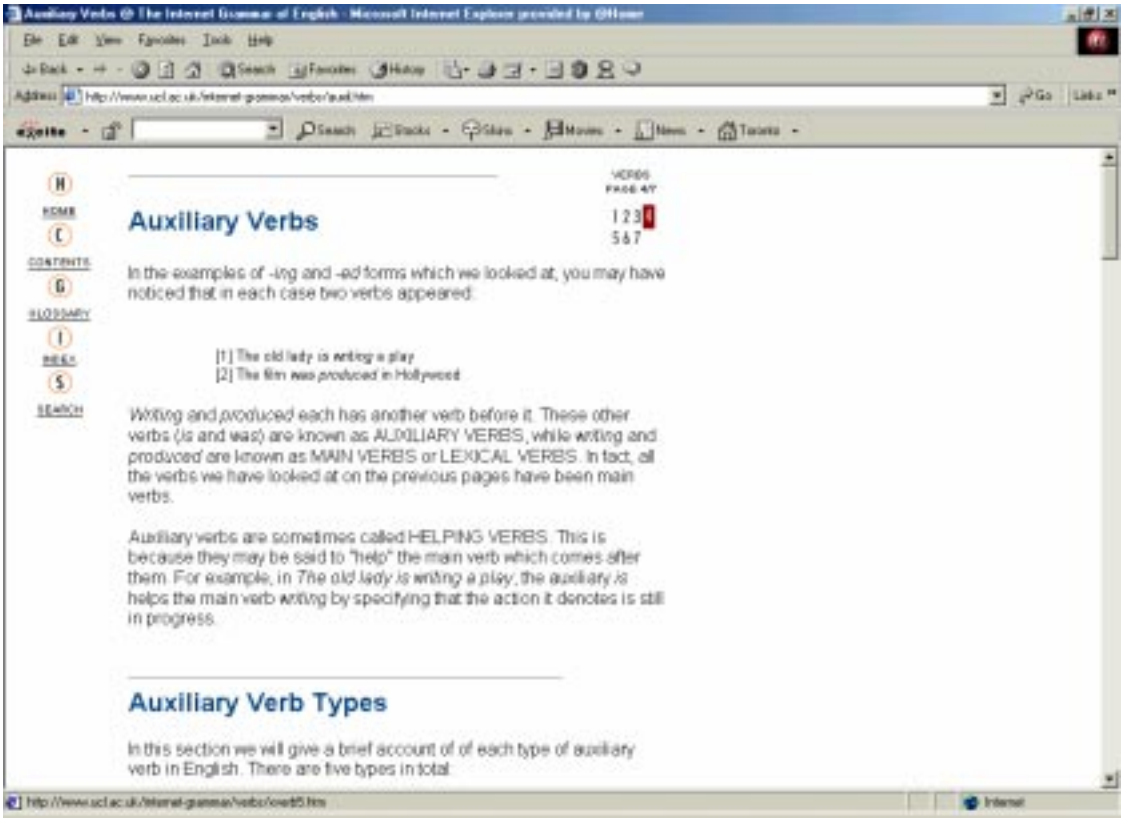



Figure 2: *The Internet Grammar of English* – Exercise on Auxiliary Verbs

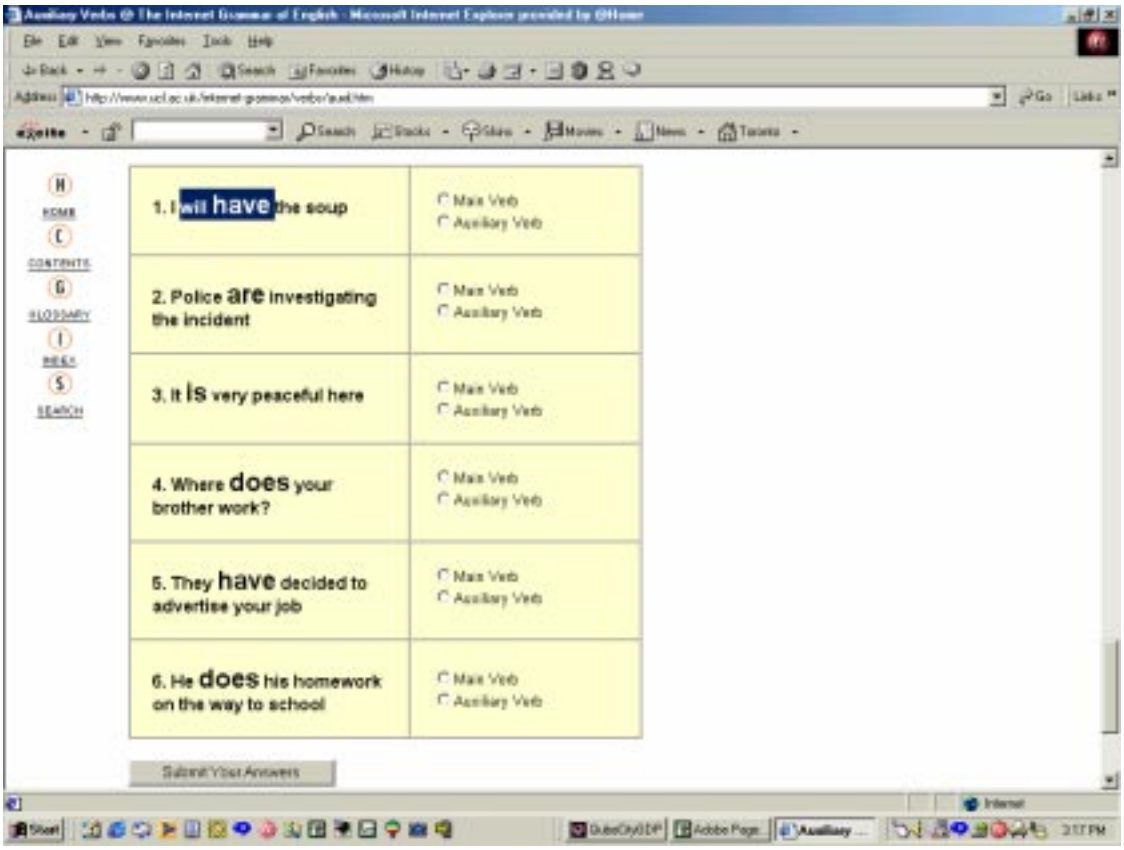


Figure 3: HyperGrammar – What is a Verb?

# What Is A Verb?

The verb is perhaps the most important part of the sentence. A **verb** or compound verb asserts something about the subject of the sentence and expresses actions, events, or states of being. The verb or compound verb is the critical element of the predicate of a sentence.

In each of the following sentences, the verb or compound verb is **highlighted**.

Dracula **bites** his victims on the neck.

The verb "bites" describes the action Dracula takes.

In early October, Giselle **will plant** twenty tulip bulbs.

Here the compound verb "will plant" describes an action that will take place in the future.

My first teacher **was** Miss Crawford, but I remember the janitor Mr. Weatherbee more vividly.

In this sentence, the verb "was" (the simple past tense of "is") identifies a particular person and the verb "remembered" describes a mental action.

Karl Creelman bicycled around the world in 1899, but his diaries and his bicycle **were destroyed**.

In this sentence, the compound verb "were destroyed" describes an action which took place in the past.

Figure 4: HyperGrammar – Examples of Hyperlinked Terms

# Compound Verbs

You contract a **compound verb** out of an auxiliary verb and another verb.

In particular, you may use an **auxiliary verb** (also known as a **helping verb**) with the verb in order to create the many of the tenses available in English.

In each of the following sentences, the compound verb appears highlighted.

Karl Creelman bicycled around the world in 1899, but his diaries and his bicycle **were destroyed**.

The compound verb in this sentence is made up of the auxiliary "were" and the past participle "destroyed."

The book Sonya **was looking** for is under the sofa.

Here the compound verb is made up of the auxiliary verb "was" and the present participle "looking."

They will **meet us** at the newest café in the market.

In this example the compound verb is made up of the auxiliary verb "will" and the verb "meet."

That dog has been barking for three hours. I wonder if someone will call the owner.

In this sentence the first compound verb is made up of the two auxiliary verbs ("has" and "been") and a present participle ("barking"). The second compound verb is made up of the auxiliary verb "will" and the verb "call."

Figure 5: HyperGrammar – Illustration of Exercise

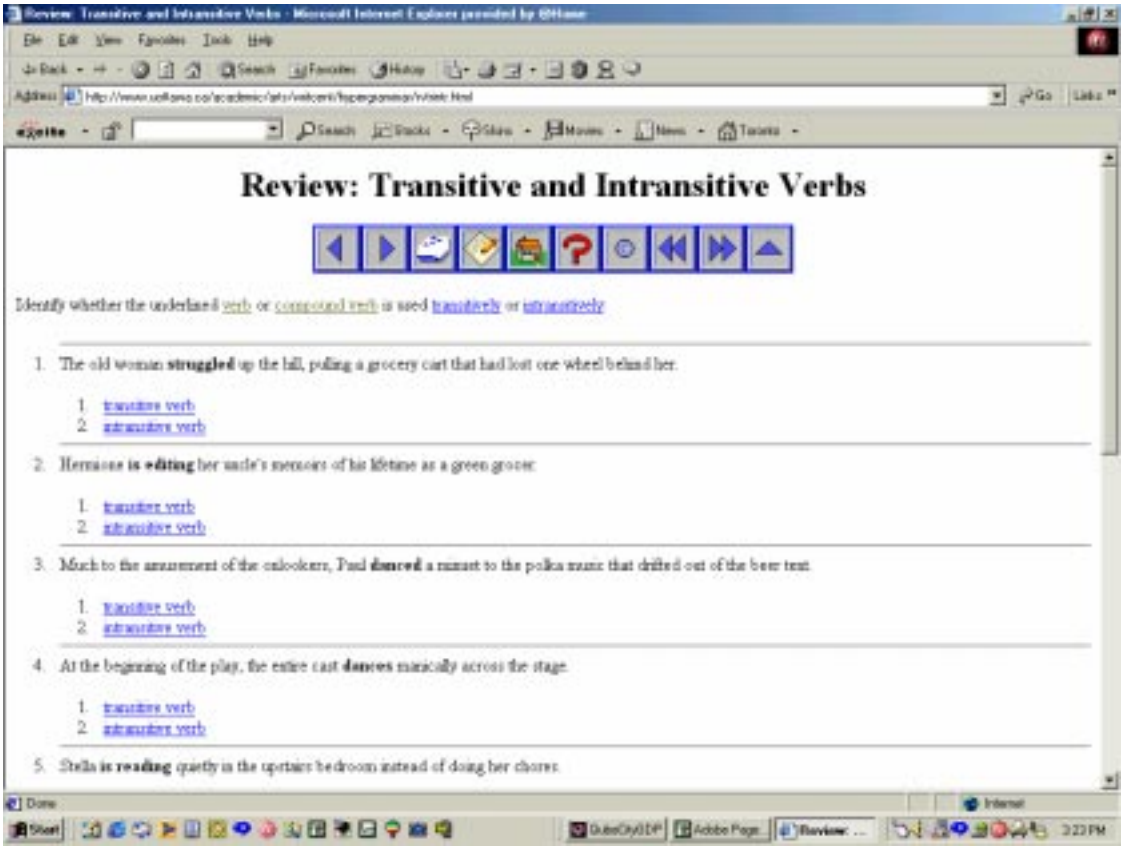



Figure 6: Guide to Grammar and Writing – Main Grammar Selections

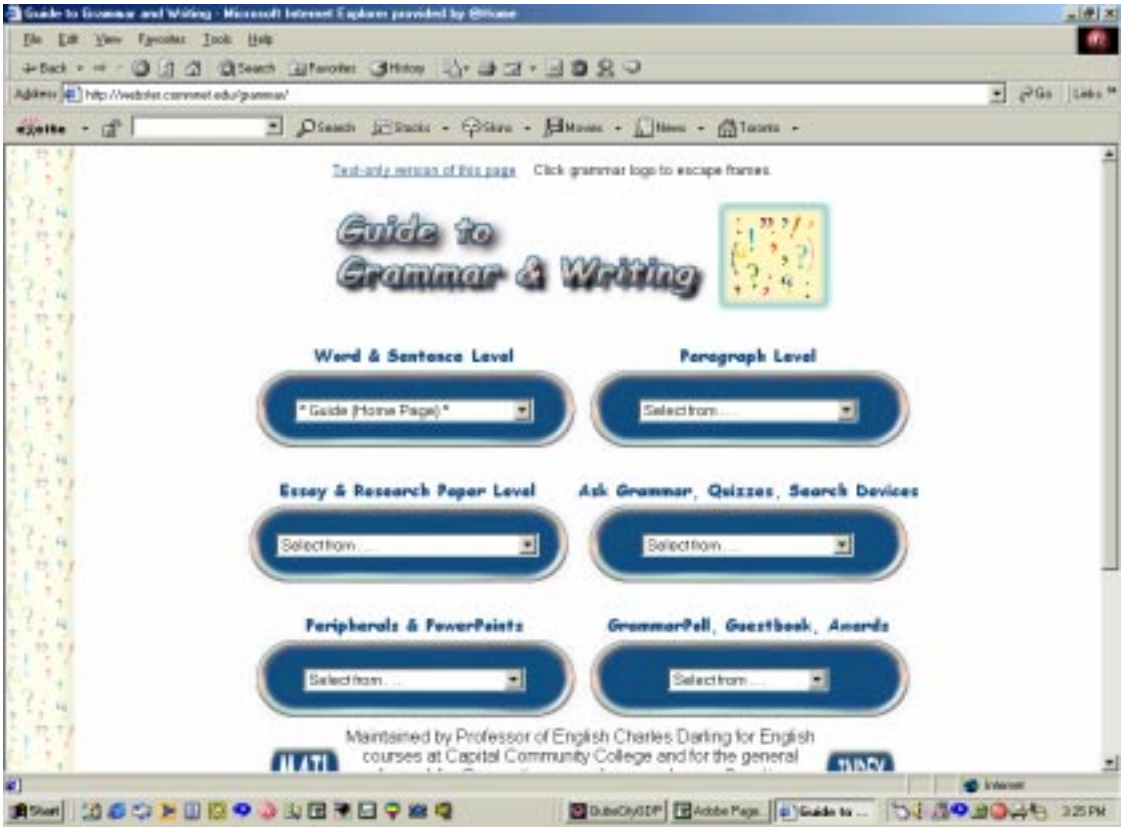


Figure 7: Guide to Grammar and Writing – Introduction of Nouns

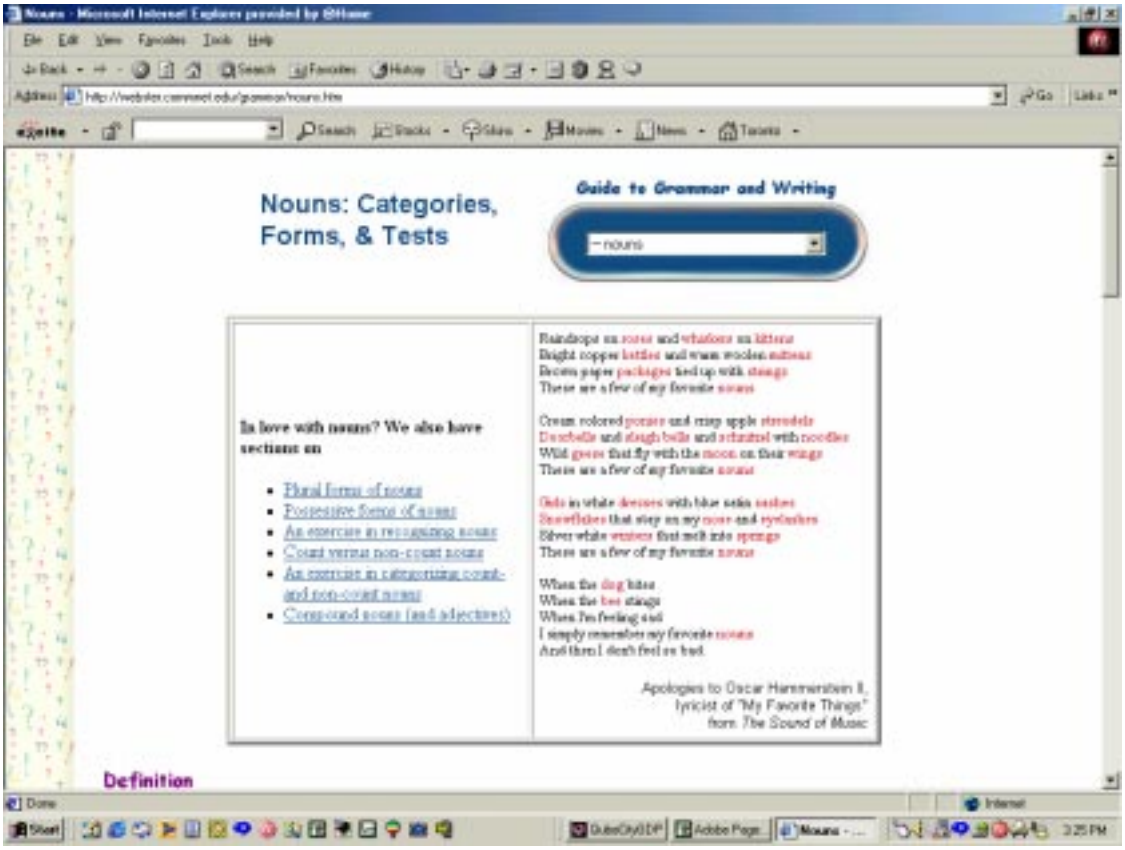



Figure 8: *NetGrammar* – Grammar Focus in Unit 1

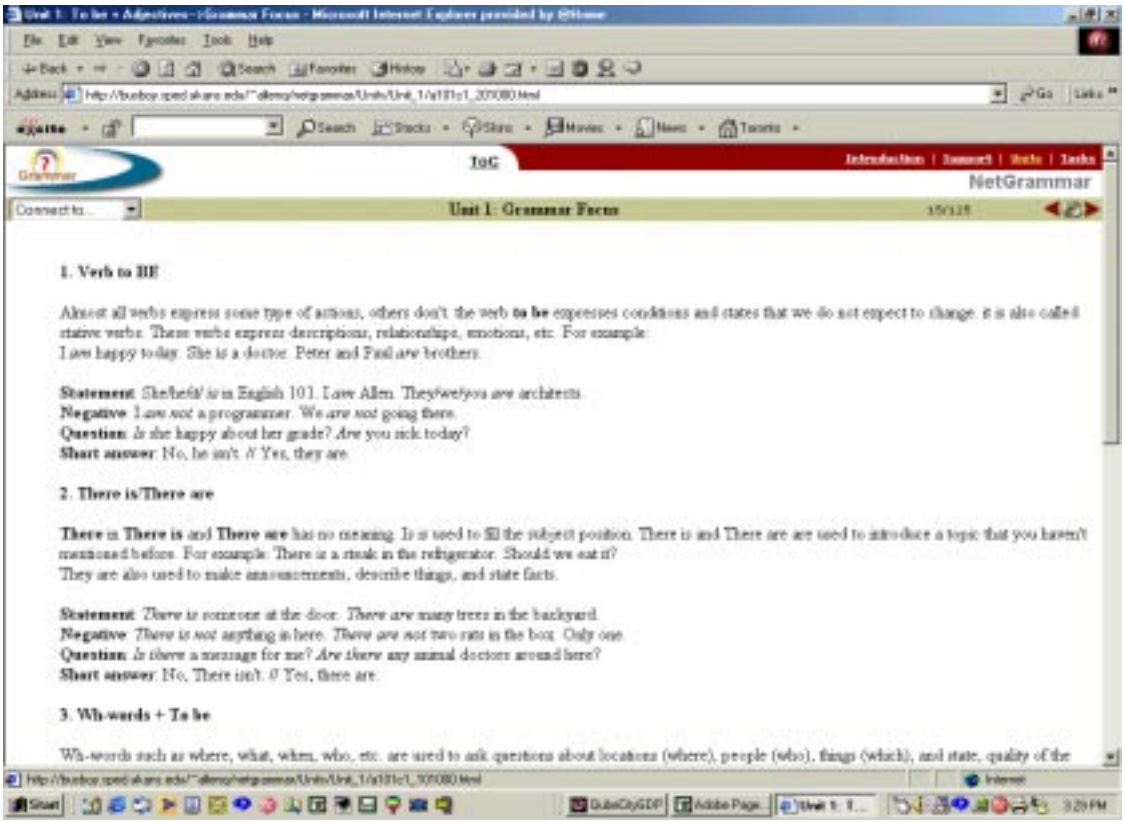


Figure 9: *NetGrammar* – Illustration of Grammar Tasks

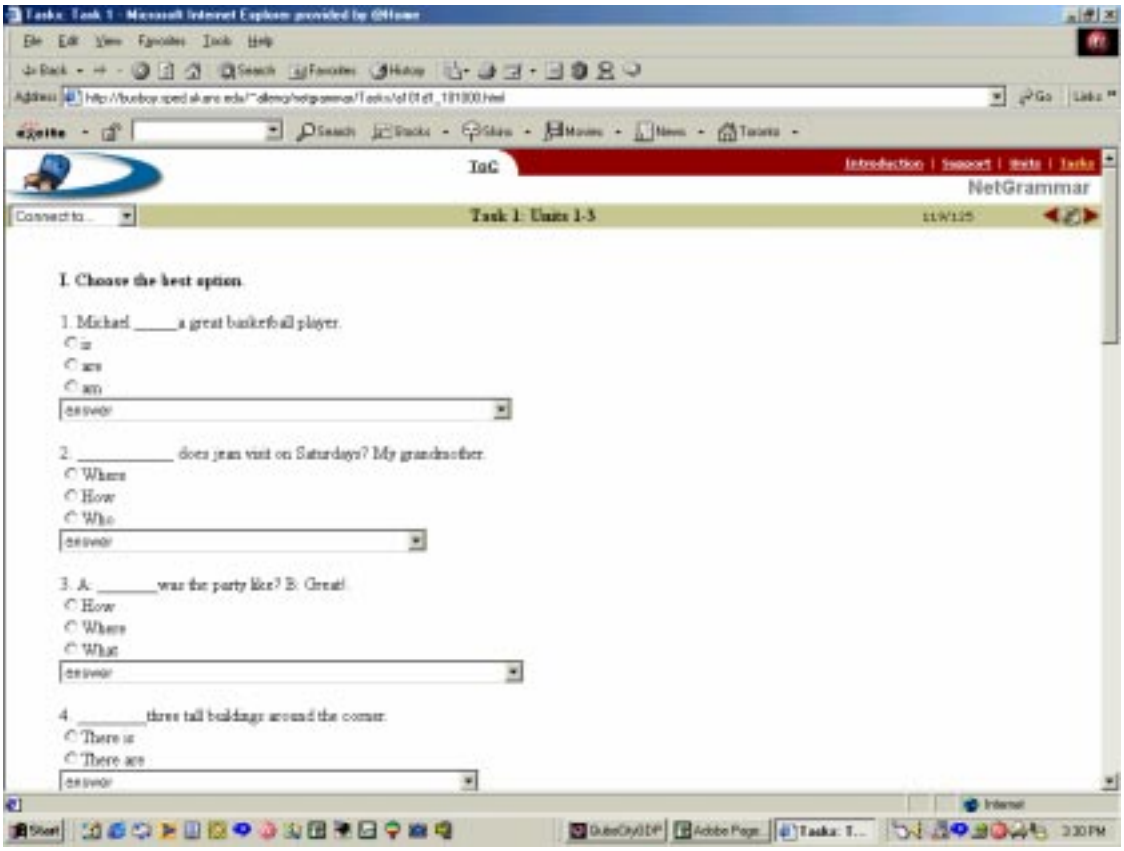



Figure 10: Grammar Queen – Introduction

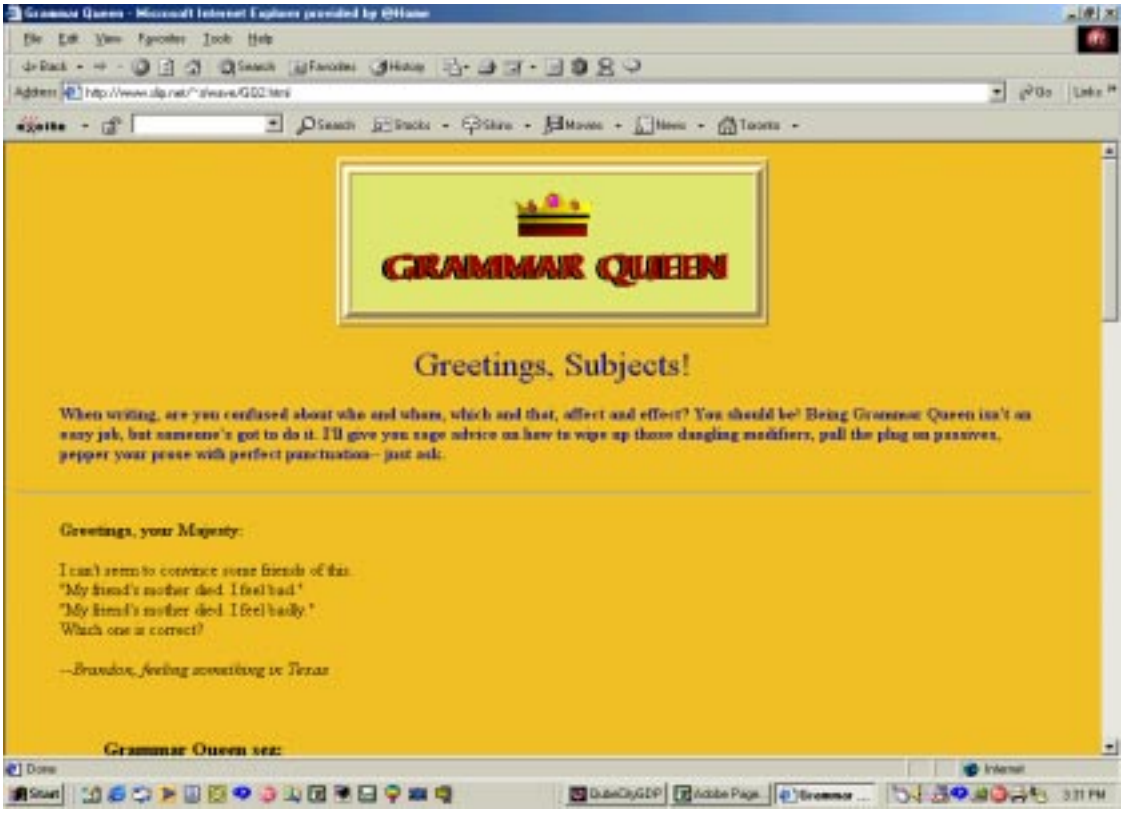


Figure 11: Example of a Question & Response

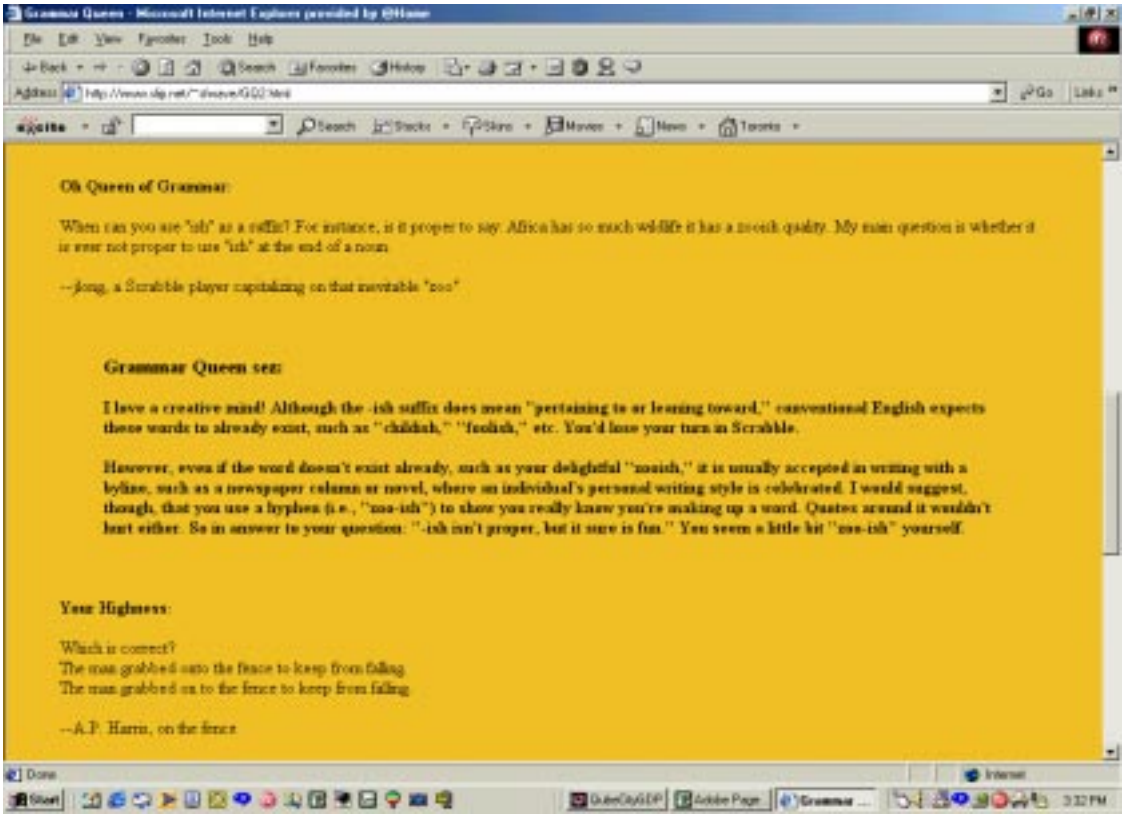



Figure 12: Cobuild Concordancer – Results for "well"

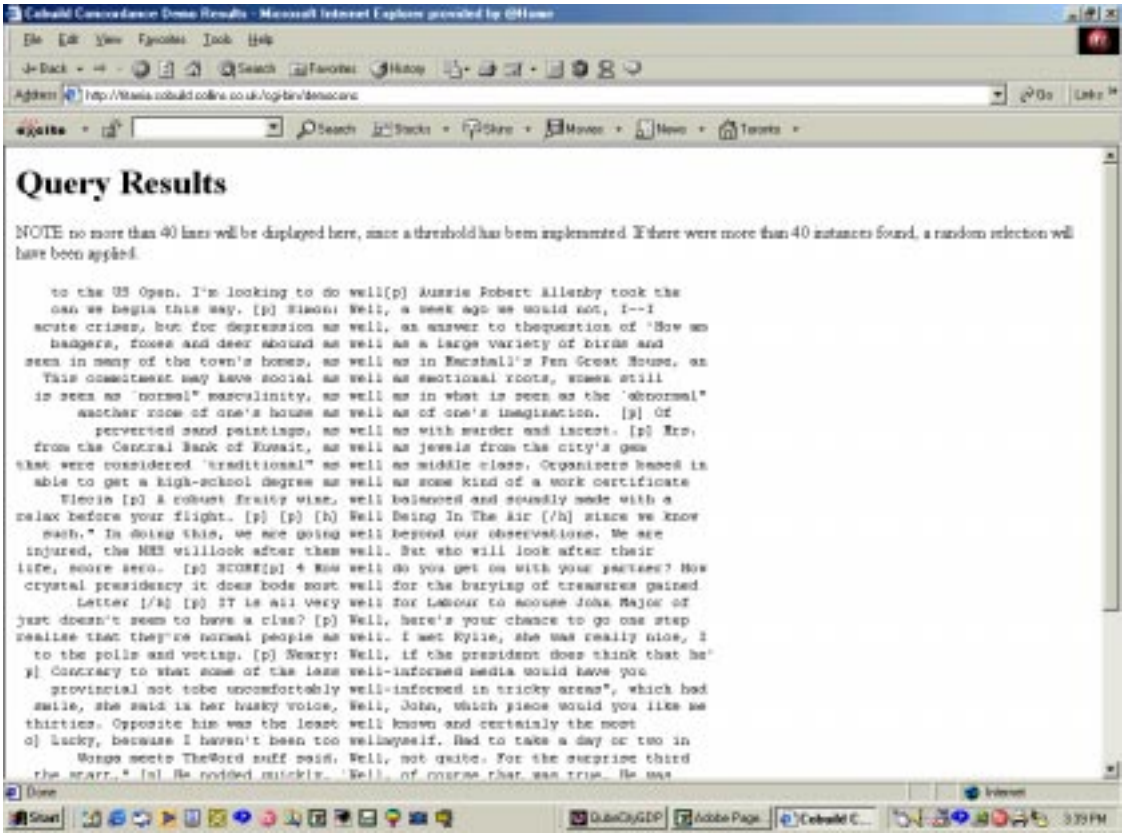


Figure 13: Cobuild Concordancer – Results for “good”

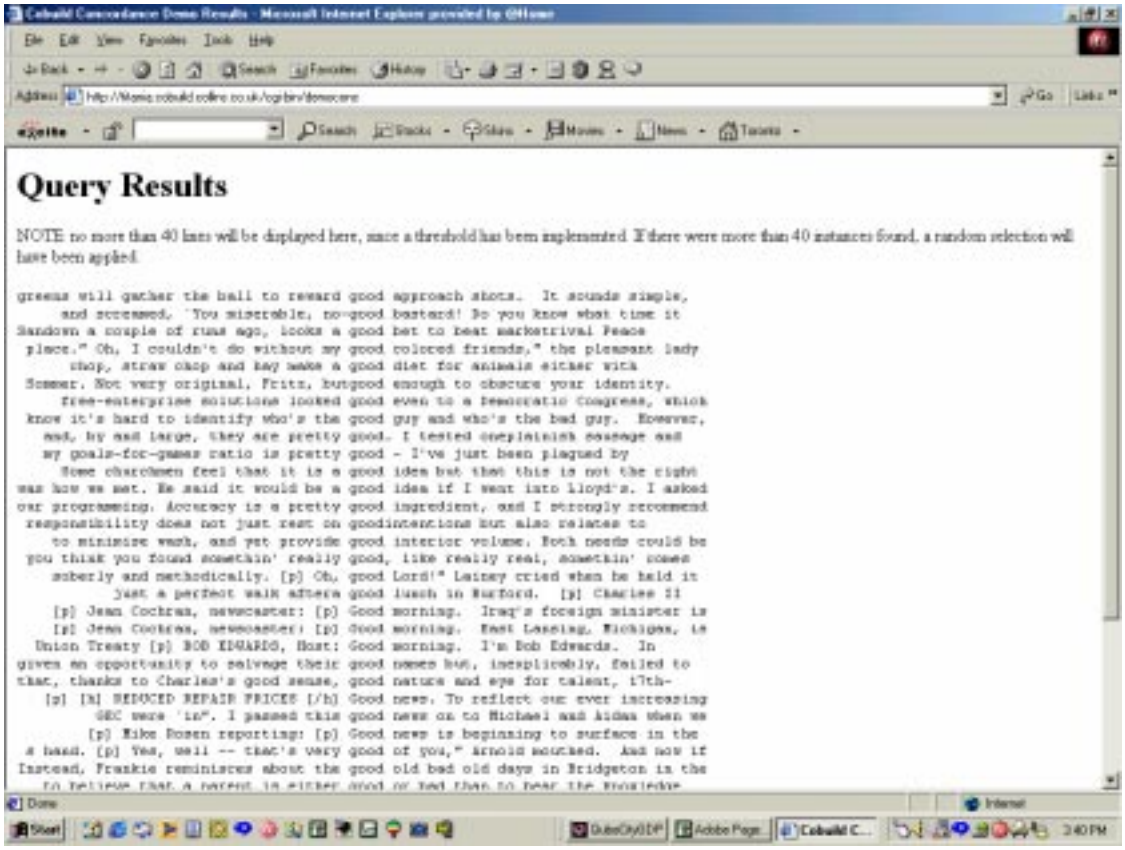
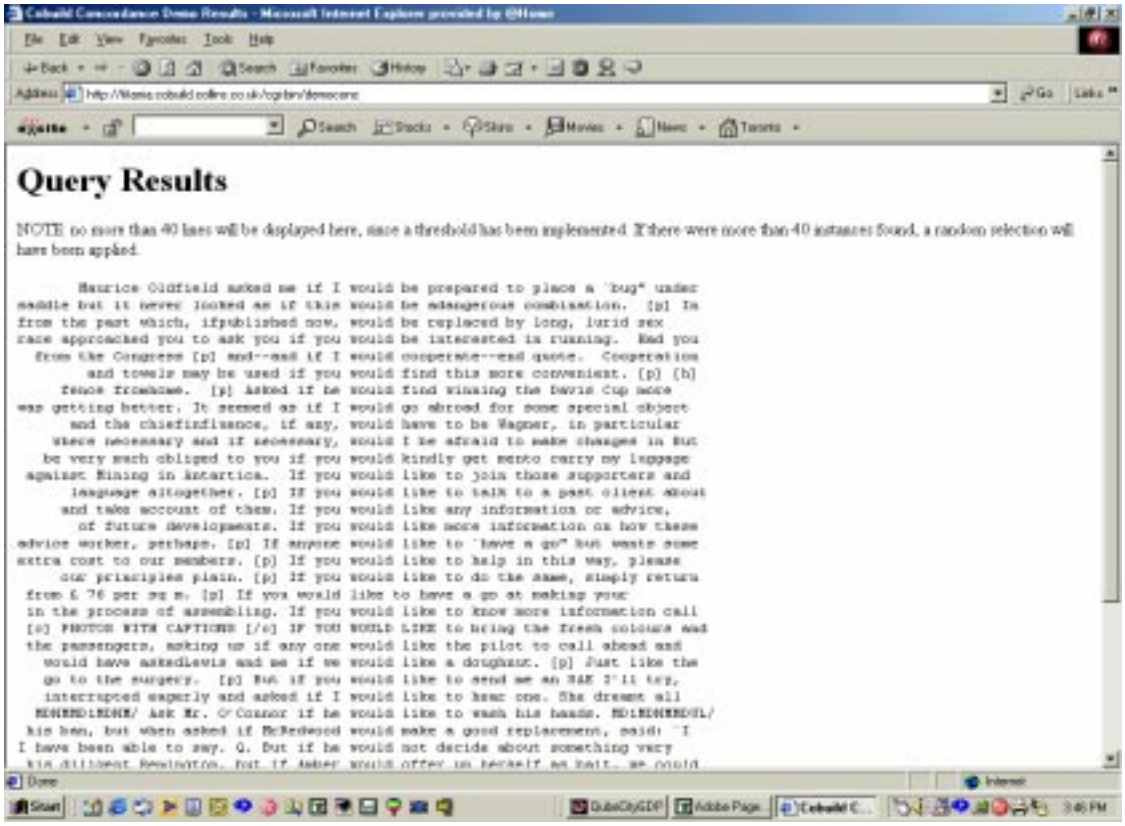



Figure 14: Cobuild Concordancer – Results for “if - - would”



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**Note: The web addresses cited in this document were last accessed on March 14, 2001**

[1] All web addresses referred to in this paper were current at the time of submission. Web pages included here were selected in part for their past reliability/stability.

[2] Language learning and language acquisition are used interchangeable here.

[3] Grammar web sites tend to address grammar specifically in relation to written English only.

[4] Transmission and loading speed is, however, also dependent on the hardware and software available to individual users.

[5] Hyper-links can be thought of as bookmarks that point from one point in a document to another for easy access. They may be within the same document, or perhaps within another document altogether, somewhere else on the Internet.

[6] Frequently Asked Questions

[7] Learners disinclined to use technology for their learning will likely be accommodated through more traditional materials.

[8] This site offers a broad range of potentially useful features, including many links to grammar exercises, but is more complex to navigate and includes many advertising banners, resulting in slower navigation and, for some learners distraction or irritation.


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# Teaching a New "Language" through Distance Education: Examples from Greece, Cuba and Canada

By Dr. Douglas McDougall, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

I will then describe three contexts where distance education is being used to teach another language. In each of these contexts, the challenges have been to use technology to learn something new – whether it be Spanish, teacher education, instructional strategies, assessment or distance education.

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore the challenges of learning new concepts in distance education via the medium of technology. The issues and challenges faced in distance education parallel similar issues and challenges in learning another language. I will first examine the components, theories, and philosophies of distance education, including the use of technology to facilitate learning. After defining various types of computer activities, I will then describe three contexts where distance education is being used to teach another language. In each of these contexts, the challenges have been to use technology to learn something new – whether it be Spanish, teacher education, instructional strategies, assessment or distance education. The three contexts include: the establishment of a distance education centre in Cuba, the implementation of technology in secondary schools in Greece, and the use of technology in a preservice teacher education program in Canada.

## What is distance education?

There has been much discussion concerning a precise definition of "distance education". There is general agreement, however, that distance education possesses specific characteristics, including the physical separation of teacher and student, usually at a considerable distance (Perraton, 1988). A majority of the instruction comes from an instructor who is at a distance from the learner. The course or educational program makes use of technical media such as print, audio, video, or computers to "unite" the teacher and the learner.

Another key characteristic of distance education is each and every student involved is treated and taught as an individual rather than as a part of a group in a classroom.

Two-way communication within distance education is another key characteristic. Communication can be synchronous (at the same time) through chats and interactive contact. This involves all individuals interacting at the same time, in the same course. In some cases, asynchronous (at different times) communication can be used as an alternative technique. Examples include email and online conference software. There are benefits to both techniques. However, they are beyond the purpose of this paper.

Another key characteristic of distance education is each and every student involved is treated and taught as an individual rather than as a part of a group in a classroom. This is significant as it changes the instructional strategies needed to teach distance education courses and it requires various assessment strategies to identify the key learning paths for each individual.

It is also important for the instructor to create a "learning group" environment as part of the course. These learning groups encourage cooperative learning principles to be part of an online course. It also encourages individual and group learning to take place within the same course structure.

When we discuss learning groups, we are aware that differences in language and culture that can create a "distance" (Cummins and Sayers, 1995). However, this diversity encourages us to use technology to promote educational success for all students. Students in ESL programs come from diverse backgrounds and the thesis of this paper is that distance education programs can help bridge language barriers.

## Theories and philosophies of distance education

There are two opposing views of how information is communicated to students and the way in which students make sense and construct new knowledge. The two approaches, symbol-processing and situated cognition, impact the instructional design of courses. Bredo (1994) has written a full description and comparison of these two approaches. I will provide a brief synopsis of both approaches so the reader can make connections

between the traditional view of learning and the alternative approach currently accepted by other researchers and educators.

The dominant view of learning was the traditional information processing approach that involves symbol-processing. This approach is based on the view that a computer could be best utilized by performing formal operations on symbols (Seamans, 1990). A key characteristic is that the teacher can transmit information to the student through representation of the information that exists outside of the student. The teacher presents the fixed set of information as a concrete image and transmits the image to the student. The learner stores this information and retrieves it as needed. Horton (1994) suggests that this new image is developed through two additional factors: the student's context that includes environment and current situation, and the mind (memories, associations, emotions, and curiosity).

The second approach is based on constructivist principles. This current theoretical view of teaching and learning suggests that learners construct their own knowledge through interaction with their environment, that knowledge is organized in networks that are increasingly more complex, that constructed knowledge is under a continual state of reorganization and restructuring, and that the construction of knowledge is partly a reflective activity (Noddings, 1990). Closely related to this view is one called situated learning (Streibel, 1991). Proponents of situated cognition suggest that both physical and social interaction enter into the active construction of an internal representation of knowledge. The information and its symbolic representations exist only inside the individual.

As these approaches differ, how one perceives learning and processing by individuals dictates one's use of technology, instructional strategies, and assessment strategies. In the three contexts presented here, a constructivist view of learning will provide the underlying framework for the design and delivery of the courses.

## Changing computer activities

The use of computers in learning has been a part of classrooms for the past 30 years. I recall my experience with punched cards in great detail. I sent punched cards to another secondary school to have the computer programs executed. The cards and program output were sent back to the students after a few days. In many cases, a few wrong keystrokes sent the program back to the student to "debug" and to resubmit.

We have progressed from these frustrating days but we continue to have to analyze what happens when something goes wrong technically. The progress we have made from using the computer as a programming machine has introduced us to a wide range of uses in many areas of education. Taylor (1980) wrote about three main uses of the computer: as a tool, as a tutor – something that could teach us, and as a tutee – something that we could teach or program.

Now, with a better understanding of the range of uses for technology, we can view the use of technology in five areas: tool, exploration, communication, teacher education, and assessment. Chronis Kynigos' (personal communication) has outlined another view of technology. He suggests that there are six categories: (1) symbolic expression and ideas exploring, (2) written expression, (3) sketching, retrieving information, (4) organizing, classifying, and analyzing information, (5) simulation, and (6) communication. While this paper highlights the use of technology in communication, it is important to note that the use of technology in all of these areas changes the manner in which we work and perform tasks.

Howard Mehlinger (1995) writes that tools matter and that they change us. We can consider the freezer and the microwave as examples of tools that change us. For example, many years ago, we would have to purchase food daily so that it was fresh. When the refrigerator was developed, food could be purchased less frequently. The freezer allows us to purchase food less often thereby freeing us to have more time to pursue other interests. It has changed how and when we purchase food.

The microwave is another example of how tools change us. I come from a large family where we ate dinner at the same time each day. Here we were able to meet and discuss our day. Today, with the use of the microwave, food can be prepared quickly and at various times. We can eat at different times rather than as a family gathering around a table at the same time. Technology has changed our eating patterns and how we relate to each other.

## Three contexts

I will describe the use of technology in three contexts: Cuba, Greece, and Canada. In each case,

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the use of technology to teach about a new "language" will be discussed. I define "language" as a set of symbols, vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. I use these three contexts to illustrate the challenges and possible solutions of implementing technology to teach a new "language". I will provide the reader with parallels to learning English as a Second Language (ESL) and possible solutions to the issues raised in these examples.

The Continuing Education Department of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) was awarded the contract to create a distance education centre with MEP and to design and implement courses in Global Economy.

## Program to design and implement distance education in Cuba

A project, sponsored by the Canadian Investment Development Agency (CIDA), was designed to assist in the professional upgrading of the personnel within the Cuban Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP) and to develop a distance education training program. MEP is responsible for economic planning and the allocation of goods, which involves the allocation of resources, fuel and food budgets, development and the implementation of the national energy policy, investments projects, and planning for joint ventures. It is currently building capacity to manage the anticipated changes as the Cuban market increasingly relies on world markets and a new trade and investment environment.

The Continuing Education Department of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) was awarded the contract to create a distance education centre with MEP and to design and implement courses in Global Economy. The constructivist view of learning, instructional strategies, and assessment practices provided a framework for developing this program.

One of the key reasons for the use of distance education courses in Cuba is that it is a relatively large country.

One of the key reasons for the use of distance education courses in Cuba is that it is a relatively large country. In the past, most of the courses had been offered in Havana in face-to-face format. However, this has presented a number of challenges. First, there is a lack of regularly scheduled transportation to Havana from the provinces. This makes it is difficult for participants to travel to Havana for the Global Economy courses. Second, there is a shortage of accommodations in Havana for MEP personnel. There are many reasons for MEP employees to come to this city but only so many rooms available for visiting MEP personnel. This lack of accommodation severely limits the access Cubanos have to the capital city.

The third challenge is the subject matter of the courses. The new content in global economy and public administration courses is relatively new and has not been taught to many people. The new vocabulary, syntax and "grammar" of these economic and public administration concepts necessitate a different approach, particularly as these economic concepts must be adapted to the Cuban context.

Through workshops for Cuban professors, Joanne Quinn, Director, Continuing Education Department, OISE/UT and I provided a framework for professors to learn about instructional strategies, graphic organizers, assessment strategies, processing strategies, and distance education. In each area of study, participants were given examples and asked to provide their own examples. The final assignment was to take the concepts of the new course and teach a mini-lesson using the techniques taught in the course. These lessons were one method to check for understanding in the new educational practices.

Distance education, instructional strategies, and the global economy course content provide the new vocabulary and grammar of the "language" being taught in the courses. The process simulates the same processes used for ESL learners. We taught initial vocabulary, modelled the language in different contexts and cases, and had the participants present their new learning as it relates to their prior understanding. In each case, we monitored the use of the new vocabulary and grammar of distance education and instructional strategies in the presentations. After the mini-teaching assignment, the participants had a better understanding of the concepts.

The learners had some difficulties learning the new concepts. Some of the instructional strategies and graphic organizers didn't translate into Spanish. Therefore, we used English words to name the concepts. This made it more difficult for the participants to make sense of the concept. Those concepts that could be translated directly were easily understood and were more likely to be modelled during the mini-teaching sessions.

It was also observed that the participants were unable to venture far from the lecture method of teaching. Their experience in schools and training courses had provided them with a teaching framework that was difficult to change. However, with modelling by the instructors and mini-presentations, the participants were able to demonstrate the beginning of changes to their instructional strat-

egies. This supports the use of mini-presentations by ESL learners to consolidate their learning.

## Teacher education program to integrate computer technology in Greece

There is a movement within the European Union to focus on the implementation of technology in secondary schools in member states. Greece, through the Ministry of Education, received a European Union contract to increase the hardware, software, and teacher training necessary to facilitate the implementation of technology in secondary schools.

Greece has a particular challenge in this area. There are no formal preservice education programs in Greece although teachers must have completed a university degree before they are hired. Prospective teachers attend one or two semesters of pedagogical courses that may include visits to classrooms. It does not apply, however, to all future teachers. There are also Local Centres for Training (P.E.K.). These centres cater to teachers who teach for the first time in public schools as well as those teachers who are currently employed. This training is optional. Teachers must now write exams in subject matter and pedagogical-didactic issues. Therefore, many teachers earn university degrees and apply directly to teach in a school. Some, however, have no training in instructional strategies, assessment practices, or technology implementation in the curriculum.

This project described below is the training component of this implementation technology project for Greece. A group of secondary teachers in mathematics, science, and humanities, was selected to be the teacher trainers in the country. In the first year (1999-2000), 15 secondary school teachers, five from each of the mathematics, science, and humanities disciplines, were given instruction in the use of technology in education. Professor Chronis Kynigos and his staff at the School of Philosophy and Education at the University of Athens provided teachers with instruction on the use of technology in schools, use of software, and exploration of computer applications. Each teacher was assigned three schools in addition to their home school. The staff provided the courses when the teachers attended the University of Athens at various times throughout the year.

In May 2000, I visited Athens to assist in the teaching of the implementation of technology in secondary education. The topics included teacher change, teacher education processes, instructional strategies, assessment strategies, and implementation of technology. The topics also explored challenges and barriers to implementation and the stages of adoption of technology. These classes explored various issues in the implementation of technology and allowed us to share our experiences.

There were two areas of new "language" in this project. As some Greek teachers did not take a teacher education course before teaching, new education concepts required them to learn new vocabulary and strategies. The new program also had the added challenge of being the first computer integration project implemented on a wide scale in Greece. Few teachers had experience with technology in their school and few models existed to support the initiative.

The program, designed by Dr. Kynigos, focused on an implemenation strategy to provide new instructional strategies through modelling. He worked with the author to provide access via computer communication software to Canadian experts. The software, WebKF (the web version of CSILE) has been used to connect teachers from the first and second year teacher trainers with Canadian consultants and teacher trainers. This electronic forum is helping improve the strategies for teaching about educational technology and instructional practices.

The learning of teaching strategies with technology requires an understanding of the two integrated characteristics of teaching. It is important that the learner receives initial vocabulary instruction and that they model the concepts as well as have the concepts modelled for them. Therefore, the Greek teachers were given tasks that required the use of technology to complete. This hands-on modelling can be paralleled to the learning of ESL students. Having tasks that require immersion into the language, such as role-play through the use of language in certain contexts, is essential to the learning of a new language.

The second component of the Greek project is instructional strategies. The author modelled a number of cooperative learning structures as well as adult learning processes. The Greek teachers were given an opportunity to participate in these processes so that they could use them in their work with teachers in secondary schools. The activities, along with instruction in adult learning principles, helped the Greek trainers to communicate with

Many teachers earn university degrees and apply directly to teach in a school. Some, however, have no training in instructional strategies, assessment practices, or technology implementation in the curriculum.

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teachers in the schools. A discussion on system and teacher change, particularly in the education context, rounded out their understanding of the implementation of technology in secondary schools.

The Greek project provides us with some parallels with ESL education. The participants have begun to explore the software through experience. They are beginning to ask questions about the use of the software and the language. ESL learners begin to explore the language at a deeper level and begin to ask questions about the language. This exploration can be enhanced when instructors provide exploratory activities for their students.

A third context where technology has been integrated was in a preservice teacher program in Ontario. The participants were enrolled in a one-year teacher education degree program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Technology was used as a communication medium for a course assignment.

## Technology in Preservice Teacher Training in Canada

A third context where technology has been integrated was in a preservice teacher program in Ontario. The participants were enrolled in a one-year teacher education degree program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Technology was used as a communication medium for a course assignment.

The assignment was to investigate an issue in education using the group investigation method of cooperative learning. In this investigation assignment, students define a problem, gather data, and share their findings with their classmates using WebKF, a communication software program that is derived from CSILE (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 1994). Students are expected to further their understanding of this issue by finding other references, and consolidating messages by "building on" previous messages.

The role of technology in this assignment was to provide a vehicle for communication and be a method increasing their understanding of the group investigation process. The students consolidate their learning by articulating their understanding with their classmates and introducing new concepts into the discussion.

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The students introduce new learning by responding to previous messages and introducing new resources. They are able to extend their learning by having a permanent record of previous messages to develop new levels of understanding. The emerging vocabulary and syntax of technology and communication is a new language for these students.

In each of the three contexts, the participants were learning a new "language" through the support of technology. The challenges are similar to those who are learning new language. The context, syntax, vocabulary, and grammar are unfamiliar and require activities to make connections between the new information and prior knowledge.

## Role of the learning facilitator

The use of technology to teach a new "language" requires the teacher to take on the role of facilitator. With this role comes new expectations for the teacher. First, they are expected to be knowledgeable in computer applications as they relate to teaching. As the participants pose many technical questions, the teacher must have a repertoire of technical and instructional strategies available to respond to their queries.

Second, they are expected to elicit learning and stimulate skill development for the purpose of learning whether it involves learning a language, computer skills, instructional strategies, implementation of technology in schools, or distance education. In all areas, they must be able to deal with basic and complex notions; to do so requires good listening skills and the ability to explain concepts clearly. Students look to the teacher to help them make sense of their new learning.

Learning facilitators are expected to make contacts with the experts to enrich the learning experience. These experts have many demands on their time. In the Greek project, experts and practitioners from Canada were invited to attend electronically and be part of the project. While some were able to participate, many were too busy with other electronic projects to do so.

It is important that goals are clarified, objectives are identified and assessment techniques are clear, especially in electronic conferences. This requires careful planning so that the course is meaningful and stimulating. The teacher must make clear the reason for using technology and how it will help the participants to learn the "language". Otherwise, students will focus on the technology and not their learning goals.

## Benefits and advantages

The benefits and advantages of using technology for learning a "language" are extensive. The computer, particularly through communication software, allows the user to share resources. These

resources may be articles or other recent reports that are relevant to the topic of discussion. The resources may also include other people, experts and practitioners, who contribute in many ways to the discussions. Their particular view or experience will help build a collective understanding. The philosophy of situated learning is used to help participants explore new ideas collectively.

Technology provides an improved access to instructors. As each participant is essentially an individual learner, they have easier and more intimate access to the instructor. They also have greater access to fellow students. The electronic communication software has email access, which gives a one-to-one, and one-to many communication access. In both cases, the student has opportunities for greater interaction. This interaction will improve the students' learning and organization of the "language" of study.

The distance education component of these contexts allows for more student access to courses. In many cases, students live in places that are geographically far from the initial meeting place. In Cuba, Greece, and Canada, the students lived away from the centre of the face-to-face classes. Although transportation is difficult in these centres, students can benefit from experienced instructors and well-designed curricula. Electronic distance education courses are more flexible as participants can complete the work at times convenient to their individual schedules and in the location of their choice. This results in more efficient learning.

There are many benefits for the use of technology in learning a new "language". While the use of the Internet in learning a new "language" is outside the scope of this paper, it should be noted that there are many software programs to teach ESL on the Internet. Many foreign language learners consider the Internet a powerful resource in the learning of a new language. Other articles in this special issue (see Hubbard, Lotherington and McGarrell) focus on the use of the Internet in ESL education. The reader is invited to read these papers for more information.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to explore the challenges of learning a new "language" using distance education. Three contexts were described: distance education in Cuba, implementation of computer technology in secondary schools in Greece, and a teacher education assignment in Canada.

In each of these contexts, the students were to learn new concepts that I have compared to learning a new language: the learning of new vocabulary, syntax, and grammar. These are significant in terms of key concepts, big ideas, and understanding. I have expanded the definition of language used in the above three contexts to draw parallels between this form of learning and learning English as a Second Language (ESL).

First, ESL students have to be introduced to the vocabulary through interaction with the language. This can be done through role-play, interaction with students and teachers, and explorations with new concepts. The creation of a distance education course and implementation of these courses in Cuba have similar expectations. We modelled the instructional strategies that we planned to use for distance education courses and the participants prepared a mini-lesson to illustrate their learning.

First, ESL students have to be introduced to the vocabulary through interaction with the language. This can be done through role-play, interaction with students and teachers, and explorations with new concepts.

Second, ESL students need to communicate in the written form and need to have opportunities to write whenever possible. The use of communication software helps the students perform these two operations. The use of experts and other practitioners enriches the learning experiences of students by offering alternate points of view and expanding their body of knowledge. This approach can also be used to help ESL students increase their understanding of the language itself.

There are many further possibilities for the use of computers in the teaching of ESL. The use of the Internet and communication software are just two new media for learning ESL. The use of computers as tools and exploration software further expands the experiences of ESL students.

As ESL learning develops with the support of technology, parallels to distance education and other technology learning should be explored. Experience in these other areas will help serve to improve ESL learning in the future.

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