

English Language Learning Magazine

CONTACT

March 2022



The Conference Issue

Supporting online language education during the COVID-19 pandemic **PLUS** Inclusive online course design: Lessons from a pandemic **AND MORE...**

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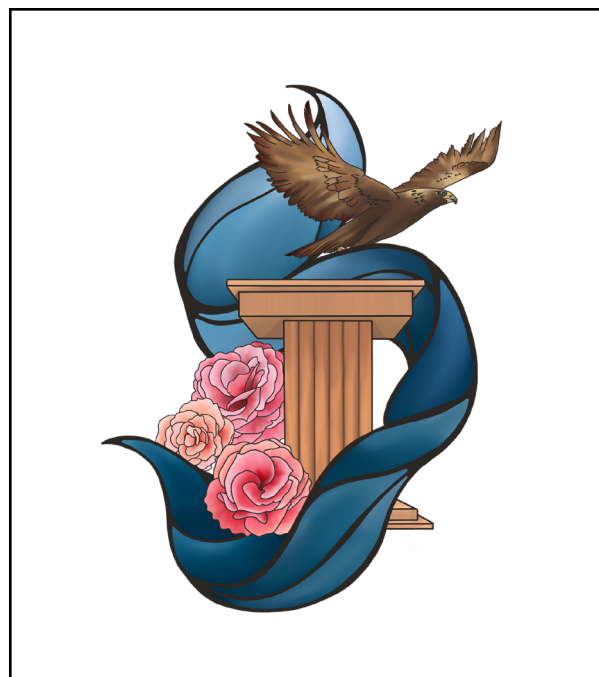


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Masuda, A. *Love and mastery*. (2022). [Illustration].

Artist Andrea Masuda can be contacted at artmasuda@gmail.com

Calendar of Events

April	May	June
April 9 — 2022 ESL Conference	May 17-20 — IATEFL 55th International Conference & Exhibition	June 4 — TOSCON22 Expanding Language Education
April 9 — TESL Dialogue: Oral Corrective Feedback: Pedagogical Implications	May 18 — Understanding Gender and Sexual Diversity	June 4 — ‘Teaching EAP in VR - what’s possible?’
April 20 — You Think It’s Ungrammatical, but It Just Ain’t So	May 25-27 — Adult Education: Celebrate Your Superpowers	June 10 — 8th International Hybrid Conference on Second Language Studies (ICSLS-2022)
April 22 — The 8th Annual Language, Linguistics, and Life Virtual Conference: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	May 29 — Assessment for Learning: the Road to Improvement	June 11-12 — The Seventh International Conference on Languages, Linguistics, Translation and Literature
April 23 — Differentiated Instruction: Myth and Reality		June 13-16 — TESOL 2022 Regional Conference
April 25-26 — International Conference on Forensic Linguistics		June 13-16 — JATCALL 2022
April 30-May 1 — 2022 Korea TESOL International Conference		



Editor's Note

Happy Spring, everyone! Welcome to the start of Volume 48 of *Contact* magazine. This issue has some exciting new additions and also includes some of the great presentations from the TESL Ontario 2021 Virtual Conference.

To start, the cover art of this issue was designed by Andrea Masuda. She is the Communications Coordinator of the Interational Programs at New College, University of Toronto. She has had an interest in art since high school and more recently has started exploring illustration and painting. She is inspired and learns from the works of Ten Hundred, Yuko Shimizu, and Camila Gondo. Andrea majored in communications and graphic design and loves the works of Pablo Picasso, Sandro Botticelli, and Edgar Degas. I am thankful for her creative and original design for our cover.

In this issue, you will also see a new section of the magazine: Spotlight. This section will shine light on industry professionals, their work, research projects, entrepreneurial ventures, and dedication to English language instruction. This month, Najwa Rahmani talks about her new business, [Educational Architect](#), and her commitment to education and learning. Please check out her interview. If you know someone who should be in the Spotlight, get in touch with me.

As for articles from the conference, Karam Noel, Rebecca Schmor, Andre Scholze, and Enrica Piccardo report on their research on language teachers in Lombardy, Italy and the need for adopting research-informed, online pedagogical resources in teaching contexts, like e-portfolios. Alanna Carter and Shereen Seoudi explain how the ESL Foundation Program at the Real Institute at Ryerson University adapted

their programming to online learning as a response to COVID-19. Nancy Van Dorp and Robert McBride discuss the need to better support the digital skills of newcomers and support for better program access, among others. Yusra Qadir provides information on the Early Language Learning (ELL) Curriculum from Mothers Matter Centre; the curriculum supports the delivery of real-world task-based English language instruction for adult newcomers with low levels of English. Finally, while they did not present at the TESL Ontario Conference, I am happy to include the work of Musa Nushi and Mohammad Hadi Fadaei as they explore word formation in specific relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. And to conclude, Samir Omara's work looks at teacher reflection.

Thank you for reading. Take care.



-Nicola Carozza
editor@teslontario.org



CONTACT

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Spotlight — Najwa Rahmani

Who is Najwa Rahmani?

My name is Najwa Rahmani (she/her), and I am a meticulous, systematic, and personable being. My greatest fulfilment comes from my commitment to lifelong learning and passion for education. My commitment and passion have incentivized me to pursue a career at the intersection of adult education, digital technology, and social justice. Currently, I am completing my Master of Education in Interdisciplinary Studies online and part-time at the University of Calgary. The topic for my first year is *Leading and Learning in a Digital Age*. Thus far, I have examined the implications for designing and leading interdisciplinary and technology-enhanced learning experiences in addition to strengthening competencies in technological and digital literacies. I have completed a diploma (Assaulted Women's/Children's Counsellor/Advocate), certificate (Instructing Adults), and four independent Continuing Education courses. As a result, I have been equipped with a robust playbook of techniques and best practices.

I wholeheartedly enjoy eating plant-based foods, travelling, and watching shows and movies. For fun, I manage my adorable cat's Instagram account!

How does Khaled Hosseini's quote, "a society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated..." resonate with you?

I am an Uzbek-speaking Turk who immigrated from northern Afghanistan at a young age. My family fled the violence in Afghanistan to pursue a safer and better life as settler immigrants. Education has been a privilege to access and receive that I otherwise could not have had if my family had stayed in Afghanistan.

There is a quote from Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* that resonates with the value of education that has been instilled in me: "A society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated..." Women and girls cannot wholly and meaningfully participate and contribute to Afghanistan's social, economic, and political spheres when they cannot access and obtain an education. Additionally, the consequences affect the quality of their lives. These questions reflect this matter:



(1) *How will women and girls access critical health information and services (e.g., reproductive and sexual health)?*

(2) *How will stricter and enforced gender roles and responsibilities harm self-autonomy, freedom of choice, etc.?*

(3) *How will this devaluing and eliminating a right to education further perpetuate patriarchal violence and oppression?*

(4) *Will there be an increase in child marriages because families are desperate to reduce the financial burden? Will there be an increase in spousal and family violence because women and girls are forced to live with abusers?*

These four questions do not capture the entirety of the dangers and harms; however, it begins to illustrate how society has no chance at success if its women are uneducated.

What is Educational Architect?

Educational Architect offers personalized services and ready-made educational materials that combine adult instruction sensibility and technical skill with an aesthetic sense. We work with consultants to leverage their expertise



to build effective and equitable educational materials (e.g., lessons, courses, webinars, workshops, etc.). Our ready-made educational materials concentrate on our knowledge-based expertise: adult education, social justice, and career development. The materials range from guides to curricula.

What inspired you to start a venture like Educational Architect?

My history inspired me to start a venture like Educational Architect. My complete recollection of who I am involves being meticulous and systematic. I adapted to the traditional knowledge-transfer approach in my academic realm by creating visual learning materials for myself. My materials included simplified text, helpful visuals (e.g., diagrams), and colour. It was not until I started my career that I began creating educational materials for others. As I began to advance my education and career, I learned to incorporate adult instruction sensibility into an activity I had been doing for years and years. I kept saying I will do it one day, and almost a year ago, I decided one day could be now.

The path I had identified in my adolescence included pursuing architecture. Life happened, which put me down a different path—pursuing social justice. I know that education will always be a core value, no matter what path I am on. To pay tribute to my adolescent self’s goal, I see myself as an Educational Architect, hence the business’ name.

How does Educational Architect demonstrate social transformation and innovation? The vision of Educational Architect is “to reform and transform society through education by leveraging consultants’ expertise to dismantle and eradicate violence and injustice to achieve liberation for all.” How do we see this in practice?

Education is often a site of harm and trauma for individuals (e.g., Residential Schools). Educational Architect is committed to transforming these sites of practice to become more sustainable by stimulating empowerment, well-being, and satisfaction in learners. We build educational materials and experiences that empower and engage learners by valuing their diverse perspectives, strengths, intersectional identities, and agency. Additionally, we build educational material and experiences that challenge traditional hierarchies and power imbalances by prioritizing the needs and well-being of learners.

Furthermore, we work with consultants to leverage their expertise to build effective and equitable educational materials (e.g., lessons, courses, webinars, workshops, etc.). These consultants are engaged in transforming workplaces to become more accessible, inclusive, equitable, and diverse. The support Educational Architect offers contributes to the consultants’ projects to transform workplaces.

Educational Architect offers many diverse services. How does this lend to English language teaching?

Educational Architect’s diverse services lend to English language teaching by supporting educators in multiple ways, including:

- *Creating multimedia (such as infographics, animations, etc.) to support learning*
- *Creating interactive activities to support active learning*
- *Creating assessments (note that this does not only mean tests)*
- *Creating content (such as manuals, resources, slides, etc.)*
- *Creating high-quality and effective courses and curricula to meet intended outcomes*
- *Creating high-quality and effective training and workshops*
- *Transforming from passive to active learning*
- *Transforming materials created for one format to another format (e.g., adapting materials from face-to-face to online learning)*
- *Offering training on how to use and integrate various technological tools (e.g., online collaborative platforms, task management systems, educational applications)*
- *Identifying the best technological tool to utilize for the learning environment*

Let’s frame it this way: You are an English language educator who will be facilitating a workshop, and you are overwhelmed with creating or updating your materials (e.g., slides). You can save your time and stress by choosing Educational Architect to design or re-design your materials.

You designed Trades and Career Planning (TCP). Can you talk more about this?

As the former Program Manager (and formerly, Program Assistant) for Women Transitioning to Trades and Employment (WTTE), I oversaw the program’s lifecycle, finances, students, and staff. WTTE is a successful and unique



training and employment preparation program for women and gender non-binary, trans, and 2-spirit peoples living on low incomes who face significant barriers to accessing training and employment, particularly in the construction trades. Trades and Career Planning (TCP) is the curriculum for WTTE. The topics and activities included in TCP will give students the exposure to make decisions about the trades (including trade-related positions in the Professional, Administrative, and Technical sectors) or careers they will prepare to enter. TCP includes:

- *Pathways to the Trades*
- *Pathways the Education*
- *Self-exploration (e.g., values, interests, passion, purpose, etc.)*
- *Self-assessments (e.g., SWOT Analysis, 16 Personalities, etc.)*
- *Career and Trades Exploration/Research (e.g., NOC Codes, Labour Market Research, work style, etc.)*
- *Impacts on Employment (e.g., automation, Artificial Intelligence, environment, etc.)*
- *Goal Setting and Action Planning (e.g., SMART and HEART goals)*
- *Job Searching and Networking (e.g., Information Interviews)*
- *Resume and Cover Letter Essentials*
- *Interview Preparation*
- *Personal Development (e.g., habits, decision making, thinking styles, etc.)*

What are your next steps?

My short-term goal is to continue building Educational Architect’s website and social media presence in addition to applying for grants to put towards start-up costs (e.g., software and app fees).

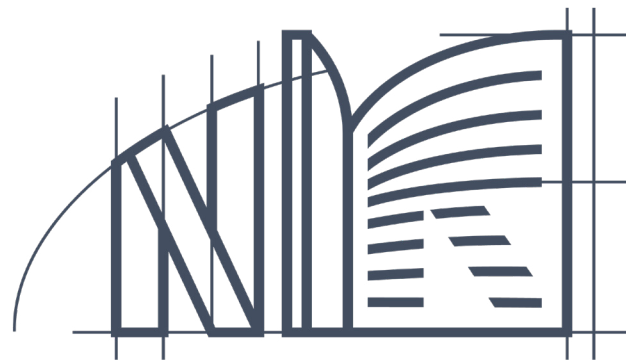
My medium-term goal is to create and add more educational materials. Our ready-made educational materials concentrate on our knowledge-based expertise: adult education, social justice, and career development. Additionally, I would like to build partnerships and collaborate with other educators and subject matter experts to co-create materials.

My long-term goal is for Education Architect to grow with more staff and become a hub for all educational materials related to adult education, instructional design, career development, social justice, and more!

What is one thing you want others to know about you and your company?

I approach my work with not only my mind but also with my heart. My heart contains my passion for and commitment to education. My heart also contains the dreams of all the Afghan women and girls who yearn for education. I know I would have been one of them if my family remained in Afghanistan, so I bring my heart to my business. I have promised myself that if and when Educational Architect becomes successful, and I have the financial means, that we will support education initiatives in Afghanistan to educate women and girls.

Moreover, through education, I am learning and unlearning to become more accountable, responsible, and aware. I weave this into Educational Architect.



If you would like to know more, please visit [Educational Architect](https://www.educationalarchitect.ca). To get in contact, Najwa can be reached at najwa@educationalarchitect.ca.

Thank you once again, Najwa—Congratulations on this exciting new venture!



Supporting online language education during the COVID-19 pandemic: Insights into language teachers' use of action-oriented, plurilingual scenarios in Northern Italy

By Karam Noel, Rebecca Schmor, Andre Scholze, & Enrica Piccardo, University of Toronto

Abstract

The shift to remote classes due to COVID-19 required teachers to reimagine their pedagogical practice and develop new strategies for providing quality language education in online environments. The sudden transition also meant teachers had to intentionally create affordances for online interaction or risk reverting to methods that ignore the interactive and socially-mediated aspects of language learning. Given this, and considering the especially devastating impact of the early pandemic across the Northern region of Italy, this article reports on an intervention that supported language teachers in Lombardy in selecting and adopting research-informed, online pedagogical resources in their teaching contexts. These included fully developed plurilingual and action-oriented scenarios, a social engagement platform, and an e-portfolio with reflective and interactive self-assessment tools. Survey data collected pre- (n=1218) and post-intervention (n=85) highlighted a drastic shift in teachers' perceived challenges and opportunities of distance language education along with a stark contrast in their use of the online environment. Namely, while collaborative activities and group work were initially reported as the least used and most challenging resources and modalities, after the intervention, they were reported as the most used and greatest opportunity in the online environment. Subsequent teacher interviews (n=25) illustrated how the use of plurilingual and action-oriented tools and resources supported authentic and inclusive collaboration between linguistically and culturally diverse learners. Study findings suggest the need for continued innovation in distance and blended language learning contexts, especially in ways that support teachers and learners to adapt to and mediate novelty and uncertainty. Practitioner takeaways, specifically for the ESOL context, are explored through the voices of the Lombardy teachers.



Keywords: *online language education; action-oriented approach; plurilingualism; pedagogical innovation; learner inclusion; learner collaboration; authentic resources; COVID-19*

A new global educational reality: The impact of COVID-19 on Lombardy, Italy

On February 20, 2020, the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported in the Lombardy Region of Northern Italy; a district with a population of roughly 10 million (Cereda et al., 2021). In the weeks that followed, Lombardy in particular but also neighbouring regions in Italy experienced a very rapid surge of positive cases, prompting public health officials to activate an emergency response and enforce a wide range of measures, including strict stay-at-home orders, social distancing, and regular testing. For educational institutions, this meant a sudden pivot from classroom-based instruction to online distance education, which required teachers to reimagine their teaching practice and implement pedagogically context-appropriate interventions with little to no time for preparation. For language teachers, the rapid transition to the online medium also meant difficulties with upholding the socially interactive dimension of language, along with the added pressures of navigating emergent technologies, adapting in-person activities and materials, and mediating learner progress in the new online environment. Language education was particularly affected by the COVID-19 emergency since it is not a content subject: It is a medium that requires action and collaboration together with meaningful opportunities for communication. Therefore, without the appropriate resources, tools, and modalities, education in the online medium risked reverting to traditional, teacher-centered approaches that ignore the socially mediated and interactive nature of language. Given this, and in light of the especially devastating impact of the early pandemic in Northern Italy, there was an urgent need to support Lombardy teachers in exploring innovative online pedagogies and developing best practices of online language education (LE).

In search of innovative pedagogies: A cross-Atlantic collaboration

In September 2020, in response to the immediate and future needs of online LE, Enrica Piccardo, a researcher at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, partnered on a



project to support language teacher's implementation of collaborative, action-oriented online pedagogies that recognize and encourage linguistic and cultural diversity. The partnership was developed with Lombardy's Ministry of Education in Italy, the Ufficio Scolastico Regionale per la Lombardia (USRLo), and was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada. The USRLo is the ministerial coordinating educational institution for all primary and secondary schools in the region of Lombardy and was the ideal partner for several reasons. The USRLo has had a long tradition of collaborative work in the field of LE through the creation of communities of practice by teachers of different languages across school levels. Schools in the region offer a broad range of languages in addition to Italian, including English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, and Mandarin. USRLo has also played a pivotal role in Italy in its commitment to implementing the [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages](#) (CEFR) (CoE, 2001; CoE, 2020), an international language policy document that is used worldwide and promotes an action-oriented, collaborative, and socially mediated approach to LE.

The action-oriented approach and plurilingualism

The action-oriented approach (AoA) gained momentum following the Council of Europe's publication of the CEFR in 2001 and its new extended and updated edition in 2020. The characteristics and forms of language use and language learning in this approach are more clearly defined than in previous communicative approaches, such as task-based learning, as they emphasize the individual learner and their language competences as well as the meaningful situations in which learners perform and accomplish tasks (Piccardo & North, 2019). In the AoA, the classroom is treated as a field of action in which learners perceive and act on affordances (Gallagher, 2015; Käufer & Chemero, 2015). Further, the AoA emphasizes the social and mediated nature of language, encouraging collaborative, reflective, and self-regulated learning during real-life tasks and project work. Learners, seen as individualized beings, or 'social agents' (CoE, 2001; CoE, 2020), work together to develop strategic perspective, autonomy, and agency as they produce a tangible artifact that they can use to showcase their learning (Piccardo & North, 2019). And, by working towards and achieving common goals, they experience a greater sense of self-efficacy and success (Bandura, 2001).

In this process of active and collaborative meaning-making, individual learners draw on their diverse plurilingual repertoires. Distinct from multilingualism—which describes the presence of multiple languages—plurilingualism highlights the interconnected nature of languages themselves and the holistic nature of individual linguistic repertoires (Piccardo, 2013; Piccardo et al., 2021). It also validates individuals' partial and dynamic language competences, while promoting the value of expanding all language knowledge (Berthoud et al., 2015; Coste et al., 2009; Furlong, 2009; Piccardo, 2018). In the classroom, plurilingual pedagogies have proven to result in critical and creative strategies for teaching linguistically and culturally diverse language learners (Galante, 2020; Lau & Van Viegen, 2020).



Approaches that encourage the active use of learners' plurilingual repertoires in the language classroom and that prepare learners to perform real-life, action-oriented tasks can improve the effectiveness of LE and simultaneously help preserve and enhance linguistic diversity (CoE, 2020; Piccardo & Galante, 2018; Piccardo et al., 2022). This further highlights the importance of implementing up-to-date methodologies that encourage learners, teachers, and stakeholders to view language use as flexible and dynamic, and to mediate learning through learners' existing linguistic and cultural resources, which was one of the intended outcomes of the research project.

The research project: Supporting online language education in times of crisis

The international research project sought to explore the benefits and drawbacks of teaching and learning languages online and support teachers in implementing collaborative action-oriented approaches in distance education. The partnering language teachers in Lombardy were provided with online resources reflecting action-oriented and plurilingual pedagogies, developed through a previous SSHRC-Funded research project, LINGuistic and Cultural DIversity REinvented (LINCIRE) (<https://www.lincireproject.org>), a partnership of North-American and European Institutions, including universities, schools, and educational institutions involved in the teaching of western and indigenous languages. Embodying the core concepts of plurilingualism, action-orientation, holistic reflection, and technology as its pillars, the LINCIRE resources promote a view of language learning that not only recognizes students' existing linguistic and cultural knowledge, but also encourages conscious and purposeful integration of this knowledge as a resource in learning a new language. LINCIRE's online resources include fully developed plurilingual and action-oriented scenarios, a social engagement platform, and an e-portfolio—Language Integration Through E-Portfolio (LITE)—with reflective and interactive self-assessment tools.

The project was carried out in five phases. In phase 1 (November 2020), language teachers across Lombardy (n=1218) responded to a pre-intervention survey investigating the tools, resources, and modalities used in distance education and the perceived challenges and opportunities associated with their use. During phase 2 (December 2020 – June 2021), a group of team leaders (n=12) recruited and supported participating teachers (n=90) to implement LITE's plurilingual, action-oriented scenarios in their classes. In phase 3 (June 2021), the participating teachers (n=85) responded to a post-intervention survey about the implementation of the LITE tool, resources, and modalities and the perceived successes and areas for improvement. In phase 4 (July 2021), select participating teachers (n=25) participated in semi-structured interviews on their use of LITE. And finally, in phase 5 (still ongoing), other participating teachers (n=24) were selected to contribute to a collection of case studies describing their use of the LITE platform and the action-oriented scenarios.



The intervention: Use of plurilingual, action-oriented scenarios

The intervention (i.e., phase 3 above) consisted of teachers selecting and adapting plurilingual, action-oriented scenarios on the online LITE portal. For instance, a German teacher with a class of low-intermediate learners might choose the B1-level scenario «Let's Go For Dinner.» Currently offered in English and Spanish, this teacher would need to translate the descriptions of the scenario steps (e.g., finding restaurants, comparing alternatives, discussing crosscultural restaurant etiquette, etc.) into German, possibly adapting some of the content according to the particular group of students. Adaptations in this scenario could include, for example, changing the currency or proposed dinner budget depending on location and socioeconomic factors. Before and after completing the scenario steps, this teacher would guide her German students through a series of *level checks*—a reflective exercise using can-do statements—which would produce visual radar charts showing the development of competences across different languages and cultures in the students' individual repertoires. Throughout the scenario, the class would also be engaged in a series of reflection posts which, inspired by the Ojibwe nation's medicine wheel for holistic and effective teaching, prompt learners to write about their development in an all-encompassing way, considering mind, body, emotions, and community. In addition to this self-assessment activity, the teacher would also have access to prepared assessment checklists for each scenario, which are aligned to the scenario outcomes, CEFR levels, and selected can-do statements. Finally, LITE users setting up their online profiles are asked to create a *plurilingual journey* detailing and showcasing their language learning and cultural experiences, in an environment that simulates social media environments by liking and commenting on posts, viewing each other's profiles, adding friends, and sending messages. Thus, students engaged in this scenario on LITE would also have the chance to interact with their classmates, teacher, and other LITE users. As these five main resources and functionalities—scenarios, level checks, reflections, social media, and my plurilingual journey—are designed to work together to promote reflection, engagement, and collaboration in language learning. Indeed, these results emerged in the data findings of the research project.

Survey findings: Increased learner engagement and collaboration

The survey data collected post-intervention suggests that the use of LITE had a positive impact on distance LE, making it more collaborative, reflective, and student-centered. When teachers were initially surveyed in November 2020, before their implementation of the LITE tool and LINCDIRE resources, they identified learner engagement as the main *challenge* of distance education and reported relying primarily on lectures and textbooks to conduct their online language classes. This is perhaps because teachers were struggling to find and create appropriate online materials while also learning how to effectively manage the virtual



classroom environment. As one teacher remarked, *“you don’t just become a Youtuber... you need time to create products that are interesting and visually appealing.”* Another teacher expressed that *“it’s not easy to organize group work at a distance because some students just don’t participate.”* Consistent with these quotes, at this stage of the project, the *least* used resources and modalities were found to be collaborative activities and group work.

In contrast, in the second survey completed after the implementation of the scenarios, the same teachers identified the main *opportunity* of the LITE tool as learner engagement and reported the *most* used resources and modalities as being collaborative activities and group work. One teacher shared that her students *“have a lot of conflict normally, but in this situation, they found a way to collaborate and also an interest in other languages and cultures.”* According to this teacher, *“it was a very good way to make them work together.”* The drastic shift in the perceived challenges and opportunities of distance language education from the first survey to the next along with the stark contrast in the use of online resources and modalities can be attributed to the plurilingual and action-oriented approach behind the LITE platform. The emphasis on using materials that value diversity and activities that prioritize real-world situations explains why teachers described their use of LITE as resulting in a more authentic, inclusive, and dynamic pedagogy. These findings support the case for the need for continued innovation in distance and blended language learning contexts, especially in ways that support learners to adapt to and mediate novelty and uncertainty.

Interview findings: More authentic and inclusive pedagogy

After conducting interviews with teachers who previously participated in the surveys, it was found that the use of LITE led to increased collaboration, authenticity, diversity, and inclusion. During the implementation of one scenario, «Creating a Community Cookbook,» the collaboration extended to the broader community as parents were involved in contributing family recipes in different languages for a French class. This teacher described her participation in the project as *“an experience that turned out to be useful not only for me and my class, but also for my colleagues.”* She went on to share how *“it involved the whole educational community—the school, the students, and the families.”* In a German classroom, another teacher decided to adapt the scenario «Lost in a New Town» to make the learning experience more authentic and motivating for her students. She explained: *“My school usually does an exchange year with a school in Leipzig, so I said, guys, let’s pretend you’re in Leipzig, like you will be next year, and you’ve gotten lost and your phone doesn’t work. What do you do?”* The teachers’ reported experiences again emphasize the value of adopting plurilingual, action-oriented pedagogies that place the learner in real-world situations, allowing them to strategically make use of their full linguistic and cultural resources as they collaborate with others and fulfill the task at hand.



Collaboration and authenticity were also paired with linguistic and cultural diversity in another school, where two Spanish teachers worked together to have their students complete the scenario «Language Learning Community Blog.» These students blogged about their previous language learning experiences and then joined classes on Zoom to present their final blog posts to each other. One of the teachers involved in this collaboration explained how *“preparing an interview to present to your own classmates is one thing, but it’s very different if you have to really present it to another class and ask real questions to learn something from the work of others.”* The other teacher commented on the cultural and linguistic diversity present in this authentic collaboration, expressing how *“when you have to present about the cultural history of Germany and then share it with Italians but through the use of Spanish, there is a very interesting union of different linguistic resources which is something that isn’t usually done.”* The latter teacher’s words capitalize on the importance of embracing an openness and appreciation towards various linguistic and cultural resources and recognizing that neither should be compartmentalized.

Finally, in completing the scenario «How Are You Feeling,» another teacher shared how *“the students with special needs really wanted to participate and make the video like all the others, and so they did everything, and they wanted to ask and be asked for help, and so it was really inclusive.”* She went on to express how *“the inclusive character of this methodology, this cooperative learning, helps students in difficulty to also produce something,”* creating increased access for diverse groups of students and enabling them to contribute to the group in meaningful and personal ways.

Practitioner takeaways: Implications for the ESOL context

For teachers wishing to implement action-oriented, plurilingual scenarios in their own contexts, teachers from Lombardy had the following advice: First, get to know the platform and what it offers. As one Spanish teacher expressed, *“it’s important to take the time for you and your students to familiarize yourselves with the platform.”* A German teacher noted that *“you have to be careful to choose a scenario that is right for the level of your class and not try to make it higher than their current level.”* Another shared that *“for the first time, it is best to use the scenario as is on the platform and then make changes later as necessary.”*

Teachers also encouraged planning ahead and allowing enough time to complete the different steps of the scenario. Two Spanish teachers advised *“taking it step by step”* and *“not rushing things.”* Other advice included keeping an open mind: One teacher recommended *“not being afraid and just going for it.”* Another advised to *“use all the opportunities”* and really *“try everything”* available on LITE. A last piece of advice was to be creative. As one English teacher shared, *“my advice would be to make the scenario personal, maybe also choosing together with the students the topic of the scenario.”* Another teacher suggested *“to get another class involved and work together on the final task”* of the scenario. Finally, a French teacher



said to “study the scenario well, but then leave it alone so you can be creative and adapt it to your reality; your context.”

Given the diverse contexts in which English language teaching takes place, the implementation of action-oriented and plurilingual scenarios in ESOL contexts would certainly provide meaningful opportunities to engage learners in authentic and inclusive collaborations.

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Inclusive online course design: Lessons from a pandemic

By Alanna Carter & Shereen Seoudi, Ryerson University

Abstract

Curriculum developers for the ESL Foundation Program at the Real Institute at Ryerson University adapted programming for in-person learning to virtual formats in response to COVID-19. An important consideration when developing the online program was the establishment of an inclusive online environment. Curriculum developers responded to challenges and fostered inclusivity through UDL, flexibility, digital tools, and demonstrating personal interest in students. Overall, a strong sense of community was achieved, and students responded positively.

Introduction

With the onset of COVID-19, language programs across the country had to shift their mode of delivery from the traditional face-to-face classroom setting to virtual learning environments. Designing a virtual learning experience in any subject area requires significant time, care, and planning; however, transitioning a language program to a virtual format poses unique challenges, particularly around establishing and fostering a safe and inclusive learning environment. The authors of this article were members of a curriculum development team at the Real Institute, Ryerson University's English language program, tasked with transforming programming designed for in-person language learning for the virtual context and will describe important learnings from their experiences in building inclusive online courses.



Context

The Real Institute houses Ryerson University's ESL Foundation Program and serves as a bridging program into the university. Depending on students' English proficiency, they are admitted into one, two, or three semesters of language study. Upon successful completion of the ESL Foundation Program, students transition into undergraduate programs at the university, including management, engineering, and new media design. Students are generally between the ages of 18–21 and come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, although the majority are Chinese. Students have a range of experiences living and studying in Canada; some have studied at Canadian high schools, while others enter the program after graduating from high school in their own countries.

Approaches to teaching and learning language

The curriculum in the ESL Foundation Program was initially designed for in-person learning and to be interactive with an emphasis on communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1985). Due to the relatively small class sizes pre-COVID (approximately 16 students), in-person classes were lively, and students and instructors were highly engaged in the teaching and learning experience. The curriculum included many opportunities for group learning, and students enjoyed and appreciated these intentionally designed lessons to use English with their peers. Instructors at the Real Institute cared deeply about the success of their students. This nurturing environment encouraged students to take risks, which is important in all learning environments, but particularly in language learning contexts where students may feel shy or nervous to participate due to lack of knowledge around linguistic and cultural norms. A strong sense of community existed in classes, and students and instructors were happy to be participants in these communities.

The importance of community and inclusivity

The curriculum in the ESL Foundation Program was designed to be inclusive, relevant, and engaging for all students. Given that many students at the Real Institute are new to Canada, Toronto, and the university community more generally, it is important that learning spaces are welcoming so that students can make connections with their peers and instructors. Community and inclusivity are essential in language learning classrooms because students need to feel comfortable to engage with lessons and improve their language skills. Ultimately, safe and respectful environments result in better outcomes. Further, given the ESL Foundation Program's position as a bridging program into undergraduate studies, it is important to teach students about the university community so that they smoothly transition into undergraduate programs and courses with a diverse range of peers and instructors.



Pre-COVID, classrooms at the Real Institute were safe, happy, and productive spaces where students and instructors worked towards common goals. Classrooms and furniture were arranged in such a way that students connected with each other regularly and authentically. Desks and chairs were set up in configurations to encourage interaction and conversation, and instructors intentionally designed activities that required collaborative learning to solve problems and create new learning (Laal & Laal, 2021). Efforts were made to create an environment that was conducive to language learning as well as relationship building.

Challenges in the online environment

When the ESL Foundation Program shifted to a virtual format, the decision was taken to balance synchronous lessons on Zoom with asynchronous learning activities on the learning management system (LMS) and third-party tools. In response to these changes, a number of challenges that threatened the safe, welcoming, and transparent environment that instructors had worked to establish in in-person classrooms immediately became apparent.

1. Geography — As classes shifted to online and virtual formats, many students returned to their home countries, meaning that students and instructors in virtual classes were physically located in countries around the globe.
2. Time zones — As a result of students returning to their home countries, time differences became a major challenge with respect to scheduling. Instructors were situated in Toronto on Eastern time, while many students in Asia were in time zones 12 or 13 hours ahead of instructors. This meant that students were attending classes very late at night.
3. Access issues — When programming first transitioned online, some students, particularly those located abroad, struggled with access issues. Some had difficulty connecting to Zoom calls, accessing the LMS, and logging in to third-party platforms to complete tasks and assignments.
4. Tech glitches — Glitches are inevitable, and, while everyone experiences them, they were initially difficult for instructors and students to navigate due to unfamiliarity with tools and technologies. Tech glitches have the potential to disrupt lessons and negatively impact attitudes towards teaching and learning.
5. Digital literacy — While the vast majority of students in the ESL Foundation Program are digital natives, this does not necessarily mean that they were familiar with or comfortable using the range of digital tools they were suddenly required to. Lack of familiarity with tools was compounded by the fact that, in some cases, students were not sufficiently proficient in English to be able to use the tools easily and correctly.



6. Decreased engagement, motivation, and interaction — As classes shifted to Zoom, students were, unfortunately, initially less motivated to engage and participate in lessons. This was due, in part, to the fact that students were located in countries around the world; felt disconnected from their instructors and classmates; and were unskilled at communicating with others in online, synchronous spaces. Students' mental health suffered as a result of changes to their learning contexts as well as local lockdowns and restrictions used as measures to control the spread of COVID-19.

Given these challenges, careful consideration to the design of the online environment was needed and a focus on creating a sense of community and inclusivity was essential. Below is a discussion of the strategies and pedagogies that curriculum developers at the Real Institute drew upon to create inclusive learning environments.

Creating communities online

In designing online classes for the ESL Foundation Program, the purpose was not to simply mimic or recreate face-to-face lessons, but rather to create online learning environments that are equally effective and inclusive. Accordingly, there were four guiding principles that governed the design process:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Flexibility
- Digital tools to enhance community
- Demonstrating personal interest in students

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

The Universal Design for Learning framework is composed of three elements: multiple means of representation, multiple means of engagement, and multiple means of expression (CAST, 2018; Dickinson & Gronseth, 2020). To ensure that classes offered multiple means of representation, they were scheduled to include both synchronous and asynchronous sessions. In the synchronous sessions, students joined classes on Zoom, and instructors explained content synchronously using a wide variety of multimedia and digital tools. In the asynchronous portion of the class, students worked independently on class materials, which were presented in different ways including text, video, and graphics.

This design ensured that students were offered multiple means of engagement. This was accomplished through different assignments and activities. Students worked individually and in groups in order to cater to all preferences and needs. On many assignments, students were given options and were allowed to choose their preference to increase engagement; these options were related to the assignment topic as well as the technology and tools used. Students were also given many opportunities for self-reflection.



Finally, students were offered multiple means of expressing their ideas, thoughts, and the learning they gained. This was done through differentiated assessments which included video and audio recordings, written assignments, discussion boards, presentations, and debates.

Flexibility

Flexibility was very important in ensuring the success of this inclusive design for the online learning environment. The program administration was understanding of the importance of flexibility, and this was reflected in class scheduling. Classes ran at two different times to accommodate students in different time zones. Early morning classes, which started at 6:00AM EST, catered to students in the Asia Pacific region, and regular morning classes, which started at 9:00AM EST, catered to local students. These schedules were appreciated by both students and instructors. Another aspect of scheduling that reflected flexibility was the division of class time into synchronous and asynchronous sessions, which helped prevent Zoom fatigue and offered multiple means of engaging with content.

Office hours were also set to be flexible. Pre-COVID, instructors had office hours at fixed times for student appointments or drop-ins; however, in the online environment, instructors were allowed to use their office hours more flexibly. Some split them over the days of the week, others scheduled them at different times to allow students more options, and some called students in groups and conducted mini-lessons to supplement classroom instruction.

Instructors were also flexible with students regarding different aspects of assignments. This is not to mean that expectations were not clearly set or due dates were not enforced. It is more about having reasonable expectations of students, given the novelty and challenges of the learning environment; for example, instructors were flexible in allowing students to choose the tools they wished to use for their assignment.

Digital tools to enhance community

Digital tools play a pivotal role in building online communities and inclusive learning environments. A wide range of digital tools were used in the program to accomplish different goals.

1. Zoom — Zoom was an excellent choice for synchronous sessions as it allowed instructors and students to interact. The breakout room functionality allowed students to work in groups, similar to what they did in in-person classrooms, which was essential to building relationships.
2. Flipgrid — Flipgrid allowed asynchronous discussions to be more personal and engaging through the use of video recordings and the ability to comment on others' recordings in video or text.
3. Nearpod — Nearpod allowed instructors to create interactive slides to engage students with content



and with each other. The interactive slides included a collaborate board, a drawing board, a quiz tool, and a poll. Nearpod also allowed for elements of gamification to be incorporated in lessons, which offered students more opportunities for community building as they chose their avatars and competed against each other.

4. Padlet and Google Suite — These tools allowed students to work together and collaborate in different ways and on different types of assignments, which was essential for strengthening relationships and enhancing the learning experience.
5. D2L Brightspace — As the university's LMS, D2L greatly helped instructors in staying connected to their students through a wide range of functionalities including announcements, video and audio notes, and discussion boards.

Demonstrating interest in students

The final guiding principle in building these online inclusive classrooms was making sure to show interest in students' lives. With the stresses that came with the pandemic and the lack of in-person interaction, it was easy for instructors to slip into dealing with students as just names on a list or numbers in a register. However, instructors made sure to intentionally show interest in their students by choosing assignment topics and themes that were important to them and relevant to their lives. Instructors also ensured they interacted with students as individuals who have different needs, preferences, and styles. Showing genuine interest in events happening in students' lives was one way of accomplishing this. An example of this was asking students to post photos or videos of their Lunar New Year celebration highlights on a Padlet to share with their classmates. The responses to this small assignment were overwhelming with students posting multiple photos and videos of snacks, decorations, lights, and family gatherings.

Positive Effects

The effects that were seen as a result of this inclusive design were positive and rewarding. Students felt very connected to their instructors and to each other. The different channels of communication allowed them to stay in touch with their classmates and instructors, ask for help, and receive timely answers and feedback. This made students feel supported despite being miles apart.

Through the different interactive activities and breakout rooms, students felt they belonged to a group. Also, they, surprisingly, formed many friendships and built strong relationships with their peers. In one class, students travelled to different cities in China to meet up with their classmates during Reading Week.

Besides connection and the sense of belonging, this design allowed students to make better use of their time. Some students in the Asia Pacific region, whose classes ran in the evenings, took on daytime jobs



to support their personal growth and finances. Finally, instructors witnessed an increased use of English through the different communication channels that were used.

These positive effects were not only noticed by the instructors, but students were also appreciative of all the efforts put into creating this online learning environment. Below is some of the student feedback received at the end of the term through their course and program evaluations:

“I liked all of things that she did to teach us.”

“I like the [listening and speaking] course and [my teacher]! She is really caring and supportive. The course materials are really engaging.”

“I like that the teacher makes many activities to make us speak to each other.”

“I like the way [my teacher] teach because it push me to study and increase motivation.”

“I like Kahoot and Nearpod because they make class more enjoyable.”

It is clear from these comments that students valued their opportunity to learn language in the online environment and connect with peers and instructors virtually. Certainly, then, with care and consideration, language learning can happen successfully and meaningfully in online spaces.

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Learning technology in LINC – Beyond the pandemic

By Nancy Van Dorp & Robert McBride, Canada

Abstract

This article is based on observations from a workshop conducted at the 2021 annual TESL Ontario conference presented by language training professionals and experts in learning technology solutions from the Avenue–LearnIT2teach Project. The onset of COVID-19 in March 2020 was a crisis in immigrant settlement language training. Many teachers and learners were forced to rapidly pivot from conventional face-to-face learning to remote learning. Teachers and learners who had previously practiced blended (or hybrid) learning were well positioned with technology and skills. Teachers and learners who had not were forced to rapidly respond with Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). Observations from the workshop panel and the participants uphold the need for continued sector engagement with learning technology to support the development of digital skills among newcomers, enable better practices in teaching and learning, and support better program access for client learners.

Keywords: *LINC, technology, teaching, learning, pandemic, Avenue*

In March 2020, the EduLINC–LearnIT2teach Project had to pivot to help address COVID-19 and the suspension of face-to-face instruction. Teachers were desperate for online tools to keep teaching and learning going. Teacher and learner accounts, and teacher training were in demand. Our former learning portal EduLINC (now [Avenue.ca](https://www.avenue.ca)) was a scalable practical response, but teachers needed training and support. We saw that we could divide teachers into two groups:



1. Teachers who already employed a LINC blended learning strategy in their face-to-face instruction and whose learners had been oriented to using Moodle or a local LMS solution and information technology in their learning;
2. Teachers who had previously made minimal use of information technology. A sub-set of the second group was teachers who personally had limited skills with information technology.

The first group was well prepared, as were their learners, to engage with online remote learning. The second group needed tools and support urgently.

Two years later LINC professionals find themselves in a transformed learning technology landscape. Many teachers now have digital teaching skills, courseware, and resources. Managers had to implement new and more flexible modes of learning. Learners are now engaged with information technology and blended or online learning and have experienced flexible delivery models.

How can LINC professionals leverage these changes to improve access, equity, language gains, and settlement outcomes? The 2021 TESL Ontario workshop examined and discussed the implications for LINC professionals and clients.

Several key takeaways arose when a New Language Solutions (NLS) panel of experts explored the LINC teaching world in a virtual workshop titled *Learning Technology in LINC—Beyond the Pandemic* (2021, November 3):

- 1) the importance of a mentor/mentee relationship during COVID-19;
- 2) the difference between ERT and online teaching;
- 3) blended learning as an ideal delivery mode of ESL learning post-COVID-19; and
- 4) digital learning is not enough; digital fluency should be the new benchmark.

Importance of the mentor/mentee relationship

NLS uses a mentor/mentee relationship on the Avenue platform for LINC teachers. This relationship has proven to be highly effective over the past 12 years, with the legacy Learning Management System (LMS; in this article, Moodle, with this specific system named EduLINC or Avenue). Under this model, more experienced teachers and advisers help direct teachers who are novice to the system to find solutions to questions and problems.

The closing and/or reduction of face-to-face classes, and the resulting rush to online solutions for classes due to the pandemic had enormous impact on adult settlement language training programs like LINC. In



February 2020, there were 1086 new *user enrolments* on EduLINC, a number consistent with the previous 12 months (McBride & Edgar, 2020). In March there were 5,521, a 500% increase, and a foreshadow of the growth in demand for project services in the months to come. These numbers represented a huge increase in demand for the LMS platform, and mirrored a parallel increase in the demand for a mentor's availability to assist and train teachers.

In March 2020, emergency needs prevailed and 17 project teacher mentors across Canada rose to the challenge of a surge in demand for help. Most NLS mentors are also active teachers, so the mentors needed to make an incredible effort to satisfy the onboarding needs of mentees. Mentors during the initial surge and throughout the months (and year) that followed dealt with not only factual and technical questions, but also provided guidance on some online learning principles. Learning technology can be challenging in the best of times, but during the pandemic everyone was also concerned for the health and safety of themselves, family, and friends. Mentors helped mentees by listening, understanding and empathizing, all the while gently helping novice teachers navigate new territory rapidly and under stress.

Emergency remote teaching versus online teaching

The shift in teaching from face-to-face to virtual spaces is often, inadvertently, called online teaching and, from the students' perspective, online learning. What has happened during COVID-19, though, cannot be 100% described as online teaching. Indeed, teaching and learning was being conducted *online*, but the essential pedagogy from online teaching was not always possible in practice.

For many teachers and learners what happened during the initial weeks and months of COVID-19 was instead a form of ERT. This happens when teachers quickly add activities and documents to an online space or platform. There is no blame or shame for wanting to do this, as the reaction is completely understandable during the first stage of the pandemic. What is unfortunate, though, is that many teachers were totally frustrated by the events because:

- a) It happened extremely quickly;
- b) Many did not have an existing online platform to use;
- c) The learning curve to feel confident on an LMS can be steep and is best achieved in a reduced-stress environment;
- d) Their students were not prepared for online learning, making the teachers' orientation to an LMS urgent;
- e) Teachers often felt panicked and *unmoored*;
- f) Teachers were anywhere from zero to ten on a comfort-with-technology scale;
- g) Some students had more technology proficiency and made teachers feel like imposters;



- h) Service Providing Organizations (SPOs) added training and new procedures that all had to be learned as well;
- i) There was no end in sight to the situation.

The early pandemic environment was not ideal for teacher innovation.

Online teaching, in and of itself, has design and layout at its base, and should incorporate the best available online technologies to maximize learning outcomes. In LINC language learning, that requires communication with learners and colleagues and putting better practices in teaching and learning to work online.

One of the fundamental strengths of online teaching is that it goes far beyond a platform where documents or files are simply uploaded and downloaded. A good LMS supports social engagement between and among teachers and learners and encourages the implementation of social constructivism principles (Walker & White, 2013, p. 25). It is, in essence, a holistic approach to teaching and learning where parties can achieve the same outcomes when they are all at a distance from each other. Teacher presence is vitally important, whether communication with learners is synchronous or asynchronous.

The Emergency Remote Teaching method employed due to COVID-19 could never qualify as online teaching and should not be judged by the same criteria (Hodges et al., 2020).

The circumstances were less than ideal for better practices in the early days of the pandemic, and indeed, many LINC professionals are still trying to *catch up* with innovation.

Blended learning as a delivery model

As a sector, the ESL world has revolved around face-to-face teaching and learning. There are numerous benefits to learning in this setting, not the least of which are the body language gestures that can be used to help communicate when words fail us. But a shift in methods of learning started taking place over a decade ago, as learning technology innovations from the broader post-secondary sector began to spread in the settlement language training (SLT) sector. Many questions arose, and common themes surfaced: Can and should technology be used in SLT? If yes, then why, where, when, and how?

So, where does blended learning come in? Blended (or hybrid) learning is a mix of teaching/learning modes, and usually means a blend of face-to-face and online teaching (using technology to learn when teacher and students are distanced from one another). The *perfect blend* is neither identified nor recommended, because blended learning considers a vast variety of factors that are unique to each teaching/learning context. Thoughtful reflection on the mix of technical abilities, subject matter, available internet, hardware and software availability, outcomes expected of learning, and so on must be considered (Hodges et al.,



2020). In any context, an effective blend would be based on optimal use of what face-to-face does best and what online learning can do.

Consider some affordances of blended learning: Modalities can change from term to term, wait lists can be addressed, learners can be placed in learning environments where they can be most successful based on not only their English needs, but also on their technology circumstances, as well as their working, home and childcare obligations. This, we believe, is the approach that will produce a positive settlement experience for Canada's immigrant and refugee populations, and help address concerns of program access and learner equity.

Current times: From digital literacy to digital fluency

Two years later and with the pandemic still a disruption that prevents any return to *normalcy*, where is the settlement language training sector? What have we learned as SLT professionals, and what is the future of online learning technology? During the workshop, one panel expert observed that ESL teachers do a disservice to their students if they revert to previous practice and abandon technology in education. Learners need digital opportunities for learning. The term technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) represents the idea that information technology (IT) should be embedded in language training to reflect how IT is used in daily life and communications (Walker & White, 2013, p. 33).

During the COVID-19 pandemic and rush to ERT, poor digital literacy skills were an obstacle for many teachers and learners. Basic digital literacy skills are needed not only to learn, but also to be successful in today's workplaces, schools, or as parents, consumers, or citizens. After two years and many personal gains in competence with online teaching, now is the time to leverage these IT skills gains. Even entry-level and lower-paying jobs usually require digital know-how. Students, especially newcomers, need to learn, maintain, and grow their digital skills in Canada.

Panel experts felt that basic literacy skills in the digital world are not enough; becoming fluent in digital skills is where we should be setting the bar. Yes, many people have learned enough to get by, to survive. But where improvement in lives and careers will be seen is when individuals are competent and comfortable in their IT knowledge and practices.

The everyday-living landscape has changed during COVID-19, with more connections, services, learning and even jobs being conducted solely online. We must not let ourselves and our students backslide into complacency or regression. We have started on this journey, so let us continue to develop equity in the economy and in life skills for our newcomer Canadians.



Conclusion

By examining the importance of the mentor/mentee relationship during COVID-19, we have identified the compassion and human contact necessary to keep teaching, learning, and innovating.

By reflecting on the differences between ERT and online teaching, we can see that under the circumstances, our settlement language training sector did the best it could. But as educators to Canada's newcomers, we know we can do better if we have the opportunity and the skills to apply online teaching pedagogy to our course design.

Having now experienced both face-to-face and online teaching and learning, we can see the affordances of both modalities and can carve programs and courses to truly meet the needs of our students.

And finally, by seeing the demand and uptake for digital literacy skills and visualizing a future that requires better competencies, we promote continued digital skill use and better digital citizenship.

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Rob McBride has been the Executive Director of New Language Solutions since its inception in 1983 as TVLT. Rob has worked as a teacher, researcher, writer and producer, principally in the settlement language training and adult literacy basic skills sectors. Rob works on projects where building basic knowledge and skills has the maximum positive impact on the work and personal lives of learners.



The Early Language Learning (ELL) curriculum supports newcomers with low levels of English

By Yusra Qadir, Canada

Abstract

The article provides information on the Early Language Learning Curriculum (ELL) curriculum, which is a set of documents to guide and support the delivery of real-world task-based English language instruction for adult newcomers with low levels of English (literacy to CLB 3) from Mothers Matter Centre. Designed as a service enhancement to the long-running Multicultural HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) Program for immigrant and refugee mothers of young children, ELL can also be used on its own to provide structured, informal English training in a classroom and/or with one-on-one English practice tutorials. Materials designed for the tutorials can also be used to support conversation circles. The curriculum was designed through the support of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and is free for organizations to use.

The ELL project was an innovative project funded by IRCC between 2018-2020. The project was a pilot and was implemented at two sites: in Toronto by Working Women's Community Centre and in Vancouver by Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISSofBC). Mothers Matter Centre (MMC) supported coordination, quality control, capacity building, and documentation for the pilot. ELL added on English language learning support atop our core [HIPPY model](#). Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters is an evidence-based program that works in the home to support vulnerable and isolated mothers in their critical role as their child's first and most important teacher. When ELL is paired with a HIPPY program, newcomer moms still learn and deliver the HIPPY core curriculum as a priority, but also attend English



language class once or twice per week to work on their English while their preschool age children are looked after by qualified childminders. The HIPPY Home Visitors also participate in the language classes as teacher assistants, helping the teacher deliver activities and occasionally using interpretation to help the newcomer moms with understanding complex concepts. The language classes are followed up by 30 minutes of home tutoring support based on the tasks the teacher is working toward in class, delivered by the Home Visitor after the HIPPY curriculum portion of their home visit.

The ELL curriculum was originally designed for use with a HIPPY program for newcomer mothers but can stand alone as a language class or be used to support conversation circles or tutoring. ELL covers 12 key settlement topics such as Knowing Your Community, Settlement and Community Services, Physical and Mental Health, Financial Literacy, and Canadian Parenting norms. Newcomers work toward informal skill-using tasks, build confidence, learn about key resources in the community, and break the cycle of isolation surrounding immigrants and refugees with low levels of English so they are more ready for structured LINC learning when their personal circumstances allow. The curriculum supports the delivery of real-world task-based English language instruction for adult newcomers with low levels of English (literacy to CLB 3). ELL can be used on its own to provide structured, informal English training in a classroom and/or with one-on-one English practice tutorials. Materials designed for the tutorials can also be used to support conversation circles.

The target clients of ELL are adult newcomers with low levels of English (as measured by the Canadian Language Benchmarks, literacy to CLB 3). Certain units or parts of units are particularly beneficial to newcomer parents, but learners do not need to be parents to participate. Units targeting parenting can be skipped if not applicable to the particular participant group.

ELL helps newcomers by increasing their language knowledge and improving their ability and confidence to communicate in social and community situations. Knowing the language they need to ask for support, helps them access existing community resources, and helps them become less isolated.

ELL is similar to LINC in several respects:

- Real-world task-based learning
- Settlement language focused for community interaction
- Alignment with Canadian language benchmarks
- Communicative and interactive classroom approach
- Client input to learning through intake and monthly needs assessments
- Builds client autonomy for learning through reflections and action-oriented feedback



ELL is different from LINC in that it is structured as informal learning as opposed to formal language training using Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) to evaluate and assign new benchmarks. Rather than doing assessment tasks, newcomers only work toward skill-using tasks and receive comments-only feedback to help them improve. Participants therefore do not receive LINC certificates from ELL to be used toward citizenship.

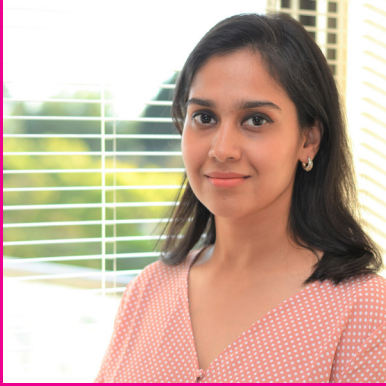
Every curriculum needs to measure language gains. Unlike LINC, PBLA is not used in ELL. Instead, the ELL curriculum emphasizes improvement over achievement. Learners work toward language tasks in class to complete skill-using tasks to show themselves and their teacher what they can do. Instead of marks, the teacher provides oral and written feedback to help guide the learners in how they can complete the task more successfully. The focus is on building on whatever language the newcomers already have, so they feel successful.

The language knowledge and skills learned with ELL, as well as understanding of the task-based approach and responsibility for learning, are transferable to LINC. The skill-using tasks completed in ELL have potential to be accepted as evidence of learning and ability in LINC though they are not formally transferable at this time.

ELL language learning materials are divided into 3 documents for each unit: Instructor Guidelines, Home Visitor Scripts, and Learner Handouts for use with the scripts. This division makes it easy for a program to use ELL to deliver classroom-only learning or tutoring-only learning if desired, instead of the classroom and follow-up tutoring model of the original design. The ELL curriculum contains enough material to support a minimum of 60 weeks of delivery over 2 years. An ELL language class requires a qualified EAL instructor to use the Instructor Guidelines and deliver ELL as intended. Volunteer language facilitators can use the ELL scripts as the basis of a conversation circle or for small-group or one-on-one tutoring.

Organizations or programs that wish to use the ELL curriculum free of charge to support newcomers learning beginner levels of English should contact Mothers Matter Centre for access.



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COVID-19 infecting global vocabulary: Implications for EFL/ESL teaching and learning

By Musa Nushi & Mohammad Hadi Fadaei, Shahid Beheshti University

Abstract

Language is dynamic and keeps changing due to the influence of a number of factors, including global pandemics. COVID-19, commonly known as Coronavirus, has affected not only people's health around the world but also their vocabulary. Focusing on the English language, one can see that many Corona-related medical words have entered the daily vocabulary of its speakers, and interestingly, many languages have been using those words to broadcast the news about the disease. The outbreak has also spawned new words, corona coinages, and new uses of old words in the language. This article intends to raise EFL/ESL teachers' awareness of the word-formation processes evident in the new COVID-19 vocabulary and to teach learners how words are created. It also argues that making learners conscious of these combinatorial processes can be a way to increase their lexical resources and serve as a strategy to promote their autonomous learning. The authors demonstrate how these objectives can be achieved via two example activities. The article concludes by enumerating several issues that need to be taken into account when teaching such vocabulary.

Keywords: *COVID-19, vocabulary, word formations, EFL/ESL, second language*



Introduction

Language is a dynamic system (Cameron & Larsen-Freeman, 2007; Chun & Lo, 2016; Fromkin et al., 2018); it serves the needs of its speakers with amazing efficiency, meaning they can appropriate this system in different ways to understand and express their, sometimes new, experiences. Languages are also affected by the changes happening in the world, changes such as advances in technology, socio-political upheavals (e.g., racism, immigration, conflicts), globalization, and pandemics. COVID-19, an infectious virus which started in the Chinese city of Wuhan toward the end of 2019, soon turned into a global pandemic and afflicted most countries ever since. With the spread of this deadly disease, *social distancing*, which was later changed to *physical distancing*, has been the primary solution, until an effective vaccine is widely available.

It is no secret that the outbreak has directly affected every segment of our society, including education (Gao & Zhang, 2020). In the initial stages of the Coronavirus pandemic, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) suggested that educational institutes take an alternate approach, which had to be Virtual Teaching (VT). Being forced to adapt to the new situations, English language teachers have endeavored to utilize social media as educational tools to instruct students and keep them motivated. The authors of the present article propose that the new situation can offer English as a foreign/second language (EFL/ESL) teachers (and learners for that matter) opportunities to harness the many words and expressions that have been introduced into the daily lingo of the English language speakers via COVID-19 and are widely used on social media networks. Taking a glimpse at social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, one may come across words such as *coronnil*, *coronapocalypse*, *covidivorce*, *covidiot*, *moronavirus*, *social distancing*, and *zumped*. Like social distancing, some of them existed before the Corona outbreak, but now almost everyone knows the concepts by heart. Other words like *Coronageddon* (Corona + Armageddon) or *Coronapocalypse* (Corona + Apocalypse), however, have been created by the pandemic and did not exist before. This article argues that such neologisms can prove beneficial to EFL/ESL teachers because they demonstrate word-formation processes which can be employed not only to teach the systemic processes through which words are created in the English language but also to encourage learner autonomy and produce more lexically competent language users. Prior to going through the implications these new COVID-19 words have for vocabulary learning and teaching in EFL/ESL contexts, we need to discuss the word-formation processes that created them. We draw on the processes introduced in Yule (2020) to demonstrate these processes. Moreover, we present the COVID-19 lingo to exemplify each process.



Word formation processes

Blending

It is the process of joining the beginning of one word with the ending of another to form a new word (e.g., *brunch*, which is the combination of *breakfast* and *lunch*). Examples from the Coronavirus include *covidiot* (a person behaving irresponsibly in conditions of containment), *zumped* (breaking up with someone over video chat), *locktail* (lockdown cocktail), *coronacation* (cessation of study or work due to the pandemic, viewed as a holiday), *quarantini* (a blend of quarantine and martini), *coronalusional* (suffering from disordered thinking as a result of the COVID-19 crisis), *drivecation* (time spent in your caravan or camper van parked at home during lockdown), *isobar* (an at-home isolation bar), *morona* (a person who is behaving moronically during the pandemic).

Borrowing

Borrowing is the process of taking words from other languages like *piano* (Italian), *sofa* (Arabic), *yogurt* (Turkish). Examples from COVID-19 include *coronaspeck* (kummerspeck, from German), *hamsterkaufing* (stockpiling and/or hoarding, from German), *pestilence* (a fatal epidemic or disease, from French).

Compounding

It is the process of combining two (or more) words to form a new word like *bookcase*, *doorknob*, *fingerprint*, *sunburn*, *textbook*, etc. Examples of words created through this process include *coronadodge* (physically avoiding others out in public so as not to contract the virus), *corona-waltz* (maneuvering around other people in public, like a dance, to avoid being close to them), *corona-cuts* (a hairstyle during the pandemic), *zoom-room* (the one corner of the home that is kept clean for video conferences), *entry screening* (measures taken by a government to monitor people coming into its jurisdiction, whether by foot, boat, motor vehicle, or plane), *superspreader* (a person infected with a pathogen who transmits the infection to an unusually large number of people), and *armchair virologist* (someone who does not know anything but is posing as an expert).

Neologism

Neologism is the process of making a new word in a language like *spangler* (an electric suction sweeper invented by J. Murray Spangler; this device eventually became very popular and could have become known as a spangler). Examples from coronavirus time include *coronacoma* (the period of shutdown due to the spread of the virus, or that deliciously long quarantine sleep), *self-monitoring* (checking oneself for COVID-19 symptoms, including fever, cough, or difficulty breathing), *upperware* (words people have



made up to describe the clothes visible during video calls), *moronavirus* (another term for a *covidiot*), *doomsurfing* (the tendency to continue to surf or scroll through bad news, even though that news is saddening or depressing), *coronials* (the term used for the babies who will be born after Corona-induced lockdown), *zoom-bombing* (the action of people hijacking or interrupting a video conference), *locktail hour* (a cocktail hour in lockdown), *smize* (smile with your eyes).

Collocations

A collocation refers to two or more words that frequently occur together, like *salt and pepper*. Examples of collocations made during coronavirus time include *the COVID 19* or *COVID 15* (extra body weight accrued during quarantine), *shelter-in-place* (a protocol instructing people to find a place of safety in the location they are occupying until the all-clear is sounded), *covidian worry* (the type of worry and depression that rapidly and virally spreads during times of uncertainty, such as during a pandemic), *panic buying* (an act of buying large quantities of food or supplies due to a fear of forthcoming shortage or price increasing), *drive-thru testing* (medical staff will take a swab test usually done through the nose to collect cells to test for COVID-19).

Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech that describes an object or action in a way that is not literally true but helps explain an idea or make a comparison like *Love is a battlefield*. Metaphor examples in the time of Coronavirus are *flattening the curve*, *new corona wave*, *the unwelcome visitor*, *corona as an enemy*, *battle against corona*, and *frontline corona warriors*.

Implications for EFL/ESL vocabulary teaching and learning: Two practical examples

There are a number of ways through which we can make best of this pandemic situation; we offer some practical steps in the following paragraphs.

First, teachers can use the Corona-related words as an activity at the beginning of the class. For instance, teachers can display photos of some people on the street who are not wearing masks and gloves to teach words like *covidiot* and *morona*, referring to those people who are ignoring safety guidelines (depending on location) by not wearing mask and gloves. This is a contextualized and entirely real-life activity that both teachers and learners might find appropriate, be it in virtual or real classes. Different scenarios can be applied for other words and expressions like *covidivorce*, *drivecation*, *dracula cough* and *sneeze*, *social distancing*, etc. At the end of this activity, teachers can go over the word-formation processes that birthed



these words and teach students those processes so that students can recognize the same processes in other words in the future exposure.

In another scenario, teachers could ask learners to ponder on expressions or metaphors in which disease-related words are employed to talk about predicaments or unpleasant situations. The teacher can pair up learners and ask them to exchange ideas about the topic and note down their expressions on a piece of paper. After collecting the pieces of paper, the teacher draws a two-column table on the board, and on one side writes the expressions and on the other side writes the same expressions minus the disease word. The teacher then encourages students to name a new Corona-related word(s) to fill the slot. For instance, learners may come up with the expression *avoid someone or something like the plague*, and learners can, on their own or, with the teacher's help, tweak the expression using a Corona-related word to create *avoid someone or something like COVID-19*.

One further way to teach Corona-related words to learners could be through lexical priming, which seeks to relate corpus-linguistics concepts such as collocations and colligations to the experimental findings of psycholinguists interested in the impedance and acceleration of word association (Hoey, 2013). To implement this technique, teachers should spend some time gathering words that can be grouped together and then teach them to learners. As a result, this technique can consolidate words and their associations, which leads to better retaining and recalling of words by students (Kök & Canbay, 2011).

Conclusion

Anderson and Freebody (1981) have made the distinction between two dimensions of vocabulary knowledge: breadth and depth. They argued that vocabulary breadth refers to “the number of words for which the person knows at least some of the significant aspects of meaning” while vocabulary depth is “the quality or depth of understanding” (p. 93). In other words, breadth of vocabulary refers to how many words a person knows whereas depth of vocabulary refers to how well a person knows these words (Li & Kirby, 2014). Teaching word formation processes can have a great effect on learners' vocabulary breadth and depth since they will not only know more words but also have a deeper appreciation of the processes that led to creation of these words. Knowledge of these processes might also help learners tap, to a great extent, into creativity on their way to use language (Tin, 2013). Moreover, this awareness enables learners to guess the meaning of new and unfamiliar words.

Dik (1967) maintains that “to learn a language is not so much to memorize a set of sentences; rather, it is to familiarize oneself with a linguistic system in such a way and to such extent that one is able to construct sentences and other linguistic structures on one's own” (p. 352). In English classes, language learners are



normally left single-handed in mastering word-formation skills, and they gradually learn them through exposure and using a dictionary. However, teachers can now teach learners the word-formation processes to foster learners' autonomy and familiarize them with the linguistic system of the language that is being learned; through this process learners can take the responsibility of language learning, here specifically vocabulary learning, on their own. They get more independent in vocabulary learning since they are equipped with the word-formation skill, and they can decode words and find the ways through which words are formed. Also, learners would not need to refer to a dictionary for each and every unfamiliar word they encounter. We end this discussion by asking readers to keep two points in mind. First, COVID-19 words are rather advanced, so the above-mentioned implications best suit high proficient students, although intermediate or high-intermediate students could benefit from them with more visual support such as more photos and videos. Besides, to teach students with lower proficiency, teachers can use their imagination and use other methods to let learners with lower proficiency benefit from this opportunity. Some words lend themselves to the Total Physical Response (TPR) method (Asher, 1969); for instance, *social distancing*, *hand hygiene*, or *flattening the curve* can be taught through TPR by gestures and role play. Second, Corona words, due to the fact that the virus is a global phenomenon, have entered many world languages, so the recommendations in this article are not language-specific and can be applied to any other language that serves as L2.

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Make teacher reflection count!

By Samir Omara, Egypt

Abstract

Language teachers always need to develop their teaching. They continue their teacher training and professional development in different ways. Reflecting on teaching practices helps teachers to dig deeper into their teaching opportunities, challenges, and solutions. Teacher reflection helps to develop quality teaching and learning while helping to sustain teachers' professional development as well. Language teaching is a reflective practice and a cyclical process with a series of steps.

Introduction

Teacher professional development is very important to support teaching and learning processes. To help develop teaching and learning, language teachers should refer to teaching as a reflective practice. Gnawali (2008) thinks that reflection helps teachers to “understand themselves, their practices and their learners” (p. 69). As teachers deliver face-to-face, blended and/or online teaching, they should keep reflecting on and developing their practice. Reflective teachers should be open-minded, and their reflection should help link theory and practice. Teacher reflection is beneficial for teachers and students although there are some misconceptions. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused lots of educational changes and pedagogical challenges, so teacher reflection helps to develop more solutions for more emerging challenges. There are different approaches to teacher reflection.



Reflective practice

Reflection is a key requirement for teacher professional development. It is the process that helps language teachers to question their everyday practice. Teachers work individually and in communities of practice to check what went well and what would be better in case it would be conducted differently. Reflection helps teachers to develop their performance through learning from their professional practices. It goes beyond checking previous practices into future improvements. It is beneficial for both pre-service and in-service language teachers. Bailey (1997) thinks that “reflective teaching is extremely valuable as a stance, a state of mind, a healthy, questioning attitude toward the practice of our profession” (p. 15).

Teacher reflection should be deliberate, purposeful, structured—linking theory and practice. Teachers should practice reflection consciously and purposefully; they reflect because they need to develop both teaching and learning. Through reflection, teachers should link theory and practice by checking lesson plans and practices in a structured approach. They should reflect on teaching in order to develop students’ learning. They should reflect to help change and develop teaching, learning, and school practices.

There are some principles of reflective practice. Reflective practice is evidence-based; when teachers reflect on their practices, they use evidence to develop practical insights. It involves dialogue; teachers communicate with peers to give, get, and reflect on constructive, developmental, and non-judgmental feedback. It explores beliefs and practices; teachers’ beliefs impact their teaching practices. Therefore, it is beneficial to explore such beliefs and their practices. It is a way of life; it helps teachers, educators, and professionals to get used to reflection as a part of their personal and professional behaviors and development.

Reflective teachers should be open-minded, responsible, and wholehearted. To be open-minded, teachers should have a desire to get, reflect on, and act upon different feedback and insights from others, including students and peers. They should pay much attention to different possibilities and experiences. They should accept the possibility of errors. To be responsible, teachers should be fully aware of the possible consequences of their actions and practices in classrooms and schools. Therefore, they should plan, reflect on, and act upon their teaching continuously. To be wholehearted, they should help to develop teaching, learning, and professional development. To develop open-mindedness and responsibility is to develop wholeheartedness.

Reflective cycle

According to Bartlett (1990), the reflective cycle consists of five steps. They are “mapping, informing, contesting, appraising and acting” (p. 209).



1. At the mapping step, teachers observe their own teaching. They collect different evidence about their teaching by using different techniques. They answer the question, “What do we do as teachers?”
2. At the informing step, they look for the meaning behind teaching plans they have developed in the previous step by sharing their plans with peers. They answer the question, “What is the meaning of our teaching?”
3. At the contesting step, they try to find underlying reasons for their theory and practice. They answer the question, “How did we come this way?”
4. At the appraising step, they continue to find teaching alternatives. They answer the question, “How might we teach differently?”
5. At the acting step, they act according to the reflective insights they have developed throughout the reflective cycle steps. They answer the question, “What and how shall we teach?”

They should go by this cycle to keep reflective practice, teaching improvement and sustainable professional development.

There are some misconceptions regarding teacher reflection. Some teachers think that reflection takes too much time; however, they can do reflection in action during teaching. Some believe that the focus is on teachers only, but reflection helps to develop teaching, learning, and teacher professional development, as well. Some teachers think that reflection is a negative practice or process, but reflection is a cyclical process that helps to have positive and developmental impact on teachers and students. Finally, some teachers think that reflection is an individual process; really, there are different collaborative approaches and techniques for reflection. For example, teachers can do self-reflection, peer-reflection, and/or group reflection using different techniques. They can record and reflect on their lessons. They can do peer observation and reflect on their peers’ classes. They can record their lessons and have discussion panels to reflect on their lessons regularly.

Reflective practice is beneficial for teachers, students, educational leaders, and supervisors.

- It helps to develop confident teachers who keep reflecting on and developing their practices.
- It helps to make sure teachers are responsible for themselves and their students as well throughout the teaching and learning processes.
- It helps to encourage innovation as reflective teachers find out, develop, and implement innovative solutions for different challenges.



- It helps to encourage engagement of teachers and communities of practice using different individual, and collaborative reflective practice approaches, and techniques.

These approaches and techniques help teachers to get, give, share, reflect on, and act upon feedback. For example, a teacher is encouraged to reflect on a teaching challenge, solution, and opportunity every month. Then, they are encouraged to share their reflections with a peer. After that, teacher communities of practice meet in-person or virtually to reflect on common and uncommon teaching challenges, solutions, and opportunities.

Reflective approaches

There are different approaches for teacher reflection. Reflection in action is teacher reflection during teaching. It happens during the lesson, so it helps to change the practice at the time of teaching. Reflection on action is teacher reflection after teaching. It happens after the lesson, so it helps to develop practice for the future. There are different techniques for teachers to reflect on their teaching. They are shared planning, peer observation, self-reports, autobiographies, journal writing, collaborative diaries, and recording lessons.

- Shared planning helps teachers to reflect on teaching and learning by getting support from peers to plan lessons together.
- Peer observation helps teachers to explore their teaching collaboratively. Therefore, they get critical reflection on their teaching.
- Self-reports help teachers to reflect on teaching by completing inventories or checklists that highlight their teaching practices during lessons. For example, teachers complete lesson checklists to reflect on their lesson planning and delivery.
- Autobiographies help teachers to reflect on their teaching career by keeping reflective and narrative records of their teaching professional experiences and progress. They help teachers to track their key professional successes, challenges, and future development.
- Journal writing helps teachers to reflect on teaching and professional development by keeping regular accounts of learning, teaching and professional development experiences. It helps teachers to reflect, share, and check back from time to time to see how different experiences, events, interactions, and sessions develop personal professional development. Journals can be written or virtual; they are more detailed than teacher autobiographies as the day-to-day teaching practice is the key focus.



- Recording lessons helps teachers to reflect on teaching and professional development by keeping audio or video recordings of different lessons. Audio or video recordings help to record the moment-to-moment teaching processes as many things happen simultaneously in the classroom.
- Critical analysis helps teachers to reflect on teaching and learning by answering and reflecting on specific teaching situations or practices. Teachers analyze a situation or practice in order to develop future performance. For example, teachers are given a certain situation as a refractive prompt like "You have delivered a writing argumentative essay lesson for a class of thirty fifteen-year-old mixed-ability students. What went well? What would you do differently if you teach the same lesson again?"

Conclusion

Teacher reflection is key for teaching and learning improvement and professional development. It is beneficial for teachers, students, educational leaders, and supervisors. It helps to link both theory and practice. It can be done in action during teaching or on action after teaching. Individual and group reflection approaches and techniques help teachers to check how their teaching has been delivered and how it will be delivered differently for future improvement. Teacher reflection should go systematically through a cycle of different steps. It helps to develop reflective teachers who are open-minded, responsible, and wholehearted. Reflective teachers are highly interested in and responsible for developing teaching, learning, and professional development, too. They help to initiate and sustain school improvement and educational change and development across classrooms and schools.

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Author Bio



Samir Omara has been an English language teacher and teacher trainer for the Ministry of Education and Technical Education in Egypt since 1998. He got diplomas of education, special education, and educational leadership. He presented at ILACE, NileTESOL, IPAWL, Africa ELTA, TESOL, and BETT. He wrote articles for NileTESOL, Africa ELTA, Hawaii TESOL, Texas ELT and TESOL journals. He is a RELO-NileTESOL mentor, AE E-Teacher alumnus, MOOC alumni facilitator, AUC Professional Certified Trainer, PAT and AMIDEAST teacher trainer. He has received the UK Alumni Professional Achievement and TESOL Leadership Mentoring Program awards. He has been the Head of Professional Development for Teachers First Egypt 2016–2020 and NileTESOL President, 2021.

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