



WAESOL World Quarterly Fall, 2014 Issue

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The *WAESOL World Quarterly* is an electronic publication of the Washington Association for the Education of Speakers of Other Languages. It provides information about the world of [TESOL](#) by sharing new teaching practices, addressing current issues, and collaborating with each other. [WAESOL](#) encourages all ESL and bilingual professionals and graduate students in Washington state to [submit an article](#).

A Letter from 2014 WAESOL President, Bevin Taylor

Inside this Issue:

pg. 3: WAESOL Updates

pg. 5: "Understanding Reasons for Cultural Differences Lays Groundwork for Acceptance of Others" - by Peggy & David Kehe

pg 8: "A Brief Overview of *Cat Got Your Tongue*" - by Patrick T. Randolph

pg 11: "Tasting the Colors of Words" - by Patrick T. Randolph

pg 14: "Narrative Approaches to Language Education" - by Dr. Linda Rappel

pg 18: "Improving ESL Learners' Vocabulary" - by Aaron David Mermelstein

pg 20: "Little Authors & their Untold Stories" - by Cheton Amble

It's September! The days are getting shorter, and you know what that means – back to school! Some of you have already returned to the classroom, and most of you (including me) will do so in the next week or two, while still a few of you have continued teaching and working all summer. Whether you are a new teacher or a veteran, this time of year can bring mixed feelings. The freedom of long summer days is fading fast, while the excitement and anticipation for the new year is mounting.



To prepare to get back into the classroom, I've been on Twitter a lot lately, where I follow educators from all levels and many different fields, looking for inspiration. Among the many [#backtoschool](#) posts, there is lots of advice on having a successful 2014-15 school year. After reading all this advice, two themes have stood out to me: **reflection** and **engagement**. As good teachers, we all strive to practice reflection and engagement, but it can be hard to find the time.

WAESOL can give you a space to start accomplishing both these practices this year. On Saturday, October 25, you can have a whole day dedicated to reflection and engagement if you attend this year's WAESOL Conference. (And you can have a whole day and a half if you also attend a pre-conference workshop on October 24.) This year's conference will feature presentations on the time-honored topics that we always want to know more about such as grammar, vocabulary, and writing, but also some new and innovative topics such as mixing language teaching with athletics, building community with an ESL club, using mindfulness in the classroom, love letters, and of course –

many uses for technology in the classroom. As you attend these presentations by your peers, reflect on what you currently do in the classroom and how you might incorporate some of these new ideas.

In between your reflection time, you'll also have a chance to engage with your colleagues on October 25. Now is your chance to speak with the presenters and pick their brains. Connect with other teachers at this year's networking tables in the afternoon. And of course, engage with the publishers in the exhibit area to see what tools they can offer you and your students. If you want to take your engagement even further, consider running for a position on the WAESOL Board of Directors so that you can help lead the organization into the future. Find any of your friendly Board members at the conference and ask us about serving. We'll tell you that it's a fun and rewarding experience, and a chance to collaborate with folks from all over the region.

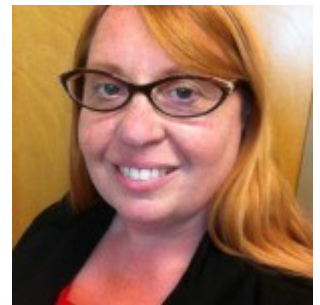
I hope to see you at the conference this year. It will be the seventh (wow!) conference I have helped to organize. Every year, I enjoy watching folks connect and overhearing the exciting exchange of ideas. I know you work hard, and your time is limited, but I hope you'll take some time for your own professional development and join us on October 25. And if you find that the conference fee is a financial burden, stay tuned, as we'll be announcing some help soon!

Enjoy the first days of school, and I'll see you in October!

Bevin Taylor, WAESOL 2014 President

A Letter from WWQ Editor & WAESOL President-Elect, Kimberly, Russell

This issue of WAESOL World Quarterly is the last that I will have the pleasure to issue, as next year, I will serve as WAESOL President. Thus, it is with great pleasure that I am able to bring you this issue featuring an article by David and Peggy Kehe, well-known authors and presenters in the field of ESL, writing about culture and acceptance of others. Additionally, we are pleased to have Patrick T. Randolph's articles about his new TESOL-published book on teaching idioms, as well as a fascinating look at synesthesia and vocabulary teaching. To complement these authors, we have additional articles on vocabulary teaching and using student-generated stories to teach language. I hope to see many of you at our upcoming conference in October at Highline Community College!



Best,
Kimberly Russell
Editor
WAESOL World Quarterly
WAESOL President Elect

WAESOL UPDATES

2015 WAESOL Board of Directors Elections

WAESOL has many exciting projects in the works including hosting Tri-TESOL in 2015 and the International TESOL Convention in 2017. Are you interested in taking an active leadership role in your WAESOL organization? If so, consider nominating yourself or a willing colleague for a position on the WAESOL board of directors.

WAESOL Board positions are open to WAESOL members in all areas of TESOL: K-12, higher ed., adult education, teacher trainers, administrators and the like. If you have a passion for educating speakers of other languages in English, enjoy collaborating with colleagues, and are interested in further developing your leadership skills, a position on the Board may be right for you!

Nominations are currently being accepted **until November 1, 2014** for the following open positions Please send nominations including a short bio to the WAESOL Administrative Assistant, Indira Hazbic, indira@waesol.org, Questions may be addressed to current board. **Nominees must be WAESOL members at the time of nomination.**

- ◇ **President Elect** – one-year term followed by one-year term as President and one year as Past President
- ◇ **Recording Secretary** – one-year term
- ◇ **Treasurer** – two-year term
- ◇ **Assistant Treasurer** – one-year term
- ◇ **Five Member-at-Large positions** – two-year term

See <http://waesol.org/welcome/constitution-bylaws/> for more information.

Online Voting will be held November 7-20. Watch your e-mail for voting information!



WAESOL Convention 2014

WAESOL is pleased to announce that all the presentations for the October 25 conference are now posted on our web site. We are very excited about the wide variety of topics covering many areas. <http://waesol.org/waesolconference/presentations/>

Online registration closes October 22. Your registration includes a continental breakfast, lunch, and beverages throughout the day, as well as annual membership for WAESOL. OSPI clock hours are available for K-12 attendees both Friday and Saturday at the Clock Hours table. We have arranged a special hotel discount for conference attendees. The links for conference registration, hotel, clock hours and more can be found at <http://waesol.org/conference>



Cultivating Solutions

Keynote Speaker

John Bunting
Georgia State University

Where

Highline Community College
Des Moines, Washington

When

Pre-Conference Workshops

Friday, October 24

1:00pm - 4:00pm

Conference

Saturday, October 25, 2014

7:30am - 4:30pm

Cost*

Through October 14: \$95

On-Site, after October 15: \$120

Pre-Conference workshops:

Friday, 1:00 - 4:00PM, only \$25.

**The registration fee includes lunch, snacks, and a one-year WAESOL membership. Clock hours are available.*



For more information, visit waesol.org



WAESOL is the Washington Association for the Education of Speakers of Other Languages

Understanding Reasons for Cultural Differences Lays Groundwork for Acceptance of Others

Peggy Kehe and David Kehe

Whatcom Community College

Bellingham, WA

Many of us who teach ESL can relate to this situation: A hard-working instructor is dismayed by the results of her students' course evaluations. Her students, who come from all over the world, are active and seem to enjoy her lessons. Many of them stay after class to talk with her and to get extra help. At the end of the term, she asks them to provide feedback on her course. Her students from Europe write comments such as, "This was an interesting course," or "I learned a lot about writing styles that I hadn't known before." However, the Asian students tend not to include much and instead write merely "OK." This confuses the instructor because she had worked hard to help them, and she wonders why they had few positive observations and tended not to mention any specifics of the course that had helped them (Kehe & Kehe, 2014).

It would be overly simplistic to explain away the Asian students' responses by citing the fact that evaluating an instructor is not part of their culture; in fact, it's not part of the culture for many Europeans either, yet for them, generating positive observations seemed natural.

In the case of the disappointed ESL instructor described above, the "problem" was not necessarily caused by Asians being unaccustomed to writing course evaluations, but rather by differing norms concerning complimenting. Barnlund and Araki (1985) conducted interviews with university students in Japan and with American students in the United States. The researchers were interested in learning how often students—in their everyday lives—were involved in a "complimenting" situation. They found that, on average, the Japanese gave or received a compliment only once every 13 days, whereas the Americans had a "complimenting" experience once every 1.6 days. The results of that research might have led the instructor described above to anticipate that she would receive fewer positive comments from her Asian students, but to understand *why* those students refrained from complimenting could have provided even more insights.

In order to understand the reasons for differing cultural norms, two important concepts often come up: collectivism and individualism. Societies in many parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America are identified as "collectivist" and are often labeled by experts as "simple." This means that, in general, the main occupation of these societies has been farming, and people have depended on their family members, friends and neighbors to survive. Because, generally speaking, the people in these agrarian societies lack material wealth, they may have little choice but to live their entire lives in the places where they were born. As a result, they know each other well, have shared goals, and need to build solid relationships. At the same time, some parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America are no longer "simple" or poor; instead, many people in those areas are financially comfortable city-dwellers. However, even though they might resemble Western-style societies, the people

themselves remain collectivists because they have maintained their identity with their group and are less likely to see themselves as separate from others. In contrast to collectivists, “individualists,” generally from North America, Western Europe and Australia, come from more affluent societies, in which people have been more independent and have often moved away from family, friends and acquaintances and for whom changing groups has been common. These differences have resulted in some sharp contrasts. For collectivists, cohesiveness and harmony among group members are of great importance, but for individualists, independence and freedom are vital (Triandis, 1994).

The distinction between individualism and collectivism can help explain many of the differences in norms, including complimenting. There are two theories about why Asians offer far fewer compliments. The first is that individualists, like Americans, who often change groups, use compliments to join new groups-- as a conversation starter, as a way to charm outsiders and as a means of opening new avenues of communication. The second theory is that collectivists, such as Asians, who tend not to change groups, try to maintain harmony and unity within their in-groups. Giving compliments could disrupt this delicate balance because doing so might encourage comparisons. Collectivists may feel that for the sake of group harmony, members should not make judgments about each other. When making even a positive one, there is a risk that other members might consider a compliment to be a comparison (Barnlund and Araki, 1985).

It may be surprising that a friendly smile can also cause a misunderstanding. One female international student, from Indonesia, said that she came to college in Bellingham, WA, every day by bus. Every morning, as she approached the bus stop, people who had arrived before her would smile at her. She said that this made her uncomfortable because, in Indonesia (a collectivist country), no one smiles at strangers. Research has shown that it is a norm among individualists to make eye contact and smile at strangers—often as a way to meet new people and even to become members of new in-groups (Smith and Bond, 1994). In contrast, because collectivists maintain their same in-groups, they have little need to rely on strategically honed techniques to make new friends. After learning about this difference, the Indonesian student said that she began to feel more comfortable approaching the bus stop.

Here is another example in which differing norms caused a conflict. An international student, Mariko, and an American, Linda, were good friends and classmates at an American university. During one class, their instructor asked if two students would volunteer to help him do some research in his office the next day. Linda raised her hand to volunteer and told the instructor that perhaps Mariko, who was sitting next to her, might also be willing to help. Mariko hesitated to answer, smiled, and said that she did not think that her English was sufficient. Linda said that she was sure that Mariko was capable and told the professor that they would both do the research. The next morning, Mariko didn't come to the professor's office, so Linda ended up doing it all alone. Later, she saw Mariko and asked her why she hadn't shown up. Mariko apologized and said that she had had a lot of other work to do and, on top of that, didn't feel capable of participating in that kind of project. Linda wondered why Mariko hadn't clarified the day before in class about how she had felt about doing the research (Cushner and Brislin, 1996).

To help Mariko and Linda make sense of their conflict (described above), an understanding of the

difference between high-context and low-context cultures could be useful. However, it would be even more useful to understand *why* some cultures are high context and others low. Individualist cultures tend to be low context. As mentioned earlier, people in these cultures are likely to change groups and move away from family and friends, resulting in societies that are more heterogeneous. In turn, in these individualist cultures, where there is a greater variety of ways to interact, people need to explain more directly what they mean. In other words, they must “spell things out.” The words that are said are of great importance. In contrast, collectivist cultures are more homogeneous. People in these cultures tend to interact primarily with their in-group members (family and acquaintances). For collectivists, *how* a message is conveyed is what is of the greatest importance; they are apt to verbalize what *they imagine* the other person wants to hear, but to express their true thought, they might use non-verbal cues such as hesitation, breathing deeply or even smiling. Ensuring that the listener will save face helps preserve the relationship. In the story above about the two classmates, Mariko tried to convey her reluctance by hesitating, smiling and expressing doubt *in an indirect manner*. However, Linda took no notice of those subtle cues. Instead, she expected Mariko to decline to help *in an explicit manner* if she did not intend to participate in the project. As a result, Linda felt that Mariko had been dishonest or even deceptive; Mariko, however, was merely trying to avoid embarrassing anyone.

Understanding that there are good reasons why cultures have the norms that they do can lead to a greater acceptance of the behavior of others that is unexpected or confusing. Besides the reasons described above about complimenting, smiling at strangers and expressing one’s thoughts directly or indirectly, research has revealed the reasons behind many other cultural differences as well. Some of these are about shyness, conformity, sharing with others, silence, modesty vs. bragging, effort vs. talent, time, tight and loose cultures, marriage and even peer editing (Kehe and Kehe, 2014).

To continue a discussion about this topic, feel free to contact us at: dkehe@whatcom.ctc.edu.

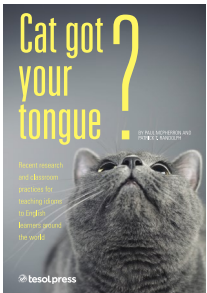
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A Brief Overview of *Cat Got Your Tongue?*

Recent research and classroom practices for teaching idioms to English learners around the world

Patrick T. Randolph,
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McPherron, Paul & Patrick T. Randolph, *Cat Got Your Tongue? Recent research and classroom practices for teaching idioms to English learners around the world.*

Alexandria, VA: TESOL Press. 2014. Pp. ii, 294.

ISBN: 9781931185196.

Introduction & Background

When my colleague and I had our book proposal on idioms accepted by TESOL Press’s call for submissions, we went through the whole gamut of emotions—from excitement to trepidation. We both loved to teach idioms in our respective intensive speech and writing courses, but would we be able to help others shed light on the cultural and linguistic complexities of English idioms? Would we be able to demystify idioms for teachers and students going into applied linguistics or TESOL methods? Would we be able to show how imperative idioms are for our students’ academic and integrative cultural success? After two years of intensive research, in-depth analysis, and writing, the answer to these questions is a confident and emphatic “yes.” We believe our book clearly examines the crucial elements required for good idiom pedagogy and successful idiom acquisition.

Our aim was to address the needs of three specific audiences: (1) applied linguistics /TESOL professors; (2) graduate students in language teaching disciplines; and (3) ELL classroom instructors. We, however, are confident—based on our own conviction and the praise from professionals in the field (Ediger, Giamei, Lo Bianco, Slick and Zwier)—that this unique book will also help the average native English speaker understand and appreciate more about the fascinating categories, uses, and importance of English idioms.

Belying Certain Idiom Myths & Defending the Need to Teach Idioms

One of the most important points that our book accomplishes is the demonstration of how necessary idioms are for our students to learn. While illustrating this, we simultaneously belie a number of *idiom myths*. My own colleagues—near and far—would ask me why I was spending so much time on a book about idioms. Many of these instructors claimed that idioms are usually only used in informal situations, that they are seldom used in lectures, and that they are very transient expressions—here today and gone tomorrow. Such statements left me tongue-tied. Unfortunately, a number of ELL educators believe the above as well, including the directors of Intensive English Programs.

In *Cat Got Your Tongue?* we point out that there are well over 10,000 idioms in the English language. According to Brenner (2011), of these 10,000 idioms, many, of course, are new. However, a great number have also been used for as long as 2,000 years. For example, the motivating idiom for the title of our book, *cat got your tongue?* dates back to 1881 and *spill the beans* may have been used as far back as the ancient Greeks. In terms of register, idioms like *best of both worlds*, *first and foremost*, *in sum*, and *shed light on* are frequently used in formal speeches and in academic textbooks (see Jensen’s *Brain-based Learning*). And professors use idioms in lectures all the time. For instance, last spring a colleague and I attended a presentation at Michigan State University. The professor used over 100 idioms during her hour-long lecture. In some lectures I’ve sat in on in the recent past, professors have used one idiom every 20 seconds of the class. As stated in the introduction of the *Cambridge Idioms Dictionary*, “Idioms are a colourful and fascinating aspect of English. They are commonly used in all types of language, informal and formal, spoken and written” (p. vi, 2013).

With respect to frequency, Lui (2008) has shown that English speakers, on average, use three to four idioms every minute. He also discovered that classroom teachers use a number of idioms, which supports our own on-going research on idiom use in lectures. One should keep in mind that idioms can be single- as well as multiple-word structures, so both *dough* (for memory) and *fat chance* are classified as idioms (McPherron & Randolph, 2014). From the above discussion, we can clearly see that idioms—both old and new, and informal and formal—are used with considerable frequency. If we are not teaching these to our students, we are doing them a serious injustice.

Teacher Uses—A Treasure of Resources

The most attractive feature of this ten chapter, five appendice book is the collection of activities and resources for teachers and teacher trainers. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the best practices, methods, and materials for teaching idioms. In Chapter 4, we address questions like:

- ◆ How many idioms should be presented at one time? (p. 79)
- ◆ How should new idioms first be presented in a textbook: alone in a list, with their definitions, in a dialog/reading, or through example sentences? (p. 81)
- ◆ Should new idioms be translated into the learner’s native language? (p. 86)

Chapter 5 looks at a myriad of strategies and activities for effectively teaching idioms. We consider everything from *conversation analysis* activities to *corpus-based* and *digital media* activities. This chapter alone could easily provide a teacher with a semester’s worth of activities. It should be noted that although these activities are centered around idioms, instructors could also use them for vocabulary-based classes or seminars.

Chapters 6 and 7 are extremely unique in that they discuss the results from two surveys: one on the teaching and the other on the learning of idioms. Chapter 6 focuses on teacher perspectives and Chapter 7 looks at student perspectives. These two chapters provide insightful information on how to best approach idiom pedagogy and acquisition from actual teachers and learners from various countries around the globe.

Chapter 8 includes a baker’s dozen (13) fun-filled and effective idiom lesson plans from around the world. In Chapter 3, we survey how the brain works and the best ways to teach based on what we currently know about

the brain. All thirteen of the lesson plans incorporate many of these essential features; for example, they include the necessary use of physical activity/exercise, aspects of multi-sensory integration, and the all-important element of emotion.

Chapter 9 offers detailed reviews of ten idiom textbooks and 16 idiom websites. We also discuss ten recommended idiom dictionaries and other reference materials for teaching idioms. Essentially, teachers can go to this chapter and get a thorough understanding of what to use and also where to go online in order to plan a class or a semester on idioms.

The last major feature for teachers and students is Appendix B; this includes a variety of idioms complete with definitions, examples, and a note on the terms' formal or informal use. Here we look at figurative idioms, transparent idioms, bi- and tri-part phrasal verbs, proverbs and sayings, idiomatic greetings, and a list (also with definitions, example, and register) of the "most difficult" idioms collected from the teacher and student surveys.

Concluding Remarks

Idioms are by no means easy creatures to teach. However, *Cat Got Your Tongue?* is a clear, reader-friendly, and insightful volume on how to best understand and teach idioms. It tames these wild creatures and makes them more manageable both in terms of pedagogy and acquisition. And, as mentioned above, even the average native speaker of English can learn a great deal about the categories and uses of idioms in both academic and nonacademic contexts.

I would like to conclude this overview with the words about our book from Joseph Lo Bianco, the Chair Professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Melbourne. He carefully reviewed our book and has the following to say:

“This insightful, brilliant, yet highly practical book is rare among the many that claim to assist teachers to teach and learners to learn not just communication, grammar, and the lexicon, but many aspects of the cultural residue of English, and specifically here, the approximately 10,000 idioms contained in English.”



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Patrick T. Randolph teaches at Western Michigan University, where he specializes in creative and academic writing, speech, and debate. He has created a number of brain-based learning activities for the language skills that he teaches, and he continues to research current topics in neuroscience, especially studies related to exercise and learning, memory, and mirror neurons. Randolph has also been involved as a volunteer with brain-imaging experiments at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He lives with his wife, Gamze; daughter, Aylene; and cat, Gable, in Kalamazoo, MI.

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Tasting the Colors of Words: Opening Minds to the World of Synesthesia

Patrick T. Randolph,
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Introduction

S.V. Shereshevski perceived reality in a unique way as a rich crisscrossing of the senses. “He would see sounds, hear colors, feel tastes, and taste shapes” (Ratey, 2002, p. 203). For Ingrid Carey, “Chocolate is rich purple and makes Carey’s breath smell dark blue” (Than, 2005, p. 2). Tania Camerino proudly claims, “I don’t know what the color green looks like. But I know what green tastes like” (Carlsen, 2013, p. 2). And Franz Liszt, the great Hungarian composer, is documented as telling his orchestra, “Please gentlemen, a little bluer if you please. This key demands it” (Seaberg, 2011, p. 24). These individuals were not experiencing hallucinatory moments of consciousness after deep, drug-induced states; rather, they were accurately explaining how they see the world, for each one shares the very intriguing neurological condition known as *synesthesia*.

Synesthesia: A brief explanation

It may feel like an odd way to experience day-to-day life for most of us, but a synesthete (a person who has synesthesia) would never trade it for the world. It’s a condition that literally makes every moment a magical feast for the mind.

What, then, exactly is synesthesia? The word itself says it all: *syn* means “together,” “union,” or “with” and *aisthesis* means “sensation.” This tells us it has something to do with “joined sensation” or “feeling together.” That is, synesthesia is essentially a neurological condition whereby there is a mixing or crisscrossing of two senses, so stimulation of one sense (e.g., auditory) produces a sense experience in a

completely different sense (e.g., sight). One type of synesthesia, then, is sound @ color synesthesia, in which sounds produce colors in the eyes. For example, hearing the sound of the word “Saturday” may cause one to see the color purple, or hearing a cat meow may elicit the color pink. Another very common kind of synesthesia is called grapheme @ color synesthesia. In this type of synesthesia, letters of the alphabet and numbers have a designated color. For example, *G* could be blue and *P* red.

Who has synesthesia?

The data seems to vary from Sir Francis Galton’s 1880 estimates of 1 in 20 to Richard E. Cytowic’s 1989 numbers of 1 in 25,000. In 2005, however, Julia Simner and her colleagues found the numbers to be closer to those of Galton’s. Her data, which experts trust the most because of her rigorously objective testing methods, showed that 1 in 23 have some type of synesthesia (Cytowic & Eagleman, 2011).

And yet others such as Maurer and Mondloch at the University of Ontario argue that we all start out with some form of synesthesia. “So, when a baby hears her mother’s voice, she is also seeing it and smelling it” (Than, 2005, p. 3). Furthermore, we have Wolfgang Köhler’s experiments that looked at the relationship between sounds and shapes. He found that 98% of his participants felt that the word “kiki” matched up with a star-spiked figure and that “bouba” matched up with a cloud-shaped figure (Cytowic & Eagleman, 2011). Perhaps it was because the voiceless velar stop (k) feels “pointed” whereas the voiced bilabial stop (b) feels “soft” or “undulating” like a wave. What I find worth noting here is this tendency to react to shapes and sounds. So, the inevitable question arises: Do we all have, to some degree, a form of synesthesia?

How to apply synesthesia to vocabulary lessons

In their book *Wednesday Is Indigo Blue*, Cytowic and Eagleman ask a number of synesthetes what the main benefit of synesthesia is. Based on their research, the most common response seems to be that it helps with vivid recall (Cytowic and Eagleman, 2011). Others, including Harvard Medical School’s John J. Ratey, have found similar results. Because of their multisensory experiences, the synesthetes actually seem to make more connections and use more of the brain during encoding.

In my own classes, I am developing a method for vocabulary acquisition called the Head-to-Toe Method. One part of this method requires the students to associate colors and smells with words. I base my reasoning for this on the observation that when we encode vocabulary in our first language, it is not done in isolation. It is a synesthetic-like experience. In fact, most, if not all, learning is done in a multisensory environment; consequently, I believe that sensory integration is the natural way we learn.

Take, for example, when you first learned the word “apple” as a child in your L1. Let’s say your mother showed the apple to you and repeated the word, so you first associated the color with the object. Then perhaps she cut a piece for you, and you smelled the sweet scent. She gave you the piece of apple, and some juice dripped on your fingers. Then you put it in your mouth. After biting into the fruit, you heard the crunchy sound in your mouth and tasted the sweetness on your tongue. In short, all five senses were employed in the acquisition of the word. There is also the possibility that you felt an emotional connection with your mother, so both sensation and emotion helped you learn this word.

Although I cannot replicate such an experience in the classroom, I can make it a multisensory one with the sensory-integration component of the Head-to-Toe Method. And studies (Cytowic & Eagleman, 2011) have shown that even having people imagine sensations activates certain areas of the brain. The more these areas are activated, the more neural connections develop, and the better the learners retain and recall the material (Medina, 2009; Willis, 2006).

Let's look at an example of how I teach this segment of the method in class. After the students have gone over the definition and a few examples of a word or phrase, I ask them what color they see or what odor they smell when I say the word or phrase in question. For instance, one lesson last term the students were introduced to the word "coherent," so I asked them, "What color do you see when I say the word *coherent*?" One student answered by saying "blue." When I asked why he chose blue, he said something to the effect that as coherent means consistent, lucid and logical, he immediately thought of his father whose ideas are always very coherent. Moreover, his father loves the color blue and frequently wears blue suits. So, when the student recalls the meaning of coherent, he will think of his father and the color blue.

The exchange I had with the student was full of intriguing associations and personal connections. He identified the word as blue because he associated it with his father. There is also a strong possibility that he experienced some other aspect about his father (the smell of his cologne or the sound of his voice), so a highly emotional element also may have been in play.

Given the simple above scenario, we have helped make a number of associations and connections by merely starting with the visual sense and the use of color, and by doing so, we have literally forged a very secure neural network in the student's brain. But more important, the word now has a very personal and familiar relationship to the student's own psyche and identity.

Concluding Remarks

What color do you see when you hear the word "synesthesia?" Perhaps we are not all genuine synesthetes (although, as above, some—including myself—would beg to differ); however, research has shown (Jensen, 2008; Medina, 2009; Sousa, 2001; Willis, 2006) that the more multisensory the learning environment is, the more the students learn and the better they retain the information. I would suggest we make our classrooms as multisensory as possible to add taste to our lessons and to reinforce a love for learning in the hearts of our students.

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Narrative approaches to language education: Re-storying lives of educators and learners

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Introduction

Narrative approaches to language learning view language as dynamic representations of linguistic and cultural meaning, recognizing how language is a reflection of both individual perception and social understanding. The idea that learning language is an individual endeavor that is embedded into specific social and cultural context supports Vygotsky's (1978) view of learning as a socio-cultural activity where, though learners' perceptions and understandings may be constructed through individual expression, knowledge is primarily acquired through social contact and interaction. In essence, a personal approach to language instruction framed through contextual referencing reinforces the idea of language being complex and formed communally and dynamically with reference to content rather being viewed as a static positioning of linguistic structures and patterns (Canagarajah, 2001; Norton, 2013). In addition to exemplifying socio-cultural aspects of language learning, a narrative and personal approach to education integrates Lindeman's (1961) notion of adult learning as a practical endeavor that invokes critical thought through the examination of life experience into language learning.

Personal Interpretation of Experiences

Exploring the influence of narrative examination to individual perception and collective understanding,

Pavlenko (2007) suggested that narrative learning may be a "central means by which people give their lives meaning across time", forming a direct connection of narrative understanding and personal interpretation to social construction in learning (p. 164). Though the process of becoming self-aware is primarily an individual endeavor, it is manifested in social environments, highlighting the importance of personal, relational and social contexts in transformative and authentic educational settings. In essence, a focal point of this approach to teaching and learning is the process of examining cultural attitudes and assumptions while recognizing embedded social realities.

Extending on the notion of narrative as both an individual and collective meaning making activity, Norton (2013) viewed language as both a product and process of identity formation using the term *identity* to describe how "a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 46). Recognizing individual positions of identity, narrative approaches to language education allow learners to situate themselves appropriately within language learning contexts.

A Reflective and Critical Educational Practice

Re-storying lives as educators and learners means developing a reflective practice on which to base instruction. Hay and Wang (2009) suggested that focussing on narrative construction could be reinforced by using related literature or weaving cultural stories into language classes. The significance of relating context to storytelling is detailed by Bell (2002) in the following:

Hallmarks of the analysis are the recognition that people make sense of their lives according to the narratives available to them, that stories are constantly being restructured in the light of new events, and that stories do not exist in a vacuum but are shaped by lifelong personal and community narratives. (p. 208)

In effect, narrative approaches to teaching and learning encourage educators as well as learners to question the origins of their own understandings and readjust value judgements and attitudes within learning environments. Reflection on personal and collective experience facilitates intercultural sensitivity in language learning through an increased understanding of individual and group behaviour. According to Miekley (2014), a critical sense of culture that is invoked through narrative study involves looking at self from a distance and exploring personal interpretations of culture and society through reflection and active critique. Developing a critical cultural sense through increased intercultural understanding signals a return to Dewey's (1933) exploration of education as incorporating attitudes of open-mindedness, reflexivity and responsibility towards self and others into learning situations.

Johnson (2006) noted how the ability to look at self and others objectively facilitate cultural awareness and intercultural ways of knowing by developing an ability to reconsider and reconstruct social identities and reassess previously held ideas and beliefs about language and cultural groups in order to develop new ways of thinking. Exploring the impact of reflection on narrative knowing and cultural adaption in language learning, Zhu (2011) advised that embarking on this type of teaching and learning process requires educators and learners reflect honestly on their own views and attitudes and be prepared to take risks to develop flexibility in communication. Some of the skills necessary for developing an increased cultural sense that can be achieved personal reflection and narrative inquiry are

The ability to look upon oneself from the outside, the ability to see the world through the others' eyes, the ability to cope with uncertainty, the ability to act as a cultural mediator, the ability to evaluate others' points of view, the ability to consciously use culture learning skills and to read

the cultural context, and the understanding that individuals cannot be reduced to their collective identities. (Sercu, 2005, p. 2)

Nelson (2011) labelled this type of learner engagement as *critical narrative study* where individuals are moved to discover and create rather than use language to fill gaps and fit into formulas. Barkhuizen (2011) claimed that narrative critique is a social activity that has potential for social and personal transformation in learning. Yet, for personal transformation to occur, the retelling of stories must be accompanied by reflection whereby learners and educators "metabolize" and are nourished by their experiences (Chickering, 2008, p. 93). Further, narratives must be pushed into a larger focus and reflected on with an understanding greater than that of the individual learner him or herself (Barkhuizen, 2011; Miekley, 2014; Nelson, 2011). In fact, striving for critical or intercultural understanding presents a need to "shuttle between cultures and communities", encouraging the use of reflexivity to develop an awareness of specific linguistic and cultural codes and conventions (Canagarajah, 2001, p. 146).

Towards a Collective Understanding of Experiences

Stories help to define individuals and enable educators to make sense of the lives learners have lived and determine the impact those elements may have on instruction. In essence, the use of narrative in language instruction offers the opportunity for educators and learners to take part in a shared learning process where linguistic knowledge can be established in respectful learning spaces that inquire into the lives of authors, learners, co-learners, and educators. This bottom-up approach to language teaching (Canagarajah, 1996) emphasizes a view of language that is personal, dynamic, creative, and meaningful. Increasing the capacity for understanding oneself and others, narrative study enhances educational processes and linguistic improvement through meaningful interaction in adult learning situations.

Building relationships through authentic interaction and engagement that is derived through narrative study encourages individuals to develop understandings of how a community or language group uses language to express and articulate underlying beliefs and values of the cultural and linguistic group (Corbett, 2003; Pavlenko, 2007). Nelson (2011) suggested that an emphasis on narrative construction and understanding supports educational atmospheres of critical analysis through the democratization of knowledge and the validation of individual realities. Using a process of mindful reflection and critique to examine personal histories and situations invokes a sense of empowerment and justice by encouraging learners to become "better prepared and more willing to look at the behaviour of persons from other cultures and accept them non-judgmentally" (Corbett, 2003, p. 25). This approach to language provides a space where engagement is "nuanced with topics, questions and vantage points" that matter to learners and are relevant to learning situations (Nelson, 2011, p. 466).

Increasing understanding through an acceptance and respect for diversity enables learners to develop an awareness about themselves and how they use language in particular situations while applying that knowledge to new learning situations. As Mezirow (1997) explored in developing a theory of transformative learning, educational atmospheres that encourage learners to acquire knowledge through questioning individual and collective assumptions offer opportunities for education and learning to transform habits of mind through the development of a critical consciousness. The ability to question one's own assumptions and history through reflective critique on narrative provides an excellent opportunity for learners and educators to increase self and group awareness to increase linguistic and cultural development.

Conclusion

Brookfield (2012) outlined how critical thinking can heighten awareness of preconceived notions and enable learners to judge ideas and motivations while uncovering new knowledge about self and the world. A personal and experiential process of language learning that encourages cultural perception and reflection through narrative interpretation enables learners to perceive and acknowledge how language forms and influences individual identity through the recognition of diverse thought processes that reflect social and cultural

understanding. Additionally, the attempt to go beyond mere tolerance in language education to developing sensitivity and understanding of others based upon acknowledging one's own cultural tendencies and considerations reflects a critical view of sociolinguistics that recognizes language in active use within cultural and social contexts. Reflecting critical theory in the application of a cultural understanding to learning, narrative study does not privilege one culture over another, but allows a space for communication and understanding amongst diverse groups in educational settings (Hay & Wang, 2009).

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Improving ESL Learners' Vocabulary

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Vocabulary is comprised of the words that we understand and can read, write, speak, and listen to. Snow, Burns, & Griffin (1998) state that we all have four distinct vocabularies: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Listening vocabulary is developed first and then followed by speaking, reading, and writing vocabularies respectively. The size of each vocabulary varies greatly for individuals and changes over time. It is likely that individuals will possess a larger vocabulary in one area. In fact, among ESL learners, this is quite common. Vocabulary acquisition plays an obvious role in second language reading comprehension (Mermelstein, 2013), and reading and writing vocabularies are generally the most linked to student success in school.

The size of one's vocabulary is directly related to language exposure. For ESL students, having a gap in one's vocabulary can be a significant obstacle to overcome and can have a huge impact on their academic performance. It takes effort to increase one's vocabulary, as language learning is a life-long process. Therefore, it is vital for teachers to assist second language (L2) learners in minimizing vocabulary gaps. However, this task is often challenging as most classrooms are filled with mixed ability students and limited resources may be available.

Understanding words takes time and is a gradual process. Tankersley (2005) highlights that there are five levels of word understanding:

- 1) No knowledge of the word and cannot recognize it.
- 2) Possibly able to read or pronounce a word, but no real understanding of its meaning.
- 3) Only a vague understanding of a word and limited use.
- 4) Can provide a general definition of a word and use it in speech and/or writing.
- 5) Full understanding of a word, can provide definitions, synonyms, examples, and proper use in context.

Explicitly Teaching Definitions

It is quite common for teachers to discuss new vocabulary and definitions directly in class. Some teachers provide accurate definitions for their students in handouts or on the board for them to copy. However, usually these methods will not produce long-term understanding (Tankersley, 2005). If students apply rote memorization of these words, they may be able pass a test, but most likely they will soon forget after the test, as the information no longer has any real value for the learners. According to Beck McKeown, and Kucan (2002), this type of vocabulary learning is simply inadequate for effectively learning vocabulary, especially for older learners. They suggest that learners need to have a deeper understanding and connection. If learners are to internalize vocabulary, they must be given time to interact with words and in multiple contexts. Therefore, we need to teach our students strategies that they can apply both inside and outside of the classroom, so they can become autonomous learners.

Reading Strategies

Many students know how to consult a dictionary, but not all do. It only takes a few minutes to demonstrate this with both a hard copy and an online version. However, heavily relying on a dictionary can also be problematic for several reasons. First, it interferes with the process of reading to have learners frequently stopping to consult a dictionary. Second, learners who use bilingual dictionaries may simply look up an unknown word and then write the known translation next to it in their books. With a translation at hand, it is less likely they will acquire the new word.

A more effective strategy for learning new word meanings while reading is to use context clues in sentences and/or paragraphs. Learners should first evaluate the new words on their own by looking for prefixes, suffixes, root words, or determining the word family. If this is not enough, then they should consider the meaning in the whole sentence. Would it be possible to substitute the unknown word for another word, possibly a synonym? If this is not enough for comprehension, then the learner should consider the meaning and topic of the whole paragraph. Once the learner thinks they have identified the word meaning, they need to apply this meaning to the word the next time they encounter it, to double check if they are correct. If not, then they need to attempt to identify the word meaning by adding all of the new information provided by the new context.

Ideas for Promoting Vocabulary Learning

The best environment for vocabulary learning to take place is when learners are surrounded or immersed in oral and written language. Being read to in class and participating in communicative language tasks can be just as important as the learner reading on their own. Another way to promote vocabulary learning is through extensive reading (ER). Richards, Platt, & Platt (1992) defined ER as “reading in quantity and in order to gain a general understanding of what is read. It is intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking of reading” (p. 133). ER has been widely advocated for language learning and research demonstrates the effectiveness of ER as a method of improving reading skills and learning vocabulary (Day & Bamford, 2002; Mermelstein, 2013; Pigada & Schitt, 2006). By providing learners an extensive amount of reading materials on multiple topics at levels matched to their ability, we can encourage learners to read more.

Another method of improving learners’ vocabulary is to have the students create lists of word families and synonym groupings. Have students use graphic organizers, such as clusters, that demonstrate the relationships between words. To expand this activity further, learners can add sentences using the correct usage of the words, and keep a special vocabulary journal that they can consult both inside and outside the classroom. One could also use antonyms for this exercise.

Another activity using antonyms is to provide students with pairs of opposite words, like handsome and ugly. Then students find more words that demonstrate the various degrees between the two words (e.g. handsome, attractive, cute, common, ordinary, unattractive, ugly). To expand this, have students do a “Think, Pair, Share” activity discussing each word. Again, learners can create sentences using the correct usage of these words and keep them in a special vocabulary journal.

Using games is yet another way to increase student motivation and enhance vocabulary learning for students of all ages. Classic word games like Bingo work well. Have the students draw out a special grid on a piece of paper using 6 by 6 spaces, and fill in each space with one vocabulary word. Next, the teacher will read vocabulary word definitions and the students should mark each word on their paper until they have 6 in a row for a “Bingo”. Another variation of this game would be to have the teacher introduce sentences with one word

missing from each sentence, similar to a cloze activity. Other classic games that work well include: Pictionary, charades, scrabble, boggle, pyramid, wheel of fortune, I spy, and concentration. Concentration works especially well when students create their own word and definition cards that need to be matched together since they spend more time working with the words.

Conclusion

Today we know that there are multiple methods to introduce students to vocabulary. Effective methods help learners make connections to words through the context, prior knowledge, and by multiple exposures. Since vocabulary is vital to success in reading, and since large gaps in vocabulary put learners behind in school and in life, it's important to find methods that interest and motivate learners to interact with the language and expand their vocabulary knowledge.

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Little authors and their untold stories- Using personal stories as a resource in an EAL classroom

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Introduction

The world itself is becoming a global English as Additional Language (EAL) classroom due to high rate of immigration from developing countries into the developed nations. With this increase in multiculturalism, there have been challenges for mainstream classroom teachers. Thus research is focusing on better ways of incorporating second language teaching in mainstream classrooms. One area of active research is the Story-Based Approach (SBA).

We are all surrounded by stories. The stories weave a nest of memories around us. People are 'storytelling

organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives . . . tell stories of those lives’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). While there is considerable research that has examined the role of literature in the L2 classroom (Paran, 2008), less research has focused on the approaches, advantages, and challenges of using learners’ stories in the language-learning classroom. Most of the stories come from individual personal experiences. Sometimes, untold stories arising from imagination can also constitute a basis for language learning.

Why use personal stories?

Language is an integration of the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Bernhardt & Kamil, 1998). All these operations are related to each other. Since expressing personal stories integrates these language aspects, the benefits high for the ESL learner. Murdoch (2002) indicates that “short stories can, if selected and exploited appropriately, provide quality text content which can greatly enhance EAL courses for learners at intermediate stages of proficiency”. Oster (1989) asserts that literature helps students to write more creatively. Instructors can create an assortment of writing activities to help students to develop their writing skills.

The study

During my first year of teaching in the elementary grades, I observed three EAL students. The observation was not intentional, but it was purposeful. Each of these students had different cultural background, language proficiency and came into the classroom with a unique story to tell. Anish, Anaya and Shyeyash were observed during remedial class hours. While they shared common experiences, their years were filled with unique stories.

Anish- A little family man

Anish belonged to a middle-class family. His initial days in the grade five were occupied with conflict. His language teacher always pointed out his inability to remain focused in the classroom. He preferred to remain silent and did not contribute much to the class activities. He always looked very anxious in the morning hour, but quite happy during school leaving hours.

One day, during remedial teaching hour, I asked all the students to draw their most favorite thing on a piece of paper. Most students drew about their favorite cartoons, cars, pets and even flowers. Nevertheless, I was not expecting what Anish drew for that task hour. He wrote about his family and when asked to explain his drawing, he said he missed his family very much, even in the school. So he always waited for the school to get over so that he could see his parents again. Learning from this experience, I used the “ My Family” as the topic of language learning in the next class. To my pleasant surprise, many other silent students in the classroom could relate to what Anish expressed and felt motivated in the classroom discussion.

Shreyash- A silent boy

Shreyash had been brought up by a single father. The loss of his mother at a very young age and his father’s busy work schedule kept his emotions unexpressed at home. His favorite thing to draw was going to an

outdoor picnic with his family members and relatives. He said to me; “I love going for outdoor picnics. I meet my cousins and my uncles and I like to talk a lot with them. At home there is nobody to talk, I feel so bored. I like coming to school.” His inability to find an outlet to express his views with a family member was seen in his immaturity in writing. Hence, I focused my next class on writing about “ My favorite Memory” and to my surprise, he could fill pages and pages, writing about what he always wanted to share at his home.

Anaya- My plate is full

Anaya belonged to an extended family of over 15 people sharing a common household. There was a healthy learning atmosphere created in the family. The parents fostered a learning environment for all their children. Nevertheless, something that stood out in Anaya’s drawing, which had been unnoticed by her parents. She focused on “After School Hours”.

Anaya drew and wrote about her after school hour activities. As a teacher, I was able to observe the rigid schedule she had to follow after the school. For some people it might look like a well-planned schedule, but the terminology she used for expressing her after school activities made one wonder if she considered “her plate already full” and that there was no room for new adventures. Thus, in the next class I asked students to draw and write about one new thing that they would like to include in their daily routine and not to my surprise, Anya was caught up in her busy schedule.

Model for Using Story-Based Approach

Sluys & Lobbo (2006) emphasized the transformational role a school could play by bringing the world together in a small classroom setting. They highlighted that every child in the classroom brings with him language, culture and experiences that are unique and unshared by their teachers and classmates. Each day my new class began with a topic that was brought up in the last class and thus I tried to develop the four language skills among the students of grade five using the PACE MODEL.

The PACE model is generally an ideal framework for the instructor-selected stories in EAL classroom. Nevertheless, I believe that the PACE model can also have a great implementation for learners’ own stories and hence, I used the PACE model with a story-based approach. There are four main phases in SBA.

Presentation of meaningful language: Here, the “whole” language is presented in a thematic fashion. Laplante (1997) comments about the ideology of whole language concept, which is based on the fact that students need to experience language as an integrated whole. Learners are encouraged to present their stories. The students present their story orally, which facilitates aural comprehension and the attainment of meaning and form; students do not have any written script. Instead, their life experience helps them to form the script. The presentation flow follows the experiences and hence makes sense to other students. With students telling stories, teachers can guide learners through the new elements of the language to be learned. Learners expand their language abilities by figuring out new elements of the target language in meaningful situations.

Attention: The Attention phase occurs after the teacher has heard the story and chooses an important grammatical feature of the story for attention. The instructor highlights the grammatical feature. Shrum & Glisan state that highlighting can be accomplished in several ways. For example, teachers can ask questions about various patterns found in the story. Since the story originates from one of the students in the class, the other students feel very connected to the story, and are more attentive.

Co-Construction: This involves collaborative meaningful discussion about the language structure. During the discussions, the learners are allowed to predict, hypothesize and generalize about the language structure. This requires the use of higher order thinking skills by the learner. The teacher needs to ask probing questions that are well chosen, clear and direct. It is an important process and learners' contributions and approximations can provide valuable data to the instructor regarding assistance needed to attain a concept.

Extension: Here, the teacher provides an opportunity for the learner to implement his new grammar skills in a creative task. The teacher designs extension activities based on the learner's personal story. These activities are often very creative, interesting and require higher order critical thinking. The possibilities of such activities are huge, but it is the context of the story that decides the approach. The activities should be able to integrate learners' culture and experience into the learning of the target language.

Advantages of Story-Based Approach

The story-based approach has many advantages. Some of these advantages are directly related in building learners' self esteem and morale.

Reinforcing skills: Incorporating learners' personal stories in the classroom helps target basic language skills.

Motivating the students: Since the personal stories are close to one's life, students are always motivated to express the story in the best possible manner. They attempt to understand their peers' stories. Such efforts help them think logically.

Teaching culture: Personal stories help in teaching culture in the ESL classroom. Each person brings a colorful story of cultural heritage. When woven together these stories unite the threads of cultural diversity. The end product is a beautiful fabric of cohesiveness created by the students.

Teaches higher-order thinking: Stories help the learners to acquire cognitive skills. The instructor is able to make use of Blooms Taxonomy to develop critical thinking questions and learners can be encouraged to form their opinion, judgement or even suggest an alternative idea for a particular situation.

Further research required

Students in the EAL classrooms learn as much language as students in the regular L1 classrooms. Hence, it would be interesting to know if SBA can be executed from the beginning level or does it require at least an intermediate language proficiency by the learner? Another area of needed investigation is the teacher-student interaction in the story-based EAL classrooms. Further research needs to focus on analyzing linguistic mechanisms through which teachers mediate between the speech of their students and the linguistic demands of the school curriculum.

Conclusion

A story allows students to be language users instead of purely language learners. It bridges the gap between declarative and procedural knowledge. The strength of the learner's personal story is that the student already knows the content and the context. This helps them to focus completely on language acquisition. Storytelling also allows EAL learners the opportunity to practice recognizing different context in their new language. Personal stories not only motivate the learner to discover his own voice in their new language but also helps develop a feeling of community building due to respect for varied shared experiences. I believe that stories promote language learning, an understanding of the variety, and community building, while also enhancing the legitimacy, affect, and motivation.

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