[* A Letter from WAESOL President Ron Belisle](#)

Friday, April 1, 2011

Greetings WAESOL members and friends,

Professional development. What is it and what are its benefits? Do you pursue it?

One source defines professional development as "… the skills and knowledge an employee gains to optimize his or her personal development and job growth. It includes learning opportunities, such as college degrees and coursework, or attending conferences or training sessions." (http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-professional-development.htm)

All of us on the WAESOL Board are strong advocates of professional development. That's why we volunteer hundreds of hours as a board every year for professional development opportunities for you. We know that our profession requires us as teachers, administrators, publishers, volunteers to be exposed to new ideas, theories and methods. The increasing diversity of our profession demands that we continually keep on learning from each other and challenge each other. New skills are becoming a necessity for effective teaching. Today's global spread of English makes it critical that all us better understand how to better meet the needs of our students. A strong professional development emphasis in any organization results in many benefits such as increased job satisfaction and morale among employees, increased employee motivation, increased efficiencies in processes resulting in more successful outcomes, increased capacity to adopt new technologies and methods, increased innovation in strategies and methods, reduced employee turnover, and enhanced company image. (Adapted from: http://managementhelp.org/trng_dev/basics/reasons.htm)

There are three main ways that WAESOL provides professional development to its members and friends. First, we work hard to gather interesting and useful articles from you to publish in our WAESOL World Quarterly. This quarterly journal provides information about the world of TESOL by sharing new teaching practices, addressing current issues, and collaborating with each other. We invite you to participate in WAESOL World Quarterly by submitting an article for our next issue. Your ideas are important to our members.

Secondly, WAESOL Community is our professional development forum in cyberspace (in the cloud) where registered users can share teaching resources, conference handouts, PowerPoints, links, ideas. These users can also post job and ESL news announcements as well as ask questions, and connect and collaborate with others on issues related to our profession. Thanks to the many conference presenters last October who posted their handouts for others to view/download, including our conference keynote speaker, Diane Larsen-Freeman. Others have since posted important ESL news and job announcements. When you register, please be sure to subscribe to replies to your own posts (threads) which means that when someone posts a reply to your post, you will be notified by email. The more we connect, collaborate and share ideas and resources, the better for all of us.

Finally, this year we are preparing for our biggest professional development event in many years, the 2011 Tri-TESOL Conference. WAESOL is joining with ORTESOL and B.C.TEAL to sponsor this conference which is scheduled for October 21 & 22, 2011 at Highline Community College. It has been 15 years since the last Tri-TESOL conference, so we are very excited. We are planning some big name keynotes. We hope you submit a proposal and/or attend and share in this with hundreds of your colleagues around the Northwest. Connecting and developing professionally benefits us all. We will keep you posted on the latest via our web site. Visit http://tri-tesol.org where you can sign up for updates.

Sincerely,

Ron Belisle
2011 WAESOL President
http://waesol.org
2011 Tri-TESOL Conference Chair
http://tri-tesol.org

Filed in Spring 2011 | | Comments (0)

* Letter from WAESOL World Editor

Friday, April 1, 2011

Happy Spring!

I hope everyone is taking care of themselves and finding fulfillment in your work and/or personal lives.

You may have noticed that the WAESOL World Quarterly looks a little different. Well, it is, and we are happy to present to you the first edition of the WAESOL World Quarterly to be publicly displayed in our new format. We really hope you find this format to be more user-friendly and accessible. We also hope that you will be so inspired by the new layout, that you too would want to be a published author featured in the WAESOL World Quarterly. I look forward to hearing from all of you soon!

This edition is full of interesting, engaging, and inspiring articles. I think this edition has really touched on an underlying theme which is relevant to all of us and what we do; it serves as a reminder that we must always try to meet our students where they are at. Each author has found a way to remind us of this in what they chose to write about. There are many ways that we must try to meet our learners where they are at and there are many approaches to figuring out exactly where they are and where they need to get to.

As the various authors suggest in this edition (please click on the authors' names to go directly to their article): We can find ways to figure out where our students are by looking to what we know about theories of language acquisition and closely identifying the different language and/or social needs of our students (Elturki). We can delve into the backgrounds and needs of a certain group of learners to find out more about them and their experiences (Croydon). We can also reflect upon privileges given or not given to members of a society and what those mean for our students, as learners, and ourselves as educators (Mora). We can then use this knowledge to plan for an appropriate educational path for our student(s). We can help students move beyond where they are and take them to where they want to be by designing authentic learning opportunities (Sargent) or creating engaging groups or clubs (Dierking) or by bringing literature into the classroom (Cha & Lee). We can also help our students bridge that gap between the comfort, or knowledge zone and the area of the unknown or yet to be learned by doing the same ourselves through collaboration (Drake) or taking a chance at a new opportunity in our careers or personal lives (Foshee).

The point to remember is that we can meet them where they are and help them get to where they want to be.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the WAESOL World Quarterly. Thanks to the many authors that contributed your time, energy and thoughts to this edition and making it great. We look forward to seeing you soon at our Tri-TESOL Conference in October. Please visit our website at www.waesol.org to find out more about how you can get involved.

Please stay in touch,

Jodi Ritter

Editor, WAESOL World Quarterly

Filed in Spring 2011 | | Comments (0)

* Ten Strategies for Helping Adult Non-literate Learners

Friday, April 1, 2011

By: Alysan Croydon

School of TESOL

Adult non-literate learners are not all beginning at the same point. Some may be able to communicate their needs orally but not read and write in English at all. Others may be a beginner in all skills. The students will have a range of previous educational experiences from highly educated, but in a language that uses a different script, to knowing a little literacy in the first language, to coming from an oral tradition where the person's language is not a written one. The students' history with the written word is a big predictor of the difficulty they will have learning the English reading and writing system and how quickly they are likely to progress.

After all, native speakers of all languages have to consciously learn the written system as it is not absorbed by mere exposure to it and ESOL students are learning literacy in a language that is not their best. Reading pedagogy itself is a pendulum that has swung back and forth between a focus on sounding out words to reading whole words and texts. How is a teacher to select materials, approaches and techniques suitable for this range of learners? Below are ten strategies to help you navigate.

#1 Needs Assessment
While we always want to develop curriculum around students' needs, finding out what they are for non-literate students is more challenging. Using photos or pictures of real places helps students express the places they may need to use English. The following questions will help determine some assessment of level:

Can my students identify any basic sight words or symbols from cards?

Can my students copy sentences accurately in English?

Can my students read simple sentences or write dictated words in English?

Can my students hold a pen, make shapes, and know the place to start on the paper?

#2 Begin with Listening and Speaking
Students need to be able to express some personal information and simple needs in very short learned phrases or sentences before starting to read. Only ask students to read something they have spent time practicing orally.

#3 Start with Real Words
Use student-generated material as a basis to learn sight words. Student-generated material avoids issues of comprehension as the students have given you the oral text such as in the Language Experience Approach. Use teacher generated material to reinforce and practice the new sight words.

#4 Create a System to Record and Recycle new Sight Words
Create a literacy rich environment of words your students can read; use a sight word wall or a

target letter chart. Develop a system for individual students to record their new words; record the words on a list or set of index cards for frequent review.

#5 Teach Word-attack Skills
Students need to learn the sounds that letters make so eventually they will be able to read words that are not sight words. Start with some consonants and short vowels. Build into word families (/a/, /n/ . /a/ +/n/= an, /c/+ an= can, /m/+ an= man, etc).

#6 Use a Combination of Top-down and Bottom-up Processing Strategies in Every Lesson
Students need to grasp whole chunks of written language through exposure to whole but simplified texts. Rapid word recognition of high frequency words is essential for fluent reading. In addition, students need help to sound out combinations of letters and sounds in words they encounter. Include both reading for meaning and work on sounds and letters in each lesson.

#7 Help Students See Patterns in Language and Literacy
Help students see patterns so they can chunk words together and use strategies such as predicting. For example, prepositional phrases such as, "in the morning", are chunked together when we read.

#8 Help Students Apply and Notice Literacy in the World Around Them
It is exciting to see the word 'the' on a real poster or recognize a word, letter or short phrase in a real document. Help students apply their learning and celebrate success.

#9 Teach Study Skills and Spend Time Organizing Paperwork
Non-literate students have little experience organizing paper work. Number and date pages, color code important handouts and sort paper work regularly.

#10 Be Intentional about Planning Literacy Instruction and Capitalize on 'Found' Literacy Moments
Literacy students need regular exposure to literacy at their level. This needs to be planned especially if most other students are already literate. Create regular time for this in your class period. Also, opportunities arise in listening and speaking activities where students encounter a literacy moment. Instead of having non-literate students copy the dialogue from the board, allow the literate students to copy while non-literate students read from a copy and do something more level appropriate. Circle sight words that are known, notice letters and letter combinations, match pictures to the words or have students shadow read with you.

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* From the Field: Highlights from an English Language Fellowship

Friday, April 1, 2011

By: Michelle Foshee

University of Washington

When I was finishing up my MA TESOL program at the University of Arizona in 2007, the chair of my department suggested that I apply for the English Language Fellows (ELF) Program. I'm embarrassed to admit it now, but I hadn't heard of this program before I applied. I did some research, and it sounded perfect. ELF sends trained ESL professionals abroad for one-year teaching assignments (with the possibility of extending). I applied and several months later I was headed to Kosovo with my husband and my dog.

Visiting my business English students

The work that I did there was varied and engaging. I expanded my craft as I taught Academic English in the Political Science department of the University of Prishtina, conducted teacher training workshops, taught listening and speaking at a madrasah, and a ran a conversation club for Serbian young adults. I also felt as if the work that I was doing mattered. I think all of us realize that English language skills can open up doors. On the one hand, English gives people access to a wider world. And in post-conflict Kosovo, English gave Serbs and ethnic Albanians a more neutral language. Although I realized this, it was something else entirely to actually see these doors open. Here is just one example: Soon after Kosovo declared independence, when tensions were still running high, I spent some time recruiting Serbian, ethnic Albanian, and Turkish teachers and students for a "Teaching Tolerance through English" summer camp in neighboring Macedonia. Throughout the long recruitment process, I saw distrust and suspicion slowly transformed into cooperation and excitement. Truly amazing …

Students playing a 'Find Someone Who' Game

Before I left for Kosovo, I wondered whether I might be putting my career on hold for a year (or two), but I quickly realized that this was not the case. Underneath all the work I did in Kosovo was the gratification of knowing that I was treated as a professional. Part of this is a funding issue. Not only does ELF provide a living wage, but I also received money to travel abroad to professional conferences. In Kosovo, I had room to grow and use my own judgment, but assistance was available when I needed it from both my embassy and the ELF team in Georgetown. I also found myself in a community of smart and engaged teachers, where I had ample opportunities for support and collaboration. I think we can all agree as teachers that the most important reason we teach is the students.

"Newborn" sculpture to celebrate Kosovo's Declaration of Independence

I left Kosovo more than two years ago, and I am still in contact with some of my students from the University of Prishtina. These future leaders of the newest country in Europe have graduated from university and are now working at international organizations in Kosovo or pursing advanced degrees at European universities (some of them are doing both). This reminds me that we are all on a path, and it has been an honor to meet these students and to travel with them on a stretch of their path.

Michelle Foshee is an instructor and teacher trainer at the University of Washington.

Filed in Spring 2011 | | Comments (0)

* Improving Proficiency through Various Literary Practices

Friday, April 1, 2011

By: Eunae Cha & Kilryoung Lee

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

I. Literary practices and language proficiency
Literary practice can be a useful method to learn a foreign language. Researchers (McKay, 1982: Collie and Slater, 1987: Rigg, 1991: Rosenblatt, 1993) have argued for the usefulness of

literature in the language classroom and emphasized that literature should be more widely used for language teaching and learning. In the literature, short stories can be easy material that can be used effectively in the language classroom. Many researchers (Chang, 1996: Day, 2003: Kim, 2003: Shim, 2004) mentioned the usefulness of various reading texts as teaching materials, and they argued that literacy learning contributes to language proficiency.

There has been a lot of research to prove the crucial role of literature in the language classroom along with the attempts to explain the written and spoken language connection. However, most research has been done in ESL contexts and it still remains unanswered whether written language facilitates second language oral proficiency and leads to communicative competence in language acquisition process. In this paper, we want to share with you how we implemented literary practices to help Korean EFL adult learners to use English communicatively in a classroom.

II. How we prepare for various literary activities
Two short novels of O. Henry, 'A Good Burglar' and 'The Jeweler's Wife' were chosen for class work, based on their proper length, intriguing content and the participants' interests. The study was carried out for about a month. The participants had a class once a week for a month. Each class lasted for about an hour and a half. The participants, Korean native speakers, graduated from universities and had studied English for over six to ten years. Their level is slightly different from high beginner to intermediate.

They read the two stories and performed various literary practices such as completing the matrix, jigsaw puzzles or writing the ending based on their imagination. The teacher used the target language only and participants were asked to speak English as much as possible, but they could use Korean if it was necessary.

III. Performing literary activities
This paper shows how the language teachers used literature in the classroom. They tried various tasks to find the role of literature and literary practices in a language classroom.

Most textbooks provide teachers what to teach and how to teach. Teachers might be confused if they have to use literature in the classroom instead of using those ready-made materials. However, using literature can give autonomy to teachers so that they can experiment with their pedagogical hypotheses.

In this paper, we want to share some tasks that were used in each class. In the first class, participants were given reading material about the author O. Henry. Then, they were asked to find specific information about the author and complete a matrix while they skimmed and scanned the text. Next, they saw a picture on the first page of the story, and read the title of the story to guess what the story was about. Then, they answered some comprehension questions after they read a certain amount of the story. They also did a jigsaw puzzle task. Finally, they had a chance to review different English tenses used in the story with a tense notice activity.

In the second class, participants first summarized what they read in the previous class and did a guided role-play. They were given a script and read it first and then they tried to do a role-play without the script. Then they were asked to find and complete missing dialogues from the story.

Next, they found the route where the main character Jimmy passed for his burglary with an American map. After this, they read a portion of the story again and guessed what might happen next. They also wrote a letter as Jimmy did to his friend Billy before they read the real one. At the end of the class they were given a homework to read the rest of the story in which ending was cut out.

In the third class, participants first wrote their own ending of the first story 'A good burglar' and shared it with each other. After they checked the real ending they did another role-play without script. This time they were given a context which was not mentioned in the story, so that they had to make up their lines. And then they were asked to write what they would do if they were in one of the character's positions. They were supposed to write subjunctive sentences to do this task. Then, they did a form-focused task to learn subjunctive sentences. Actually, most Korean adults already learned subjunctive sentences in the secondary school, but they have difficulty using them communicatively. First they listened to a pop song which contained many subjunctive forms and filled in the missing verbs. Then, they translated subjunctive parts of a Korean song into English. After that, they completed subjunctive sentences with their own ideas. Finally, they self-corrected their first draft of writing using correct subjunctive sentences. As homework, participants were given a new story, 'The Jeweler's Wife' and asked to read it.

In the last class, participants were asked to write about their favorite character from the first story and the reason why it was their favorite. After this, they wrote their own ending of the second story and shared their thoughts with others. The two stories are different, but they both deal with criminals and detectives. Now that they finished reading the two stories, they compared and contrasted two main characters, criminals and the detectives.

Probably, the best advantage of using literature as well as all the tasks mentioned above, is to motivate students to read and encourage them to learn English. All participants showed a positive attitude towards literature-based class.

Among various literary practices, the most effective ones are role-playing and guessing or imagining the story and writing about it to make participants speak. For a guided role-play, they always read the script as it was, but when they did without script, they could speak more creatively. They were divided into two pairs and asked to play the main character Jimmy and his fiancee Annabel in the first story 'A Good Burglar'.

IV. Conclusion
Teachers can design numerous and creative tasks with literary works. Most of all, literature motivates students to read with pleasure and it will lead students to read extensively out of the classroom. Literary practices provide learners with chances to think creatively and time to prepare for speaking since they can organize their thoughts through writing. In the last of the classes, they became more confident in speaking.

In the EFL context, learners have little opportunity to meet foreigners and have conversations with them. Learners need to find ways in which they can use English communicatively. For the successful language learning, it is important for learners to make an effort out of classroom autonomously. Literary practice will facilitate learners' self-study. If they read and write, as well

as try self-talk based on their reading repeatedly, they will be prepared to communicate in English in unrehearsed situations. L2 language learning does not have to be a linear process. It will be better to learn all language skills as a whole rather than in order: listening, speaking, reading and writing as usual. Adult L2 learners are already literate in their first language and also in the second language to a certain extent, therefore they should have more chances to write in L2.

Written language does not merely represent spoken language. Reading and writing are also dynamic processes and take place in a social contexts. Written language helps learners transfer their thoughts into words. Learners can benefit from literary practice to develop integrative language skills.

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of Speakers of Other Languages

[* Implementing Authentic Extension Activities to Increase Second Language Acquisition](#)

Friday, April 1, 2011

By: Denny Sargent

(in cooperation with Seattle University)

Senior Instructor, [The School of Teaching ESL](#)

The term 'extension' activities is one of the cornerstones of Facilitative Language Teaching, the underlying pedagogy behind our school and the classes we teach. It is based on the theory that language interactions that are "real" are more effective in helping students with second language

acquisition and autonomy. Aside from helping students retain target language in long term memory through real use in real situations that meet real needs, such out-of-class authentic uses of target language serve as a way to measure competencies, benchmarks and tasks. If a student can accomplish something useful or necessary while utilizing target language, or gather target language that can only be found 'on the street' in real-use situations to add to their language 'bank', then they have clearly met the objectives of the lesson or unit. Doing or finding proves real ability and understanding. The problem in many ESOL classes, as I see it, is that most "homework" does not accomplish this. In other words, students doing work at home does not equal real use or meaningful practice in authentic situations. The answer to this problem is to implement "extension" activities that gently push our students into going out and working directly with real language tasks in real language-use situations, which is the goal of all language learning in the end, I might add.

(Continued)

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* Competition, Cooperation, Collaboration

Friday, April 1, 2011

By: Debi Drake

Language Teacher, SD #22 Vernon and Gonzaga MTSL Student

Cooperation and collaboration are intimately correlated with the teaching and learning environment where competition is more a consequence of skill development or learning than it is a correlate. The old adage, "Two heads are better than one" supports the idea that, like with cooperation and collaboration in the teaching and learning environment, deeper thinking and the quality of learning can improve as a result of a concerted team effort. The level of understanding is similarly increased when students work together rather than individually.

Cooperation in a classroom setting is an example of a child-centered activity; an activity that involves two or more learners working together to solve a problem or complete a learning task.When a group of students work cooperatively, the learning task or project is divided into manageable parts and every group member is assigned to complete their part within a certain time frame and to a certain standard of quality. There may be some collaboration that occurs when that standard is defined and jobs are assigned, but each student from the group typically completes their assigned part(s) individually. Together, the group learns from one another and their completed parts meet the assignment criteria or solve the problem posed. The end product of the group's cooperative enterprise is enriched by different people's ideas and understandings and, typically, the cooperative process involves more forethought, planning and discussion than would an independent enterprise. Like cooperation among students, many business places

operate under a cooperative model with each employee getting their job done to the established standard and within a specified time period. We use cooperation and collaborative activities interchangeably in our High School-aged Summer Institute classroom to encourage participation, create language rich activities, the interchange of ideas and even accountability.

Collaboration, like cooperation, involves two or more members in a group. Unlike cooperation, collaboration is a group enterprise that involves a concerted effort. In collaborative activities students discuss, negotiate the next step, and work together on each part of the assignment or problem to be completed. Collaboration involves a consensual process and a common product. Since discussion is essential, collaborative assignments are language rich, interactive, and enriching for all members involved since, "two (or more) heads are better than one". Individual ideas and understandings are shared, discussed and enriched by other ideas that arise from discussions within the group since each member is regarded as an equally important and valuable member. Language is enriched and learning is therefore optimal and entirely learner-centered. In our Language Institute, students are working collaboratively to create a fairytale, a folk tale, or a myth, based on the story their group has chosen to preview and use as a model for the story they will create. The project criteria has been written into explicit instructions for each group to follow and we teachers are monitoring groups closely to encourage full member participation and equal contribution. Collaboration is a new concept for many students but they are keen to get involved.

When learners work independently they are honing their own skills and ideas without the benefit of learning from or collaborating with other learners who, in collaborative contexts, enrich and enhance learning. Competition is often a result of a person or a group of people who want to prove their skills or knowledge is superior in relation to others. In competition, there is a winner and a loser which can impair the losing person's motivation or it can, conversely, push that person or group to train or study harder in preparation for the next competition. Some people argue that competition is not healthy, but I would argue that a little competition never hurt anyone. I myself am quite competitive, especially with myself, but I see this as positive because I have an i + 1 perspective and approach to life which allows me to continue learning and striving toward a goal just without of my reach; a goal that, once I reach it, another goal is set.

Notwithstanding some potential benefits of competition, in a child-centered learning environment that encourages teamwork and language rich activities that appeal to all learning styles and can involve all four macro skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking, cooperative and collaborative activities are preferred over competitive activities. Two heads are always better than one!

Filed in Spring 2011 | | Comments (0)

* A Lesson in Privilege

Friday, April 1, 2011

By: Diane M. Mora

I've thought and talked about "privilege" in a variety of situations. I keep a list of more than 50 ways I am privileged. Some of my privileges have been gained by effort, others have been gained purely through the accident of birth, and others are the result of a hierarchy of privileges created long before I was born. It's fair to say that even the privileges I now enjoy by previous effort are first and foremost a result of being born with fair skin.

Skin color is the first privilege on my list. I'm aware that skin color, gender, access to education, economics, sexual preference, all factor into the formula for determining privilege as well as disadvantages. I can be on both sides of the privilege coin at any given moment, but fair skin and blue eyes frequently ensure that I will enjoy a favorable position within the realm of privilege.

For a long time I understood privilege conceptually, logically. My understanding was more academic than experiential. I've come to understand privilege in a new way.

On the outside I appear completely Caucasian, entirely American. My last name, Mora, might be attributed to an Italian heritage or marriage to a Hispanic American. But Mora is my birth family name. It's of Spanish origin. By definition on the U.S. Census, on employment applications, loan applications, and education applications, I am Hispanic American. I am second-generation American, however, I don't speak Spanish. I never spoke with my grandparents because we spoke two different languages.

I've been told that my grandfather emigrated through Ellis Island from Spain, and met my grandmother on U.S. soil. She was possibly of Aztec or Mexican descent. I remember their beautiful skin and hair, darker than my own. I have my grandmother's odd blue eyes. We had many things in common as you might expect in a family, but two essential things were different – skin color and language.

My father is first-generation American. He also had beautiful brown skin with dark hair and dark eyes. My father and his eleven siblings were bilingual long before it was a valuable skill; they had no choice. Neither of my grandparents spoke English and the nuns at the Catholic school didn't speak Spanish.

My dad married a White Anglo Protestant woman. Her family disowned her for a period of time as a result. My parents were refused leases on apartments in Kansas City as recently as the 1950's. No one cared that he had just returned from Germany where he served in the U.S. Army. Based solely on my father's appearance (what we would call "racial profiling" today), landlords told my parents to their face that they did not want my father's "kind" in their building.

I have two brothers. One is fair skinned like my mother, my other brother is brown skinned like my father. All three of us come from the same set of birth parents. None of us learned Spanish. I believe my father saw speaking Spanish as a handicap, not an advantage.

Growing up and living in a suburb of Kansas City in the 1960's, my brown skinned brother was taunted by classmates and called "N****r". He hated school and has never gone beyond high school. My fair skinned brother and I are first generation college graduates. Is there a connection?

In June of 2010 I participated in a humanitarian aid project along the Arizona/Mexico border, setting food and water along desert trails so that desperate migrants might have a chance at surviving the harsh desert conditions. Living in the desert for a week gave me many opportunities for reflection. People in the desert taught me many things I hadn't known about U.S. border history and immigration. Things that help me make sense of why my father may have wanted to repress our knowledge and understanding of our Hispanic roots, and his refusal to speak Spanish in our home.

For example, the Immigration Act of 1924 preceded my father's birth by one year. My father was born in Kansas in 1925. I imagine the legislation struck fear into the hearts of my grandparents. By the time my father was four years old, the onset of the Great Depression was creating a rise in anti-Mexican-immigrant sentiment, resulting "in the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Mexican immigrants between 1929 and 1935, including tens of thousands of U.S. citizens of Mexican descent." Were my grandparents and my father scared? I have every reason to believe people were likely to apply racial profiling to them.

In 1954, the INS, under Eisenhower, launched "Operation Wetback", the mass deportation of thousands of Mexicans from the U.S. My parents were married in 1952, so this would have coincided with the time my parents were refused apartment rentals in Kansas City. Is it possible that racial profiling was responsible for deeming my father an unsuitable tenant?

It's June 2010 in Tucson. I'm sitting in the back seat of a Suburban. My two white, blond-haired colleagues are sitting in the front seat. We're returning from our volunteer work in the desert interior. We haven't actually left U.S. soil, but Border Patrol has a stop station between the edge of the desert and Tucson's city limits. The vehicle stops. The guard says hello to my two colleagues. I'm sitting in the back seat wearing a hat. The guard sees that someone is in back, but can't see me fully. He leans around the driver's seat and asks, "Who's back there?" He notices the fair coloring of my skin, and doesn't wait for an answer before waving us on. I wonder if I'd been born with my dad's brown skin, would Border Patrol have asked for my identification?

If (like one of my two brothers) I had been born with my dad's skin coloring, if my father had taught me to speak Spanish, and if someone were to ask me to state my full name it would be difficult to walk around Tucson, Arizona today without feeling very self-conscious and afraid. I'd be fearful of other citizens who harbor negative feelings toward people with brown skin, people who might feel entitled to violate me physically because of my skin color. I'm a citizen by birth, so I wouldn't be arrested or deported, but it's likely that I'd be suspected, questioned, and possibly detained. My fair skin protects me. This is not a privilege I'm particularly proud of. Actually, it saddens me.

My father would be 85 years old if he were still alive. Would he still feel justified in repressing our family history and refusing to speak Spanish to anyone but his brothers and sisters in private? Would he watch the news and tell me, "I told you this was for your own good"?

I went to court in Tucson. I saw the process by which many undocumented immigrants are repatriated. It's called "Streamline", and it does streamline the judicial process. But is this good?

Chains clanked as brown skinned people walked in and out of the courtroom. Every defendant had brown skin. Every defendant – male and female – wore shackles at their wrists and ankles. No distinction was made between those who were simply "guilty" of earning wages to support hungry families and those who were involved in an illegal activity over and above crossing the border. The Judge spoke rapidly, processing and sentencing 80 people in 38 minutes. I thought, "The Judge and the Public Defenders look more Hispanic than I do". Only Border Patrol agents and other security personnel looked White. I realized I was now the Profiler. I tried to comprehend what I saw taking place. I've never seen a human being in chains before except for murderers on television. But this isn't television. These defendants are in chains primarily because of their skin color and their country of birth. They are in chains because they lack privilege, something I gained by a random act of birth.

Could this have been the fate of my grandparents? Might this have been what my father feared as a young man?   Are his fears still realistic?

The conditions for my privilege – white, educated, heterosexual – are not static, but fluid and depends on many external factors that I cannot shed or even always accumulate through effort. I'm not sure I can divest myself of privilege because I'm not solely responsible for its existence nor the conditions by which it favors me. On rare occasions I feel the effects of being non-privileged because of my gender – female. But as a female with fair skin I'm still more privileged in most situations than I would be with my gender with brown skin.

Until I entered my Master's program in 2004 and studied Social Justice, it never occurred to me that my father was "different". I didn't give his skin color much thought. I didn't understand that others might have seen him as different in a threatening way. He was simply my dad.

I never understood that in the 1950's, '60's and '70's my parent's mixed marriage was unusual. But it's here that I discover one lesson in privilege I can be proud of. Being born into my family afforded me an example of just how irrelevant skin color actually is. My parents loved each other enough to risk family ostracism, unfair housing practices, and random stops by local police who, for over 30 years, would detain my father on his way to work in the early mornings of the predominantly white suburban neighborhood we lived in.

I'm privileged in a way few people are because I'm the product of a love that was willing to risk all privilege.

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[*](#) Student-led English Conversation Clubs as a Tool for Promoting Student Empowerment and Learning Outcomes

Friday, April 1, 2011

By: Philip Dierking

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Brazilian educator and pedagogic theorist Paulo Friere once said, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and each other" (1970). Friere's statement highlights the importance of providing learners with the opportunity to engage their environment in order to acquire new knowledge. I discovered this importance first hand through my experiences advising a student-led English conversation club at the University of Djibouti. During my two years working with this club, I became convinced of the ability these organizations possess to create dynamic language learning environments that empower students to engage in meaningful learning tasks. I feel that student-led English conversation clubs should be a mandatory part of any language program that will not only enhance students' learning outcomes, but their social development as well. The following case study will describe the steps taken to implement an English club at the University of Djibouti, and the resulting outcomes. The case study will also demonstrate how the success of these outcomes benefited from principles promoted by a social constructionist theory of learning.

I. Case Study: English Club at the University of Djibouti
As an English professor in Djibouti, I had been curious about the potential of English conversation clubs to fill the learning void created by the lack of learning resources at the university. As the only accredited university in the country, the five year-old University of Djibouti (UD) has a difficult time providing the higher education needs for the over 800,000 person nation. The young UD is still trying to develop its programs and infrastructure, and consequently it lacks sufficient resources to support its students' learning. This means that for English students there are few clubs, organizations, and accessible language resources to help cultivate their learning. Additionally, the teaching culture heavily promotes a teacher-centered, lecture format of teaching with few opportunities for students to engage in discussions or problem-solving within the classroom.

Very early in my first semester I decided to collaborate with a fellow Djiboutian English professor named Fatouma Mahdi to create an English club for our students. Originally I had envisioned rather simplistic ideas for the club, involving a small number of students discussing subjects pre-determined by the teacher. However, I credit Mahdi with having the foresight to suggest that for this English club we should try a different approach: allow the club to be one which the students own and take responsibility for. Adopting this philosophy, we began the English club with the mentality that we would take a backseat role and serve more as a safety net

for the club and its leaders. Adjusting teachers to facilitator roles have been supported by scholars such as Bauersfeld, who claims that teachers need to facilitate the students arriving at their own understanding of the content, allowing them to play a more active role in their learning process (Bauersfeld, 1995).

After advertising the club among our students, we held elections on the first club meeting to elect an executive board that consisted of a club president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, and event planner. From that point on it was the responsibility of the club and its executive board to plan and facilitate English club meetings. They decided on the weekly meeting structure, the topics to be discussed or debated, as well as additional activities. However, Mahdi and I served only as advisers. We attended all meetings and provided helpful feedback at moments when the executive board needed it, but we never took control of a meeting. It was admittedly difficult at first, especially when observing student-led activities that could easily have been more effective if facilitated by myself or Mahdi. However, we remained consistent in not interfering with the student's process, and only provided suggestions in the form of debriefs after each meeting. Our belief was that regardless of the final outcome, as long as the students were attempting these tasks on their own, valuable learning was still taking place.

II. Putting the responsibility for learning with the learner
Earnest Von Glaserfield (1989), in referring to social constructivist theory, argues that rather than placing the responsibility for learning on the teacher (with the students playing a passive and receptive role), the responsibility for learning needs to rest increasingly with the learner. He theorizes that learners look for meaning and will try to find regularity and order in the events of the world even in the absence of full or complete information. Given this notion one can then augment the students' learning processes by placing them in situations where they can naturally engage their environment and negotiate meaning. This process was observed with unprecedented results with my students.

As soon as it was established that club leadership lay in student hands and not the teachers', the students appeared eager to assume the responsibilities of their positions within the club. The executive board members diligently adopted their roles and treated the club like a student government. They organized weekly English club meetings as well as weekly planning meetings for the executive board to develop each week's regular club meeting. For the regular English club meetings, they organized several topics to debate in English each week, as well as several English songs to listen to while reading the words in English.

As time progressed, and as the club members gained confidence in the success of their club meetings, they began to branch out to bigger projects. They created an entirely student-written English language journal to distribute throughout the university, assembled a student theater group that wrote and performed bimonthly short performances for the English club (which also happened to deal with important social issues in their community), and even organized several successful university-wide English language ceremonies where they performed short skits and speeches in English, as well as traditional dances.

III. The effects of learners' confidence and motivation
The most important successes we observed with the English club were the diversity in the

student's learning outcomes. Over the course of the year there was a substantial increase in both the confidence and the English language abilities of our students who were involved with the English Club. I personally observed several of my several students who began the year very timid and with weak English skills. However, after participating with the English club throughout the year, they not only appeared more confident to participate in class but had also managed to catch up to the same level as my stronger students. These results were observed both with their in-class participation and test results. The relationship of our students' confidence and their learning outcomes is also supported by Glaserfeld, who states that, "sustaining motivation to learn is strongly dependent on the learner's confidence in his or her potential to learn" (Glaserfeld, 1989).

Additionally there was dramatic change in students' personal and social development. Once put in the position where the club responsibility lay in their hands, we found that our students began relying more often on each other for help with club projects than the teacher. The students identified peers who were strong in grammar to serve as editors for their English Journal. They also recruited students who were skilled writers to write the scripts for the theater groups. They even turned to talented speakers to help facilitate the club debates. Their motivation to work together in groups helped foster teamwork skills that were normally not emphasized in their classes. They appeared to develop group and leadership skills by going through the motions of task delegation, conflict management, and giving and receiving peer feedback. This was also reflected in the classroom where students were more eager to engage in group work, debates, and critical thinking tasks, and appeared less dependent on myself or other teachers to feed them knowledge.

IV. Implications for the field
Vygotsky (1978) encourages learners to be challenged with tasks that refer to skills and knowledge just beyond their current level of mastery, and to that end the English club served exactly that purpose. The effects of the club and the challenges it provided the students were felt throughout the two years I taught in Djibouti. Besides increasing their oral English abilities, my students became more engaged learners who were more motivated to participate in critical thinking in the classroom, and take more ownership for their learning outside of it. In a time where we are striving to find the right methods to address the learning needs of students globally, it is my recommendation that all language programs implement a form of student-led language group or organization. I am convinced that enhanced learning outcomes will arise from providing students with opportunities to partake in self-directed language tasks and social collaboration. I'm also firmly convinced of the ability of student-led English conversation clubs to create those opportunities.

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* What Kinds of Factors Might Contribute to ESL/EFL Learners' Successes?

Friday, April 1, 2011

By: Eman Elturki

Many Non-Native English Speakers (NNES) coming from remote cultures find it difficult to acclimate to American culture and the educational environment. There are different factors that may affect the learning process of an English learner. Some of them might be related to linguistic factors, while others to socio-cultural ones. The linguistic problems often occur as a result of the influence of first language (L1) such as using L1 grammatical patterns inappropriately in the second language (L2) or pronunciation difficulties. The socio-cultural problems can occur because of the different cultural environment and social habits that differ from the L2 learner's own culture, especially if he or she is a newcomer to the US. This article highlights some of the factors that can play an important role in the developing one's second or foreign language.

Krashen and Terrel (1983) have identified different stages of progress that an L2 learner goes through during the acquisition process: the silent or preproduction stage, the early production stage, the speech emergence stage, the intermediate language proficiency stage, and the advanced language proficiency stage. Knowing the level of language acquisition allows the teacher to work within the student's zone of proximal development (ZPD), that area between what the student is capable of at the moment and the point a teacher wants the student to reach next (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky, you can work in a student's ZPD by "scaffolding" language development, or providing the support a student needs as he or she progresses (in Hill & Flynn, 2006).

Other factors that might contribute to the progress of second language acquisition (SLA) are comprehensible input, language transfer, social interaction, affective filter and motivation. Comprehensible input refers to language being used in ways that make it understandable to the learner even though L2 proficiency is limited (Krashen, 1982). Peregoy and Boyle (2005) suggest some ways in which meaning can be conveyed and make language more understandable such as paraphrasing, repetition of key points, reference to concrete materials and acting out meanings.
Language transfer is another factor that contributes well to L2 proficiency. Some researchers see that academic skills, literacy development, concept formation, subject knowledge, and learning strategies developed in L1 will all transfer to L2.

When vocabulary or oral and written communication skills are expanded in L2, students can increasingly demonstrate their knowledge base developed in L1 (Collier, 1987; Collier & Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 1981, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 1995). In this respect Cummins (1981) defines two important types of language proficiency: Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). He (1981) suggests that CALP is necessary in order for students to use language for thinking and reasoning, rather than exclusively for basic interpersonal communication or conversation. That is, the development of CALP in L1 plays an important role in the development of L2.

Social interaction is considered to be another important factor in L2 development. Vygotsky (1978) argues that the range of skills that can be grown with guidance or peer collaboration surpasses what can be achieved alone. Another factor that is believed to be significant in SLA is what Krashen (1982) called the 'affective filter hypothesis'. This has to do with the social-emotional factors. If the learner has a high affective filter, the learning process is blocked. However, the affective filter is low when the learner is provided with a low-anxiety learning environment, motivation, self-confidence and self-esteem. In Krashen's words "people acquire second languages when they obtain comprehensible input and when their affective filters are low enough to allow the input in" (1982, p. 62).

To summarize, scaffolding, comprehensible input provided by the teacher, language transfer (BICS & CALP), social interaction, affective filter and motivation play a very important role in easing the learning process of an English language learner. Although there are some aspects that might slow down the learner's progress such as tongue problems and the low level of conversational skills; however, the teacher's ways of scaffolding students and encouraging interaction with peers have proven to be good factors in SLA development.

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