

WAESOL World Quarterly

A quarterly publication of the Washington Association for the Education of Speakers of Other Languages

* A Letter from WAESOL President Naomi Elliott

Sunday, April 15, 2012



Dear WAESOL members and friends,

It is hard to believe spring has arrived, and we are warming up! On February 4th, our board had its first meeting of 2012. Our next meeting is April 28th, at Highline Community College, Building 14, Room 105 which starts at 9:00 am. Please join us for a few hours if you are able. We urge you to consider becoming familiar with the board and learning about opportunities to volunteer during this year's conference planning.

During the meeting, we discussed our upcoming annual fall conference to be held in October 2012 at Highline Community College www.highline.edu. Our conference theme "*Where Do We Go From Here? Pathways in Times of Change*" reflects the current political climate in education which demands a timely response to student needs, improved teacher preparation/professional development, and the urgent need to prepare high school and community college level ESL students for their future leaps into higher education opportunities.

The call for proposals will be sent out to members this month. Please consider sharing your unique teaching experience, and research, with us through a wide variety of formats. Please contact the WAESOL Board <http://waesol.org/contact/index.php> if you have any questions regarding proposal submissions, or clock hour availability. This year, presenters will be able to add their email addresses to the program directory. Session power points/handouts submitted

pre-conference will be available electronically pre-conference, and during the conference, via a new barcode system printed on session signs, and may be posted to the WAESOL Conference 2012 website after the conference.

If you are interested in additional professional development opportunities please visit our sister affiliate BC TEAL links for the following upcoming conferences:

TESL Canada 2012 - TESL Interiors: Landscapes of Literacies and Language, October 11-13, 2012

Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops, BC, Canada <http://www.tru.ca/tc2012.html>

BC TEAL 2012 Annual Conference – May 4th and 5th at Capilano University in North Vancouver, BC. The theme of the conference is “ESL: English as a *Sustainable* Language.”

<http://www.bctéal.org/conferences/bc-teal-2012-annual-conference>

Currently, you now have the remarkable opportunity to help TESOL International Association advocate for education policies that matter to you, your students, and the field. Register for TESOL Advocacy Day 2012, June 18-19, Washington DC – Crystal City. Please follow the link for additional information:

http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/sec_document.asp?CID=20886&DID=13716 . Or, to inquire about current opportunities to contact your representatives:

<http://capwiz.com/tesol/officials/congress/?district=08&lvl=C&azip=98391&state=WA>

Thank you for your support,

Naomi Elliott

WAESOL President 2012

Filed in [Spring 2012](#) | | [Comments \(0\)](#)

*** Letter from WAESOL World Quarterly Editor**

Sunday, April 15, 2012

Happy Spring!

Everything is in bloom, the weather is getting warmer and Spring is definitely here. I hope you are all finding time to relax and enjoy the nice weather while it is here.

I am sure most of you are like myself and can't help but get excited about the summertime, whether that just means nice weather or time off of work to spend with family, friends or vacationing. I have to keep reminding myself to stay focused on the end of my school year and make sure that it is a meaningful and productive finish to a good academic year. In order to help myself and hopefully others, this edition of the WAESOL World Quarterly is all about honing

our skills. Each article focuses on a different way we can improve very specific aspects of our teaching skills and better help our students reach their goals. I hope that you find at least one article that helps you!

Speaking of honing skills...As the Editor of WAESOL World Quarterly, I am looking for ways to better serve our members. I have included a survey for all of you members to fill out regarding how we can better serve you through the WAESOL World Quarterly. Please see the article in the Quarterly or click on the link below to fill out the quick and anonymous survey. Thanks in advance for your feedback!

[WAESOL World Quarterly-Member Survey](#)

In other news...We are so excited to announce that we have begun a collaboration with the BC TEAL and their Newsletter. We have decided to share 1 article with the other organization for each publication. Please see the article from Marcia Kim on [3 Teaching Activities, Lesson and Tips](#) in this edition of the WAESOL World Quarterly. If you are interested in reading our neighboring organization's newsletter, please visit the site below:

[BC Teal-Newsletter](#)

I hope that this edition or some of the articles will help you re-focus and finish your academic year or quarter as successfully and productively as you had wanted. Enjoy!

Thank you all for your contributions and continued support of WAESOL.

Take care,

Jodi Ritter

Editor, WAESOL World Quarterly

Filed in [Spring 2012](#), [Winter 2012](#) || [Comments \(0\)](#)

[WAESOL World Quarterly is Seeking YOUR Input!](#)

Sunday, April 15, 2012

Please visit the link below to complete a very short survey regarding the WAESOL World Quarterly and how we can better serve our members. Thanks in advance for your time!

[WAESOL World Quarterly-Member Survey](#)

*** How to Get ESL Students to Accept Your Minimal Marking**

Sunday, April 15, 2012

By:

Isabel Haller, M.Ed, MA
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Teaching writing can be an arduous task, but grading a student's writing can be even more laborious and even futile. However, as writing teachers, we believe that our time spent meticulously marking a paper is time well spent. Unfortunately this is often not the case. As a teacher of ESL writing, I myself, on many occasions have had second drafts of papers submitted where my comments, and editing have been completely ignored. Is this deliberate resistance to my feedback? More than likely it is not. Zamel (1985) notes "teachers' marks and comments usually take the form of abstract and vague prescriptions and directives that students find difficult to interpret." (p.79) After reflecting on my style of grading, I realize that some of my responses to student writing, especially when dealing with content and ideas, are indeed cryptic and potentially confusing. I realize that although I use some standard editing marks, my students may be unsure of how to "correct" what I simply underline, circle or note as being "unclear" or "awkward".

Feedback that concentrates on the quality of content and ideas may be confusing to an ESL student, but feedback on grammatical accuracy may be overwhelming. Compared to teachers who provide feedback on native speakers' writing, ESL teachers usually deal with many more mistakes due to their students' struggle with grammar and usage in their new language. ESL composition teachers may feel compelled to comment on these errors to prevent their students from assuming that their writing is mistake free.

Richard Haswell (1983) advocated a system of minimal marking and his approach could have two main benefits. Minimal marking can help teachers avoid wasting time on vague comments and marks that are ultimately ignored, and it can help students interpret feedback and fix their own work. I see the logic and value behind Haswell's system, however before this method can be applied to ESL writing, students need to understand the pedagogy behind it.

To some students, receiving a paper covered in ink may be discouraging, but many ESL students welcome and expect their teachers' responses even if they do not always understand the comments their teachers make. ESL students may assume that whatever is not marked is correct. They may believe that the only way to improve their writing is to fix every mistake and therefore they may demand that their teacher mark every error. Because of these preconceived notions held by our students, as ESL instructors, in order to effectively implement a system of minimal marking, we must thoroughly explain why we mark some aspects of a paper and not others when choosing to follow a minimal marking method. Before I return any graded papers to students, there are three things that I explain to students in order to transition them to what may be a new system of feedback. My students need to be aware that I take into account carelessness, degree of importance, and a student's innate tendency to avoid correction when choosing to implement minimal marking.

Carelessness It must be pointed out to ESL students, that students in general, regardless of what language they write in, are guilty of carelessness. Students may not proofread carefully; often times, if they had, they may have caught their mistake. Although I may not mark every error, I do advise students to go back through their papers carefully. I emphasize that this often means that they have some careless errors. I tell students to re-read their papers aloud. Often when we read something in our head, our mind compensates for errors and we unconsciously correct these errors, and read them, as they should be. Reading something aloud forces you to read more carefully, and as a result, more errors may be caught. If in a testing situation where reading aloud is not an option, tell students to point to each word that they have written, this will slow down their reading, so to help them identify errors

Degree of importance Students need to understand that each assignment that a teacher gives evaluates different criteria. Sometimes an assignment is being used to evaluate ideas. Other times an assignment may focus on how well ideas can be organized. Some writing tasks may simply assess grammar and correct usage, while other writing pieces may attempt to evaluate content, ideas in addition to grammar and usage. It needs to be explained that even when a teacher assesses several skills at once, there is usually one skill that is weighted more heavily than others. This is easy for students to see if a rubric is used. When using a rubric, tell students to read the rubric before writing, so they know what is the most important skill of focus. Teachers often prioritize target skills. I tell my students that if I mark everything on their paper, especially if it wasn't the target skill, they will not focus on what I feel are the most important aspects that they should be working on.

Tendency to avoid correction Students may quickly learn that taking risks is not rewarded, but rather punished. If every error is marked for correction, students may revert to more simplistic "safe" language and structures. Students need to realize that to advance to the next level, they need to expand their language and try new words and more complex structures. Discuss with your students your policy for using new and more advanced language. Perhaps allow "freebies" for errors on skills not yet taught. Not marking a student's attempt to extend their language may help students feel comfortable taking risks and ultimately will help them grow as writers.

Nancy Sommers (1982) points out that the amount of time that teachers spend on a paper ranges from 20 to 40 minutes. If the product of these efforts are ignored or misunderstood, than this

time is wasted. Minimal marking can be effective, but ESL students due to an extreme desire to improve their language skills, may be resistant to this method and opposed to it. Explaining why you choose to limit your markings may help them to accept this practice and may lead them to be more careful, and creative as they write.

References:

Haswell, Richard H. (1983). Minimal marking. *College English* 45(6):600-604.

Sommers, Nancy(1982). Responding to Student Writing. *College Composition and Communication*, (33) (2), 148-156.

Zamel Vivian (1985). Responding to Student Writing. *TESOL Quarterly*. 19 (1), 79-101.

Filed in [Spring 2012](#) | | [Comments \(0\)](#)

[* Book Review: Q: Skills for Success 1 Listening and Speaking](#)

Sunday, April 15, 2012

By:

Eman Elturki

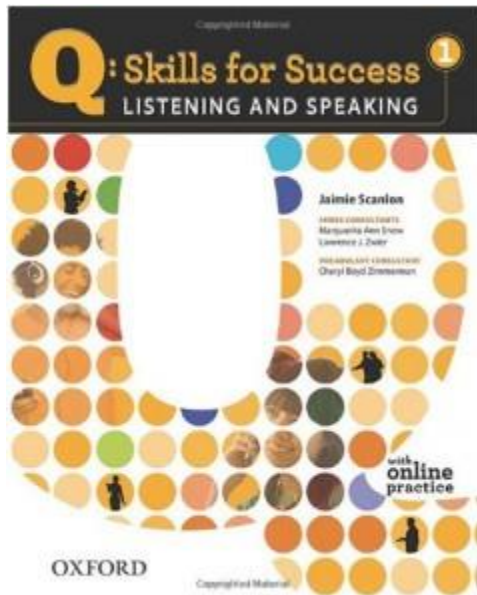
Washington State University

Book: Q: Skills for Success 1 Listening and Speaking

Author: Jaimie Scanlon

Publisher: Oxford University Press (NY, USA)

Publication Date: November 22, 2010



It is not an easy task to find an appropriate textbook for English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) listening and speaking class without worrying about the need to supplement for uncovered points. *Q: Skills for Success 1 Listening and Speaking* can be a great source for teaching a listening and speaking class in addition to working on developing other language skills. *Q: Skills for Success 1 Listening and Speaking* is a part of a six-level series for teaching listening and speaking. It offers essential topics for beginner ESL/EFL learners. The book consists of ten units; (1) Do you know your name? (2) How can you find a good job? (3) Why do we study other cultures? (4) What makes a happy ending? (5) What is the best kind of vacation? (6) What makes you laugh? (7) Why is music important to you? (8) When is honesty important? (9) Is it ever too late to change? (10) When is it good to be afraid? It comes with audio CD, teacher's handbook, a testing program CD-ROM, and online practice. *Q: Skills for Success 1 Listening and Speaking* is especially suitable for beginner-level adult learners to help them develop the communicative language skills that they need in their daily life as well as in academic settings.

I used this book with level three young adults in an academic intensive English program to prepare the students for study in the United States. *Q: Skills for Success 1 Listening and Speaking* is rich with various topics related, for example, to anthropology, hospitality and tourism, management, psychology, sociology, language studies, physiology, advertising, human resources, linguistics, and advertising. The topics are presented in the form of radio or TV interviews, presentations, podcasts, university lectures, classroom discussions, TV news reports, conversations, and job interviews. The listening tracks are clear and maintain characteristics of natural speech such as the vocalizations *um* and *ah*. They can be easily comprehended by beginner ESL learners. There are different interesting tasks to practice, for instance, listening for main ideas, listening for details, predict content, make inferences to understand a speaker's attitude, listen for examples, recognize jokes to understand a speaker's intent, recognize numbers and dates. As for speaking, students practice to ask for repetition and clarification, role-play an

interview, take notes and prepare for a discussion or presentation, eye contact, ask follow-up questions to keep the conversation going, conduct interview, report results of a survey, compose questions and organize them into a survey, and credit sources to identify where information came from. The activities focus on enhancing the critical thinking of students by engaging them in discussions or asking about their perspectives on certain issues. The tasks are appropriate for pair and group work.

In addition to listening and speaking, each unit has explicit teaching of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The covered grammar points are simple present, simple past, should/shouldn't, *because* and *so*, future expressions with *be going to*, gerunds, conjunctions *and* and *but*, imperative, *so* and *such* with adjectives). The pronunciation sections include intonation in yes/no and information questions, past tense *-ed*, reduced vowels, word stress, reduction of *be going to*, the 3rd person *-s* ending for simple present verbs, intonations in questions about choices, linkages of consonants to vowels, content word stress in sentences, and linking vowel sounds. At the end of each unit, there is a list with the newly introduced vocabulary.

The topics of this book, such as cultures and vacations, were appealing to my students and evoked classroom discussions. Furthermore, my students enjoyed the different activities suggested by the book; they might be used as they are or adjusted to meet the lesson objectives. For example, in the unit about 'honesty', students listened to interesting facts about the percentages of cheating in schools in the United States and China. After practicing how to use numbers, I had them design a survey and ask one another questions like *have you ever told a lie?* Then, they were given a few minutes to organize their results and share them with the class in the form of a presentation using appropriate ways studied in the unit to report the results of a survey. The variety of the topics and activities presented in each unit spares the teacher the need for supplementary material. Additionally, the student book comes with an access code that can be found behind the back cover. This code enables the student to register online and obtain extra practice for each unit. I assigned the online practice as homework and designed a quiz from the online practice as well as the chapter after the completion of each unit.

Although this book provides rich material to teach listening and speaking as well as other language skills, it has some drawbacks. The units are too long. Even though I met with my class five days a week for almost one hour, it was hard for me to cover all the points and activities in the unit. Moreover, the grammar points are explained in too much detail followed by exercises. A teacher might spend the whole class duration working on the grammar section without having the chance to go over the other sections of the lesson. Therefore, if you decide to use this book, you might need to skip some sections or assign them as homework. All in all, despite these negative aspects, *Q: Skills for Success 1 Listening and Speaking* can be used as an effective source in a listening and speaking class.

* Curbing Cheating for Accurate Assessment

Sunday, April 15, 2012

By:

Davey Young

Over the course of the last year I have been teaching freshmen and sophomores in mandatory English classes at a university in China. My classes contain a wide range of both ability and interest in English, which has made it difficult to conduct an accurate assessment of my students' abilities. This challenge is further confounded by enormous class sizes, a general reluctance to participate in class discussion, and apathetic students. More meddlesome still is many students' inclination to nefarious means of making the grade.

Students in China and elsewhere can be quick to concoct various means of cheating on traditional means of assessment such as written tests, and will often copy homework or other out-of-class work from each other or outside sources. It is important to keep in mind that these students generally don't see anything wrong with this way of completing work. It is simply a means to an end. It is very common for me to see, just before class, students who are sitting less than a meter away busily copying a homework assignment from a classmate before the bell rings. I've prompted some of my brightest and most motivated students to explain a particular answer and heard the reply "I don't know; I found it on the internet." In the Western tradition this sort of behavior is seriously frowned upon, but in the Confucian educational tradition of rote learning from those who hold the knowledge (combined with an extremely competitive, test-oriented education system) it is the norm. This style of applying knowledge also affects written work, as students in China often memorize entire essays to regurgitate on standardized tests like the TOEFL and CET. While we as Western teachers need to learn to take cheating in other educational systems with a grain of salt, we also need to stymie it from interfering with our ability to properly determine needs or assign a grade.

Here are a few tips on how to garner a clear and accurate assessment of student performance and learning that is not confounded by the myriad ways in which students can muddy the waters. It goes without saying that cheating is by no means limited to a single country or academic environment, and so I hope these tips will prove useful to teachers everywhere.

1. Rule number one: Above all else, keep in mind that students may be operating in a culture which tacitly condones cheating. This is important, as catching a student in the act can color a Western instructor's opinion of that student in the future, creating a negative bias in objective assessment. Do not judge your students for cheating! I've never known a

student to cheat out of malice towards the teacher. In fact, students often cheat not to help themselves, but to help a friend. From their perspective, their acts are altruistic.

2. At the outset of the course, communicate clearly to your students why you do not want them to cheat in your class. Namely, that such behavior can give a false impression of their proficiency and thereby lead to a lot of problems down the road.
3. Make a cheating policy and stick to it. Being lenient will only create a bad precedent that will haunt you throughout the course.
4. Change up your means of assessment. If students get comfortable with your style of testing, they'll have an easier time finding shortcuts.
5. Create multiple versions of the same test. Randomize items across two or three versions of the same test and distribute them so that no two neighbors have the same version. This can create a headache when grading, but helps guarantee test validity.
6. Change up the seating arrangement on test day. If you spring a new seating chart on students, they may not be as likely to count on cues from friends.
7. Embrace using cheat sheets. Consider making tests open-book or open-note and adjust the difficulty or complexity of the test accordingly. Design items that require flexible use of forms over rote memorization. (This is generally good advice.)
8. When collecting tests in a crowded classroom, don't walk around the room or ask students to pass their test papers down the row. Instead, simply instruct the students to place the test face down on the desk and leave the room once they're finished. Turning your back on students or creating a hubbub of hand-changing gives students a chance to copy answers or consult with peers.
9. Ban phones. While many students rely on smart phones for dictionaries, they can also store cheat sheets, allow a means of communication between students, and enable students to take a photo of the test paper to be passed on to other classes.
10. Let your students know you're watching. Move around the room randomly and change your pace. Don't let students become so comfortable that they'll pull out a hidden cheat sheet.
11. Don't be naïve! Just because a student is a good person does not mean he or she will not cheat. Our belief that cheating is bad is culturally based; our students do not necessarily share our cultural background. Even the strongest and most motivated students can resort to cheating.
12. For writing assessments, only rely on in-class writing.
13. Create novel writing prompts that elicit personal experiences and impede rote responses.
14. Experiment with peer assessment. For group projects and presentations, allow students to assess the contribution that their group members put into the work. (This must be done delicately in eastern Asian countries, which are more collectivist compared to Western countries. Allow such assessment to be done anonymously and discreetly.)
15. Take the time to administer oral exams. Even with large class sizes, there is no better way to assess a student's conversational proficiency than through sitting them down and giving them novel prompts and questions.

Finally and critically, know your enemy! Your enemy is not the cheating student, but the cheating method. I have either seen myself or heard anecdotally of cheat sheets printed on

beverage bottle ingredient labels, written delicately on fingernails or the inside of glasses frames, and even posted on the wall behind the teacher in Chinese (in a case when the teacher couldn't read the language). Students can be very creative, and as much as we may lament how their creativity is employed, it is in some cases certainly used to cheat. What teachers need to do is be creative, too, in order to outfox the fox.

Filed in [Spring 2012](#), [Uncategorized](#) || [Comments \(0\)](#)

*** Finding the Courage to Test**

Sunday, April 15, 2012

By:

Karrie Zylstra, ESL Instructor

At the end of every quarter, I give my adult intermediate students two CASAS tests and two tasks. My students take the reading and listening in CASAS and I choose tasks for them to demonstrate their abilities in writing and speaking. Most of them are focused on moving into career programs and entering upper level academic classes, so the results of these tests and my decision about their progress matter to them. Some won't be able to wait if they cannot enter a program this quarter – they will go back to work to feed their families.

In the fall of 2011 I gave my students these tests without too much preparation outside of the coursework we'd done in class. I watched them panic on the days of the tests. While many did make progress, I wanted to see if I could use the next round of testing as an opportunity to improve their skills for both test-taking and, more broadly, dealing with stressful life situations.

From the Start

I started winter quarter with goal setting and having them look at the ways that goal setting can improve their ability to succeed. I used exercises with optical illusions to show them how we can miss things right in front of us if we don't have a clear focus or if we are busy telling ourselves that something is impossible.

Clear Expectations

I began to prepare them more directly two weeks in advance of our tests. We discussed what tests they would take on which day. I had given them a handout at the beginning of the quarter which we reviewed, they asked questions and I clarified. After this, I told them the most important material to review at home so that they could best prepare.

Test Importance

A few days later we discussed why it was important to do well on tests and tasks. As I said, my adult students are very motivated but I took the time to explain what the results meant and laid out what scores to achieve for which levels of classes. I said that, as an instructor, I could advance them even if their tests were not ideal but that the other instructors would still look at those test scores. I explained that scores do not always reflect their abilities but that they were still mandated and still mattered. We also took the time to remember the goals they had set for themselves at the beginning of the quarter.

Short Practices

We then began to do short practices related to the reading tests. I gave them a test practice from the textbooks we use and a time limit of 15 minutes. We would then check the answers together as a class, clarifying what they might not understand. We did this at the beginning of class in the same room they would test in until the day of the test.

It's All in Your Head

Two weeks in advance, I asked them to practice inside their minds feeling relaxed and confident on the day of the test. Much as I did for myself when I gave a presentation, I had them think of a similar situation where they felt comfortable. Maybe they were writing a letter or reading something in their first language. They could then hold on to the feeling as they moved in their minds to the new situation of testing. When they felt fear, they could move back in their minds to the familiar and comfortable setting. I instructed them to practice this over the two weeks frequently – at least 3 times a day.

And Next Quarter

Although I wouldn't say they improved more dramatically on their test scores, I would say that they were noticeably more relaxed. This spring quarter I have a few more ideas to try. Below are my steps for improvement:

- Share my own goals for the class at the beginning of the quarter
- Share with students the statistical doubts about the validity of standardized tests to help them let go of the connection between their personal worth and the scores. I told them I had doubts myself but think that hearing it from experts might benefit them.
- Incorporate a listening test practice
- Design a worksheet to guide their test visualization practice
- Practice visualizing a relaxed test atmosphere as a class at least once

Truthfully, I often get lost in the day to day of the third person singular, forgetting to keep the end in mind. It worked very well for me to remind myself and my students throughout the quarter that the tests and tasks will come. Finding the courage to test made a difference that I could feel and one that I hope will last long after they have left my class to become successful elsewhere.

*** Dolch Words: Teaching Sight Reading to Adult ESL Students**

Sunday, April 15, 2012

By:

Elizabeth Standal

Seattle University (TESOL Graduate Student)

I recently started teaching Beginning ESL to a small but very diverse group of adult students. These students have come to the US from native countries on three different continents; some have been here for many years, while others arrived a matter of months ago. But one thing almost all these students have in common is that their reading and writing skills in English are not very strong. Some did not receive any education—in any subject, including literacy skills—in their native languages; some speak languages that do not use the Roman alphabet. I soon realized that this situation presented challenges that I was not used to dealing with.

My previous teaching experiences had involved language learners who were businesspeople or university students. I had never taught students who struggled with basic reading, so I set out to learn more about teaching ESL to learners in this situation. As I continued my research, two phrases I read and heard repeatedly were “sight reading” and “Dolch words”. For example, Peregoy and Boyle (2004) refer to sight word recognition as something that should *precede* “instruction on specific sound/symbol correspondences” (pp. 114-5)—not a sequence I would have expected. What is meant by “sight reading” and “Dolch words”, and how can they be applied in the classroom?

Edward William Dolch (1889-1961) was a professor of education who, over a period of many years in the mid-twentieth century, published a number of works on how to teach reading skills. While he focused on teaching reading to children whose first language was English, his work on sight reading is also relevant to ESL professionals teaching early reading skills.

In his work *Psychology and Teaching of Reading* (1951), Dolch describes “sight words” as words that, for a reader, are “known so quickly that we are unaware that we are recognizing them, and we are instantly conscious of meaning. We ‘see through the words to the meaning’, just as we see clearly through a plate glass window” (p. 149). In other words, “sight reading” involves instant recognition of the word, rather than spelling or sounding the word out to arrive at the meaning.

The school where I teach my Beginning ESL class encourages instructors to use the “Dolch list” as a starting point for teaching sight word recognition. This list, originally created by Dolch in 1936, includes 220 “service words” (Dolch’s term). These “service words” are a good foundation for sight word vocabulary because they are words that recur in many different types of text—for example, function words such as pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions, and also basic verbs and adjectives such as “get”, “go”, “was”, “good”, etc. Dolch did not include any nouns in his 220-word list, but provided a supplemental list of 95 nouns.

I began making flash cards with words from the Dolch list; using these cards for various activities has become part of the regular class routine. I started with words that were already in students’ speaking vocabularies, such as “and”, “the”, etc., and now I also use words that students are learning about in class. Some cards have truly become “sight words”—core words that students can recognize every time they see them—while others are newer ones that students are still in the process of learning, but that they will recognize in spoken form. These new cards are often used when introducing important new vocabulary; they are displayed as the word is spoken. After numerous exposures, the newer cards can eventually make their way into the category of “sight words”.

At the very least, I spend some time in class showing students the cards in their sight word vocabulary as review. At first, I would say the word aloud and ask them to repeat it while looking at the card. Now, students are adept at recognizing these core words and will say them without prompting when the card is shown.

I try to vary the uses of these cards to hold student interest. Other exercises include asking students to use the word shown on the card in a spoken sentence, or to assemble small sets of cards into sentences. For example, students could be asked to reproduce short dictated sentences (“How are you?”, “How is she?”) with the cards, or use the cards to provide answers to spoken questions (“I am fine”, “She is fine”). Sometimes students are shown several cards (perhaps 10 to 15) and asked questions on alphabetic and phonemic awareness, such as, “Which words have the letter ‘h’? Which words have the sound ‘rr’?”

Other activities are more like games; for example, a few cards could be distributed to each student and then students should raise their hand, or raise the card, when they hear “their” words spoken aloud. As a partner exercise, students could each be given a few cards and, without showing them to their partner, dictate the whole word or spell out the word on each card, which their partner writes down. These activities have worked well in class; the latter can also be a helpful way to check up on students’ alphabetic awareness—do students remember how to say “e” and “i”, “g” and “j”?

The Dolch list was created a long time ago, but is still highly relevant to beginning readers. After all, Dolch’s “service words” (pronouns, question words, basic verbs, etc.) have not changed much since 1936 and are still very frequently used in most texts. That said, the fact that this list was designed for children whose first language is English means that some adjustments should be made for adult ESL students.

The list is organized into five sections: Pre-primer, Primer, First, Second, and Third. The implication is that the Pre-primer words should be learned first, then the Primer words, and so on. However, ESL teachers may not find it logical to adhere closely to this sequence of progression. Dolch himself addressed the problem of selecting words and organizing them into such categories: "...there are just too many 'common words' in the language. There are at least 1,000 words that are all about equally common, meaning that they are used constantly by everyone" (p. 178). This means that this kind of organization is bound to be somewhat arbitrary. Words in the Pre-primer list such as "funny" or "jump" may not actually be of prime importance or relevance to adult ESL students. Such words can be omitted or replaced with words used more frequently.

The supplemental list of nouns may also be seen as problematic; it includes "good-bye", but not "hello", and "man", but not "woman" or "people". Some of these nouns may be interesting and relevant to children, but less so to adult learners, such as "Santa Claus", "rabbit", or "squirrel". Dolch was very dubious about creating a list of nouns as sight words because, unlike the 220 "service words", specific nouns are less likely to recur across a wide variety of texts: "When the content changes, the nouns change...A sight vocabulary of nouns can never be widely used" (p. 180). In my class, I just create cards with nouns related to vocabulary learned in class, without paying much attention to Dolch's noun list.

I think my students feel a bit more comfortable with written language now that they have a set of core words that they are able to recognize instantly, and have gained more practice recognizing sounds and letters within words. Their set of sight words is slowly but steadily growing, a very encouraging sign for both the students and the teacher.

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[* Impairments and Disabilities of Speech, Language, or Hearing in English Language Learners](#)

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Parents and ESL teachers may be the first to recognize that a child has problems making certain sounds when speaking the home language and English, respectively, but they are not certain how to proceed because they cannot determine the cause and often hope the child will outgrow this way of speaking. *TESOL Quarterly* recently published an article, reviewing *Second Language Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Perspective* (Yazan, 2012) and reminding us that ESL teachers are expected to keep up with “social, cultural, and historical macro structures. . . . [particularly] application of activity theory in order to explore the relationship between L2 teaching and such macro factors as educational reform policies, curricular mandates, high-stakes tests, and norms of schooling” (p. 221). To this end, we provide information about Washington’s mandates and assessments for students with special needs, focusing on ELLs.

Public schools in Washington normally provide resources to help determine the nature of the problem and provide professional help for those “who have impairments and disabilities of speech, language and hearing” (EWU website accessed 27 February 2012). Washington was identified as one of the Western states to have implemented pilot programs in 55 schools as of 2009 (Harr-Robins et al, p. 13). The Regional Educational Laboratory published a report, *The status of state-level response to intervention [RTI] policies and procedures in the West Region states and five other states*, and the authors state a basic mission of the program:

RTI programs are intended to provide evidence-based interventions that are aligned with individual student needs by identifying students requiring support early, monitoring their progress frequently, and providing more intensive interventions for students showing the least progress (National Association of State Directors of Special Education cited in Harr-Robins, 2009, p.13).

In Washington schools, speech therapists are clearly needed and often do the following:

- * Provide classroom-based services
- * Co-teach with classroom teachers and reading specialists

* Work with students who are at risk for reading and learning difficulties and with children who are experiencing academic failure

* Provide training to parents, teachers, and administrators to help support students' academic and social success. (p. 13)

The Special Education Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) produced a report funded by a federal grant under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA). The report, *Using Response to Intervention (RTI) for Washington's Students* (2006, updated 2011), is available online, and OSPI allows the copying and distribution of their results. Of greatest interest to ESL professionals is the following information about screening:

Screening: 34 CFR § 300.302 provides that screening by a teacher or specialist to determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation is not an evaluation for special education eligibility requiring parental consent.

• **SLD Areas:** 34 CFR § 300.309(a)(1) provides that to identify an SLD an evaluation must show that a student does not achieve adequately for his or her age or to meet State- approved grade-level standards when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the student's age or State-approved grade-level standards, in one or more of the following areas:

- a. Oral expression;
- b. Listening comprehension;
- c. Written expression;
- d. Basic reading skills;
- e. Reading fluency skills;
- f. Reading comprehension;
- g. Mathematics calculation; or
- h. Mathematics problem solving.

• **Rule Out Other Factors:** 34 CFR § 300.309(a)(3) provides that in order to determine a student has SLD his or her lack of sufficient progress in the above areas may not primarily result from:

- a. A visual, hearing, or motor disability;
- b. Mental retardation;
- c. Emotional disturbance;

d. Cultural factors;

e. Environmental factors or economic disaf. Limited English proficiency.

(2011, p. xxvii)

Shortly after TESOL was founded in 1966, an important article appeared in *TESOL Quarterly*, “Some Effects of Bilingualism on Certain Clinical Speech Procedures” (Hannah & Brooks, 1968). Here the authors explain that “interdisciplinary programs still find a need to refer certain international students who, in addition to a second-language difficulty, have a speech disorder which interrelates with this” (p. 293). Here they make “an attempt to indicate how the ramifications of such a student’s bilingualism require the introduction of certain modifications in the clinic procedures ordinarily followed” (p. 293). They describe the problems faced by a bilingual stutterer:

...his frequently tenuous command of the rhythm pattern of the English language is considerably weakened by a series of seemingly uncontrollable repetitions, prolongations, filled and unfilled pauses, all of which make communication almost impossible. Efforts to communicate in the second language are accompanied by added feelings of inadequacy, since listener reactions frequently resemble those experienced in the first language during periods of nonfluency, but seem to be present almost continuously in the second language. (p. 293)

At the same time, Wallace Lambert was conducting longitudinal studies of bilinguals in Canada and finding that their overall academic achievement was greater than that of monolinguals. For this reason, most ESL professionals agree that bilingualism is highly desired, and the benefits far outweigh the challenges. At the same time, as ESL professionals, we might ask the following questions:

1. *How can we determine if the ELL has a speech or language problem in the home language or if it is simply a problem the ELL has in English? What signs should we be looking for?*

ELLs are often referred for speech-language evaluations because they are struggling in class and appear to be performing at a decreased level in comparison to monolingual English-speaking peers. ELLs may demonstrate certain language behaviors or have difficulties in communication skills that are similar to monolingual English-speaking children with language disorders (Shipley & McAfee, 2009). Among the variables to consider are: normal processes of second-language acquisition, the amount and type of exposure to English, English proficiency levels including social and academic language, and skills and behaviors in both the home language and English that would suggest a speech or language disorder.

Normal processes of second-language acquisition, which may include a silent period, language interference/transfer, code switching, and language loss, factor into determining a language difference between the home language (L1) and English (L2) or a language disorder (Roseberry-McKibbin & Brice, n.d.; Shipley & McAfee, 2009). Many ELLs who are exposed to English for the first time will use L1 only until they realize that is not the language spoken at school. This phase does not last long; however, many ELLs who are learning English may then enter into a

silent period. During this time, ELLs are more focused on listening and comprehending English rather than verbally communicating in class. It has also been suggested that the younger the child is the longer the silent period may last. Preschool ELLs may potentially demonstrate this silent behavior for one or two years, whereas, the older child may stay in this silent period for as little as a few weeks or a few months (Tabors, 1997, 1998; Roseberry-McKibbin & Brice, n.d.). After the silent period, many ELLs may produce shortened phrases in L2 because they now have learned words for basic needs and social interactions and memorized chunks of language (Tabors, 1998).

It is common for ELLs to produce errors in English which are influenced by their home language. This process is known as language interference or language transfer. For instance, double negatives are required in Spanish, so the ELL may produce the utterance *I don't have no more* (Shipley & McAfee, 2009). In Spanish superiority is signified by using *mas*, so the ELL may produce the utterance *This cake is more big* (Shipley & McAfee, 2009). These utterances reflect the transfer of language characteristics from L1 to L2.

Another common behavior is code switching or shifting between languages within an utterance. For instance, a Spanish speaker might say *Me gustaria manejar – I'll take the car* meaning *I'd like to drive – I'll take the car*. This behavior is demonstrated not only in children acquiring a second language but also in proficient bilinguals (Roseberry-McKibbin & Brice, n.d.).

Some ELLs may lose their skills in L1 while they are focused on acquiring L2. This process of language loss relates to subtractive bilingualism, which may affect the child's school and family life. The goal for ELLs is to go through additive bilingualism achieving success in both languages and cultures (Roseberry-McKibbin & Brice, n.d.). The aforementioned processes are all considered normal experiences during second-language acquisition. They are indicative of a language difference not a language disorder.

An additional piece to working with ELLs is the recognition and understanding of the differences between social and academic language, specifically Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS refers to everyday conversational context-embedded language (e.g., participating in physical education class or asking permission to go the bathroom; Roseberry-McKibbin, 2007). It has been suggested that the average ELL requires approximately two years to acquire BICS (Roseberry-McKibbin & Brice, n.d.). CALP involves language typical of the classroom that is context-reduced (e.g., teacher lectures, comprehending information textbooks, following written instructions, classroom and standardized tests; Roseberry-McKibbin, 2007). The average ELL requires five to seven years to acquire and successfully demonstrate CALP similar to a monolingual English-speaking peer (Roseberry-McKibbin & Brice, n.d.). This difference between social and academic language is known as the BICS-CALP gap. An ELL may demonstrate use of adequate conversational English, but struggles in content-reduced academic areas such as reading, writing, science, or any school course that is context reduced. Educators may suspect a language-learning disability in this situation; however, in reality, the language gap is the real reason for the ELL's academic difficulties. Other variables that may affect the language of ELLs are any

avoidance behaviors, their individual personalities, anxiety level, and their motivation to use English (Roseberry-McKibbin, 2007).

The language proficiency level of the student must be considered when determining difference from disorder because a lack of proficiency in English is not indicative of language impairment. According to the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), language proficiency is provided by the results of the *Washington English Language Proficiency Assessment (WELPA)*, which includes the *Washington Language Proficiency Test II Placement Test* and the *Annual Test* to establish eligibility for and continuation of ESL services. This tool evaluates reading, writing, listening, and speaking knowledge and skills (OSPI, n.d.). An ELL is assigned a proficiency level/number based on his/her test performance: Beginning/Advanced Beginning=1, Intermediate=2, Advanced=3, Transitional=4. Many language proficiency tests assess BICS and not CALP. It may be necessary for the ELL teacher or the SLP to review this particular tool so they understand what skills are actually being assessed. Proficiency testing should involve both L1 and L2 and the test should evaluate BICS and CALP. Knowledge of the types of test questions will provide more information regarding proficiency levels.

The following are some factors that the SLP would be evaluating during an assessment with an ELL: phonology, grammar, and pragmatics in both languages; ability to effectively use language in different contexts; level of participation; ability to follow directions and make requests; discourse organization; ability to describe objects and events; ability to make predictions; ability to use contextual cues to comprehend; and degree of difficulty to learn a new skill (Shipley & McAfee, 2009).

The following are examples of behaviors that may be present in an ELL with a language-learning disability: inappropriate nonverbal aspects of language; inappropriate questions and responses; inability to express basic wants and needs; decreased ability to initiate, respond, and maintain conversations with peers; inappropriate turn-taking skills; uses more gestures and nonverbal communication when verbalizations are expected; unorganized discourse; word-finding issues not related to English proficiency; and requires a great deal of repetition of information (Shipley & McAfee, 2009). Although, the SLP will be specifically examining many speech and language behaviors and skills, it would be beneficial if the ESL and regular education teacher offered information regarding the ELLs communication in the classroom. Collaboration among the professionals is critical to provide the best services for ELLs.

2. *How would we begin the conversation with parents to determine if the ELL has the same difficulty in the home language?*

The first consideration would be what language to use during this conversation, the home language or English. Often, parents of ELLs have limited English skills; therefore using an interpreter is crucial. If the ELL's ESL teacher was fluent in the family's home language, then he/she is the obvious person to facilitate this conversation. If not, then an interpreter should be involved. If the school does not have direct access to an interpreter, another school employee, parent-liaison, or community member who was fluent in the ELLs home language could also serve in this capacity. The SLP and ESL teacher should work together to create a list of

questions regarding the child's use of L1, specifically, achievement of developmental milestones and current speech and language behaviors in various contexts. (See question 5 for a more discussion language development information).

Non-English-speaking parents of ELLs may not understand how the school system in the U.S. works. Information regarding the school curriculum, standards, classroom and assessment materials, teacher and school expectations, and their rights as parents also needs to be communicated during this initial conversation (ÍColorín Colorado!, 2007). Depending on the culture of the ELL's family, it may be helpful to provide general information and questions to parents in translated written form and then follow up with a discussion with an interpreter. However, the potential reading level of the parents needs to be considered.

3. *What resources are available in the schools in Washington? How do we go about accessing them?*

Detailed information regarding English language development standards for teachers to use in the assessment of bilingual children is available through the OSPI. When working with families who do not speak English, Washington state educators and service providers have access to phone interpretation services for communication and meeting purposes. The school district is required to first establish an account with Washington State Department of General Administration. Once an account is established the school or district has access to interpreters in more than 170 languages. Online training is also provided for those who are working with translators and interpreters. Many schools or districts may have interpreters on staff or direct access to them.

Educators also have access to the office of Migrant and Bilingual Education which manages the Migrant Education Program and the Transitional Bilingual Instructional Program and Title III (OSPI, n.d.). The Migrant Education Program provides services to migrant children and their families. The Transitional Bilingual Instructional Program and Title III ensure quality educational opportunities for ELLs. Of course, school districts have access to ESL programs, SLPs, and other necessary service providers.

4. *When is the best time to seek professional help?*

Once the determination is made that the child is exhibiting speech or language-learning problems in L1 and L2 not related to English proficiency, typical second-language acquisition processes, or lack of response to RTI (if that was available), then that child should be referred for a full speech-language or special education evaluation as soon as possible.

If there is concern about an ELL's speech or language skills in L1, the ESL teacher, regular education teacher, and SLP should all be involved. If the ELL requires an evaluation, then that student should be assessed by the SLP with the involvement of an interpreter.

5. *What should be done if the parents feel that the child will outgrow the problem or there is no problem?*

There are many cultural parameters that may impact speech and language services with various cultures (see Brislin, 1994 for an explanation of cultural parameters). Different cultures have diverse attitudes toward disabilities and beliefs regarding their causes may affect the parents' attitudes toward recognition, assessment, and treatment of a disability. Understanding the cultural beliefs and values of a family and determining the family's level of acculturation are important when we work with them to understand the benefits of intervention services for their child.

Knowledge of typical development in the ELL's home language is essential for service providers in this situation to provide examples of speech and language problems to the parents. There are many resources documenting child development in different languages or cultures that may be helpful to service providers and educators. A few of these sources are: ASHA (<http://www.asha.org/practice/multicultural>), the Early Childhood Research Institute on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS; <http://clas.uiuc.edu/index.html>), and Child Find (<http://www.childfindidea.org>).

As previously mentioned, parents' understanding of what is expected of their child at school and the child's current level of functioning is also necessary for this discussion. Ultimately, parental consent is necessary for services.

6. *What can ESL teachers do to be sure that the ELL is getting the services needed?*

The ESL teacher should make a referral to special education services or speech-language services in order for the ELL to receive the necessary evaluation. ESL teachers should refer to their school's or district's referral and assessment procedures for specific information.

7. *What does the law allow in terms of providing an interpreter during speech-language assessment and therapy? How are interpreters used?*

We don't have anything called a bilingual assistant in our field. We have slp-a—that's an SLP aid, but the aid may or may not be bilingual. Interpreters are hired for the assessment and parent meeting only. According to ASHA's IDEA Issue Brief regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students (n.d.), IDEA 2004 and the reauthorization in 2006 supports appropriate service delivery to this population. Specifically, it stresses the use of non-biased assessment materials; assessments should be provided in L1 unless it is not possible; limited English proficiency is not considered a factor in determining disability; parents are entitled to an interpreter at the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting; and if a child does present with limited English proficiency, the language needs of the child must be considered within the IEP (ASHA IDEA Issue Brief, n.d.) A significant addition to IDEA 2006 is the provision for alternative assessment materials and procedures for ELLs in order to obtain the most accurate information regarding academic, developmental, and functional knowledge and skills (ASHA IDEA Issue Brief, n.d.).

If the child is dominant in L1, then the child should be assessed in L1 and L2 to gain as much information as possible regarding his/her language skills in both. Prior to any assessment or meeting with an interpreter and the ELL and his/her family, the SLP and interpreter should discuss their roles and expectations for the assessment or meeting. The SLP conducts the

assessment, while the interpreter communicates between the child and the SLP, as well as the SLP and the family. During the post-assessment debriefing between the SLP and the interpreter, it would be appropriate for the SLP to ask the interpreter his/her opinion of the child's skills in L1.

Research suggests that intervention should also be conducted in L1 and L2 (Gutiérrez-Clellen, 2001; Thordardottir, 2010; Wyatt, 2012). Bilingual intervention may be the best option to maintain and increase L1 skills and aid in the acquisition of L2 (Roseberry-McKibbin, 2002; Wyatt, 2012). The goal for ELLs is to be proficient bilinguals. If an SLP has access to an interpreter who speaks the child's home language, then intervention in both languages may be possible. If an SLP is not fluent in the child's home language then he/she should only treat in English. However, SLPs should support the ELL's home language and culture in any way they can.

8. *How do SLPs determine if the ELL needs an interpreter?*

If L1 is the dominant language for the ELL and he/she lacks English proficiency, an interpreter should be involved in the assessment. Whether or not an interpreter is involved in intervention with an ELL varies among schools and SLPs.

9. *Are most SLPs trained to work with ELLs?*

While SLPs should be aware that they need to consider both languages during an assessment (Bedore & Peña, 2008; Kohnert, 2010; Peña & Bedore, 2011), many have not received training regarding ELLs. Graduate programs in communication sciences and disorders differ in their offering of specific classes that focus on bilingualism and ELLs; however, cultural knowledge and skills necessary to work with diverse populations are incorporated into many classes in programs throughout the US and guidelines are provided by ASHA (2004). Only 8% of school clinicians reported that they received training in bilingual assessment (ASHA School Survey, 2008). According to a demographic profile of ASHA members (2009), 5% of SLPs are considered bilingual service providers. To be a bilingual service provider, an SLP needs to have native or near-native proficiency in a second language (ASHA, 1989).

That being said, SLPs have a responsibility to be culturally competent clinicians (ASHA, 2011a; ASHA, 2011b). Cultural competence includes, but is not limited to, awareness and acceptance of diversity; awareness of one's own culture; and cultural knowledge of the populations you are service (ASHA, 2011a; 2011b). Cultural competence is a continuum and evolves over time (ASHA, 2011b). SLPs should be knowledgeable of federal and state laws regarding service delivery with ELLs. SLPs must also understand the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the students they serve and that these characteristics vary among cultural groups and individuals within a specific cultural group. Cultural competence is required to conduct fair, appropriate, and accurate assessments and intervention (ASHA, 2004; ASHA, 2011a; ASHA, 2011b). ASHA recently reemphasized the commitment to this aspect of our profession by updating the professional issues and position statements regarding cultural competence for practicing clinicians (2011a; 2011b). SLPs are required to complete continuing education requirements to

maintain certification. If they lack the necessary skills to work with ELLs, then it is up to the individual to seek out learning opportunities to advance their knowledge in this area.

10. *What are the greatest concerns SLPs tend to have regarding ELLs?*

A great concern for many SLPs is that they use the most culturally and linguistically fair and appropriate assessment and treatment methods with ELLs who have speech and language disorders. Kohnert, Kennedy, Glaze, Kan, and Carney (2003) conducted a survey with SLPs to examine challenges to clinical competency in Minnesota. Of interest were the responses to the survey question, *With what frequency did they (the SLPs) encounter challenges in clinical situations and service delivery with CLD clients/patients*. Among the challenges that were identified as *often* were: clinician/client language mismatch; lack of appropriate assessment and treatment materials in other languages; lack of knowledge of developmental normative information for other languages and cultures; lack of professionals who speak the home language of the client; limited family resources. *Assessment for culturally and linguistically diverse children* was the most frequently selected topic for continuing education opportunities.

11. *How is the diagnostic process similar to and different from that of native speakers compared to ELLs?*

A speech and language evaluation for a monolingual English-speaking child usually involves a case history, documentation of developmental milestones, communication strengths and weaknesses, classroom observation, and use of norm-referenced or criterion referenced assessment tools to evaluate speech and language skills.

A speech and language evaluation for an ELL also involves a detailed case history regarding developmental milestones and communication strengths and weaknesses. This case history may need to be part of an interview with the parents of an ELL. It is also necessary to determine what is typical speech and language development in the child's home language. Additional variables such as, the languages spoken at home, the parents' education level, country of birth for both parents and the ELL, length of residence in the US, socioeconomic status (SES), generational membership, and the degree of acculturation into American life should also be investigated. A classroom observation to examine current level of functioning and communication skills is also necessary (Roseberry-McKibbin, 2007).

Since many standard assessment tools that SLPs use have been developed with normative data from monolingual English-speaking children, these tools are not appropriate to use with ELLs. Using these tools with children, who differ from the normative sample, increase bias and reduce the validity of the assessment which may lead to under- and over-diagnosis of speech and language disorders with ELLs (Laing and Kahmi, 2003). Using a translated test is not preferred practice since many items from standardized tests do not translate into another language. IDEA 2006 advocates for use of alternative assessments with ELLs. If a norm-referenced test is used with an ELL, the SLP could provide a descriptive assessment based on the ELL's performance on the test without reporting a score. Other options include test administration and scoring modifications (Wyatt, 2012). Some have suggested dynamic assessment as a viable alternative to standardized assessment of ELLs (Gutiérrez-Clellen & Peña, 2001). Dynamic assessment

evaluates a child's learning ability using a test-teach-retest model. Another option is the use of processing-dependent measures which are not based on life experiences or world knowledge, therefore, removing bias from the assessment (Campbell, Dollaghan, Needleman, Janosky 1997). Other alternatives that could be utilized with ELLs include language sample analysis, portfolio assessment, and curriculum-based assessment.

There are some standardized assessment tools that have been created to use with ELLs (e.g., Spanish speakers). As with any standardized test, the SLP should always examine the reliability and validity of the tool and the make-up of the normative sample to determine if it is appropriate to use with their students.

Assessing an ELL in only one language also lacks validity because the child is not given credit for his or her language knowledge in both languages (Kayser, 1989). Evaluations must include various measures, both formal and informal, in both languages to obtain an accurate picture of the ELL (Wyatt, 2012).

12. *What is the field of Communications Disorders contributing to our understanding of impairments and disabilities of speech, language and hearing in ELLs?*

Research in the area of culturally and linguistically diverse populations has contributed a tremendous amount of information over the past several years regarding typical speech and language development in various languages and dialects (e.g., Arabic, Cantonese, Dutch, French, Hmong, Korean, Mandarin, etc.), language difference versus language disorder, speech or language disorder with the context of language difference, and effective assessment and treatment approaches (ASHA, 2011b). However, there is still much more to investigate in all these areas. SLPs work within an evidenced-based practice framework and research continues to focus on clinically applicable knowledge regarding culturally and linguistically diverse populations to determine the most efficacious services we can provide.

What we are asking ESL teachers to do here is to work closely with the SLP in the school and/or district; become familiar with referral procedures; and learn as much as possible about the students' cultures, beliefs, languages, and challenges in order to discover if the ELL needs services not yet being provided. By understanding the issues and by working closely with other teachers, parents, and the SLP, we will discover ways to best serve ELLs in our state.

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*** 3 Teaching Activities, Lessons and Tips**

Sunday, April 15, 2012

By:

Marcia Kim

The first activity is called Rod City. Cuisenaire rods are wooden or plastic blocks that are one centimeter wide. They are of varying lengths. Each length has its own color. You may have seen them used to teach elementary school mathematics. You can purchase a set online.

I first experienced this activity at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont.

Activity 1: Rod City

Materials: Cuisenaire rods

Preparation: Divide the rods for pairs of students so that each student in the pair has the same rods.

Procedure:

1. Students sit face to face at their table with a book or binder in between them. The book or binder will act as a screen.
2. Give each pair their rods.
3. Tell the students that they are called “rods” and that they are going to use them to build a small structure. Show an example of a structure.
4. Clarify useful language. “Put the red rod next to the green rod.” “Can you repeat that?” “Are you following me?” “Do you mean the right side or the left?” and elicit prepositions of place.
5. Student A builds a small structure and describes it to Student B, who tries to reproduce it. While Student A is describing his structure, he shouldn’t watch Student B reproduce it. If Student B can’t understand, he or she should ask questions. After students finish, they check their accuracy by comparing their structures. If there is a difference, students should discuss why and note down what language they used.

As the students carry out the task, the teacher walks around and notes down examples of language use. After students have completed a few rounds, the teacher can clarify language at the board using the notes she took.

How is this activity useful for EAP students?

What starts to happen after a few rounds of building, describing, questioning, and checking is that the students start getting more competitive. Their structures become more complex. Students go beyond their available language to complete the task. Their language starts to get more creative. The language that emerges from the students is authentic and meaningful to them.

Rod City is an example of an information gap activity. In daily communication, one person needs a piece of information to achieve a certain task. Sometimes they don’t know what that

information is, so they have to work to find out by asking questions, or verbalizing what they already have to find out what they still need.

Rod City works on the same principles as another activity called “Describe and Draw” but instead of building structures and describing and reproducing them, the students describe a diagram. Depending on your students’ needs, you can have them describe graphs, processes, maps, and charts to provide practice in verbalizing data such as numbers, fractions, measures, time or money. Students can read, write or listen to this type of data, but verbalizing it accurately is difficult (Jordan, 1997).

Students who are majoring in the social sciences would find this activity extremely useful because it gives students practice in giving accurate descriptions, clear instructions and exact questioning. (Jordan, 1997)

One of the reasons why this activity unfolds the way it does is because Cuisenaire rods are such a versatile and effective learning tool.

For more about using Cuisenaire rods, *Teaching and Learning Languages* and *Images and Options in the Language Classroom* both by Earl Stevick, are good resources.

The second activity is adapted from *Literature* by Alan Maley and Alan Duff.

Activity 2: Word Portraits (Duff, A. & Maley, A. (1997) Literature Oxford: OUP.)

Materials:

Copies of the text students are going to use

A list of adjectives that describe people

Preparation:

Read the text.

Brainstorm a list of good adjectives that describe people to use for characters in the text. The adjectives might or might not describe the characters in the text.

Procedure:

1. First, the students read the text. It can be any text that describes a person such as a biography or a character sketch in a story or novel. Pearson Longman has a wonderful series of books called Penguin readers. Three Penguin readers I have used with this activity are: “Women in Business”, “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde”, and “Cry Freedom”.

2. Give your students the list of adjectives such as bossy, sophisticated, shy, or intelligent. It's a good idea to use adjectives your students are familiar with and have already worked with, but it's not necessary.

3. Then students in small groups use the adjectives to describe the characters in the text. Some of the adjectives will obviously apply to the characters, some will not apply, and some might apply. The students decide which ones are most, least, or partly appropriate to the characters. What the students decide, will depend on their ability to make inferences and make connections between the adjectives and what is implied in the text. Students must offer support. It could be from the text or from their impressions. This is a great opportunity for students to practice giving support for their opinions.

4. Next is the class discussion. Go through the adjectives with the students and ask them to give their views. One of the great things about this activity is that there are no conclusive answers. The students are free to defend their own interpretation of the text.

A common task asked of students is to "describe a character in their own words". When students do this, they become frustrated because they can't think of anything to add to what the author has already said. Rather than start with the text and work out to write a description, in this activity, the students start with adjectives and work back into the text. Instead of reducing the character, the students expand on the character often discovering features that are implied (Duff & Maley, 1997).

How is this activity useful for EAP students?

This activity lends itself very effectively to authentic communication, especially the discussion skills of agreeing, disagreeing and giving of explanations. Students practice making inferences and supporting their views by looking for parts in the text. Both of these skills are useful in university and promote critical thinking.

Several EAP textbooks for reading, writing, listening and speaking contain descriptions or stories about people. Word Portraits is extremely adaptable. It can be used with a variety of texts, both written and aural. I've used this activity with Penguin readers, poems, and academic recordings.

The third activity is an example of a technique called Test-Teach-Test. I first experienced Test-Teach-Test in Bromley, UK on a Cambridge CELTA course.

Activity 3: Test-Teach-Test

In this example, we'll look at the communicative function of giving advice.

Test-Teach-Test gets its name from the stages that make up the technique. There are three stages:

Stage 1 is the first "test" where the students perform a controlled activity.

Stage 2 is the “teach” stage where the teacher teaches the target language.

Stage 3 is the second “test” where the students perform a second controlled activity similar to the first.

Test-Teach-Test can be used with any materials. For this example, we are going to use the materials listed below.

Materials:

Copies of an advice column like ‘Dear Abby’

Activity #37 Sound Advice from *Advanced Communication Games* by Jill Hadfield cut up

A piece of overhead transparency

Overhead projector

Preparation:

Prepare two controlled activities for the “test” stages. These activities can be from activities books or developed by you to include target language for specific situations useful to your students.

Procedure:

1. In the first test stage, set up a controlled activity which will promote the use of the language that you want to test or practice. For this activity, give the students the ‘Dear Abby’ column from the newspaper. Instruct students to read the advice columns and to orally give advice. Provide a model with a student. Use some advice giving phrases in your example, but don’t provide any language input.

While the students are carrying out this task, the teacher listens in and jots down examples of mistakes in the use of the target language the students are making while they are carrying out the task. The teacher doesn’t say anything to the students at this stage. The teacher just listens and writes.

2. The second stage is called the teach stage. The teacher puts up the mistakes in the use of the target language that she jotted down. The teacher can also put up examples of correct phrases the students used or phrases in the course textbook that should be covered as part of the curriculum. The aim of this stage is to correct the mistakes, highlight important aspects such as formal and informal expressions, grammar, use of contractions, and to drill pronunciation. The students should get involved in the error correction.

The teacher can also play a recording of speakers engaged in the communicative function.

3. In stage 3, the second test stage, the students perform a similar activity to the first activity to check the effectiveness of the teach stage. A suggestion for this activity is activity number 37 Sound Advice from Jill Hadfield's *Advanced Communication Games*. Students in small groups get a set of cards that are placed face down on the table. Student one picks a card and describes the situation displayed on the card, and asks for advice. The group members give advice. Student one should give the card to the player whose advice he or she likes the most. Student two picks a card and the game continues. The object of the game is to get as many cards as possible. The team member with the most cards is the winner (Hadfield, 1996).

How is this useful for EAP students?

Students become very creative in their advice when they realize what it takes to win. They start to use all of their available English.

This is a great model for practicing language functions. It's immediately active, the language is not imposed on the students, the activities have a purpose and an end goal, it provides a nice balance of accuracy and fluency practice, and real information is exchanged. Social interactional activities such as this one require the students to be aware of the situation, the roles of the people involved, and to pay attention to formal and informal uses of the language (Richards, 2006). All important things for students to know and practice.

In EAP textbooks, communicative functions often come with lists of polite and impolite expressions and situations to show how the expressions should or shouldn't be used. In general, communicative practice follows this sequence: listen to a recording of people using the target language, answer questions or fill in blanks, listen again, practice the language function by reading a dialogue. This is fine, but by adding the textbook phrases and recordings to a Test-Teach-Test lesson structure, you'll find that your students will get more effective practice.

Just a quick note on the controlled activities: it's important to use ones that naturally promote the language. You can't twist the language to fit an activity. In addition to the Hadfield *Communication Games* series there are many activities books that contain an array of good activities that you can use in the 'test' stages. As a matter of fact, for all of the activities mentioned in this article, you shouldn't feel dependent on a particular resource. Use what you have or find alternative resources.

We often think that because students are in EAP, they can apply appropriate language for different functions, but this is often not the case. EAP students benefit from this type of activity because they use specific language within a real context. Real information is exchanged. The language is not imposed on the students who already know it. The level can be adjusted by the complexity of the controlled activities you give to your students.

Conclusion

I've used these activities with my EAP students with a great deal of success. Feedback from students has always been positive. Students often comment that because they have been given

opportunities to practice in class, they feel more confident in their language use and communicative abilities.

Author's Bio



Marcia Kim is an instructor in the English for Academic Purposes program at the University of Calgary. She has been involved in ESL and teacher training since 1990.

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*** Differentiating Schooled, Unschooled, and Preliterate**

Sunday, April 15, 2012

By:

Denise Wood, MA TESOL student, Biola University

When I walked into my low- and false-beginning ESL class in Kennewick, I was prepared to deal with multi-level proficiencies among my students. There were both literate and preliterate learners in my room. However, I was *not* prepared for the discrepancy I experienced between those who were literate due to formal schooling and those who were literate but unschooled.

My class at Agape Literacy Center, a community-based ESL program, had refugees from Myanmar and Somalia as well as immigrants from Mexico. The Karen students had learned to read and write in their own language during their years in the refugee camps on the Thai border but had not had formal schooling. The Somali students were preliterate in their L1. My students from Mexico had completed their high school education there. The variety of these three backgrounds created an interesting dynamic in the teaching and execution of daily classroom activities. I'd like to share one particular experience that surprised me and made me aware of the need to teach more than language and culture in my classroom.

As this was my first semester to teach students who had no knowledge of the numbers or alphabet, I knew I would be on a steep learning curve myself, as I worked to meet their needs as a group and as individuals. I had been adjusting my lessons for the students who were preliterate, as I had learned how to manipulate the activities in order to keep students doing more oral work in class and most written work at home. (The amount of time spent on doing any written work slowed the pace of the class as well as the coverage of content considerably.)

After a week of teaching a unit on food and shopping, I felt confident going into my classroom, as I was well-prepared with that day's lesson plan. I started with a quick and simple review of how to form the plural, followed by a listening activity. Students seemed to understand and complete the activities well. I then handed out a worksheet that asked students to look through a brief monologue of a girl talking about three friends and the foods they can and can't eat. It wasn't more than six sentences. Their instructions were to write the foods that were singular under one column and the words that were plural under another. I knew I would need to help the preliterate students and was prepared to simply have them tell me which words were in each category rather than spend the time writing out the words. However, I did not anticipate the difficulty of the process of completing the activity for most of the other students. What began as a ten-minute review activity became a 25-minute major component of the lesson.

After I gave the directions and had students do an example, all but one simply sat there and looked at the page. I explained the directions again, believing it was a communication issue. The student from Mexico quickly completed the activity and then decided to use the rest of the activity time color-coding what was plural and singular on her worksheet and creating corresponding charts in her notebook. With the rest of the class, I broke the activity down into its simplest steps: find the words that are foods; circle them; decide if it is singular or plural; and then write the words in the correct columns below. I had to go through the monologue and basically just point to the words that were foods. The actual grammar activity of identifying if a word was plural or singular was something they had no problem deciding correctly when I asked them. Therefore, the grammar was not the issue. It was the complication of the task.

There were too many steps involved in the process of completing this activity. These steps are familiar and simple for those who are schooled and quite literate in their own language. Students needed to know how to skim for information, identify the words they were looking for, determine if they were singular or plural, and then write them in the correct column. However, for my unschooled (yet literate) students as well as those who were preliterate, this was a HUGE assumption that they could sequentially and progressively work through these steps.

I began to reflect more about the skills this task required and why my unschooled students had difficulty with skimming or completing charts. I believe it is because the steps needed were unfamiliar or difficult to them. I must remember that “literate” does not necessarily mean experienced with school-type tasks. So, how do I help my students to complete activities that require more complex reading or processing strategies that they have not yet learned? One solution is to find tasks that are not so complicated (such as circling plural words and underlining singular ones). Another solution is to show the whole class a projected sample and work through it, making each step explicit.

I learned that day that “literate” and “schooled” are not the same. In the future, I cannot expect my unschooled students to be able to complete activities unguided that require skills typically learned through formal education. In my preparations and teaching in literacy level classes, I need to instruct students not only how to read and write, but also how to segment, sequence, synthesize, and analyze information. These skills are needed not only in the classroom but also in the workplace and for their new lives here in Washington.

** I wish to thank Dr. Kitty Purgason of Biola University for her feedback during the revision of this article.

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[* WAESOL Tri-TESOL Report](#)

Sunday, January 15, 2012

By:

Ron Belisle (conference chair)

Kathy Hunt (conference co-chair)

The 2011 Tri-TESOL Conference, which took place on October 21 and 22 at Highline Community College in Des Moines, Washington, was a big success. More than 800 participants from all over the Northwest came together to share ideas, gain new perspectives on their teaching and forge connections with other professionals in their field.



WAESOL joined with ORTESOL and BC TEAL to sponsor this event. The conference featured more than 220 presentations and workshops, along with 3 nationally known keynote speakers and more than 30 exhibitors and vendors. The quality and variety of presentations was very impressive. You can still view the complete schedule of presentations on our web site at the link below.

<http://tri-tesol.org/presentations/>

Several of the presentation handouts can be accessed at WAESOL Community at the link below.

<http://waesol.org/community/>

In addition, keynote handouts can be downloaded via the Tri-TESOL web site at this link.

<http://tri-tesol.org>



This was the first Tri-TESOL Conference since 1996. One significant outcome of the conference was the goodwill and cooperation that have developed among the three associations, WAESOL, ORTESOL and BC TEAL. We have realized that by working together, we can strengthen our profession and increase the success of our students in the classroom and beyond.

There is a tentative date set of 2015 for the next Tri-TESOL Conference. In addition, WAESOL and Seattle has been chosen as the host for the 2017 TESOL Annual Convention.

To get WAESOL updates and keep abreast of WAESOL, Tri-TESOL and TESOL news, visit the link below.

<http://waesol.org/contact/mailings/index.php>

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*** Presenting for Professional Development**

Sunday, January 15, 2012

By:

Karrie Zylstra, ESL Instructor

It was so long ago that I struggle to remember, but I believe my first TESOL conference was in 1992 in Vancouver, B.C. From that first conference until this year, I've seen attended innumerable conferences and seen even more presentations but never *made* a presentation. This past year I decided to stretch myself and present at the 2011 TRI-TESOL conference in Des Moines, WA.

On October 22, 2011, I gave a 20 minute session on a conversation activity I discovered while working on my degree and then refined to fit my students. In the process of putting together "The Buzz of Conversation," I experienced a few things about preparing and giving a presentation that I thought others might find helpful.

Ideas

After thinking carefully about what I might share with others, I chose the conversation exercise because my students and a substitute instructor seemed to all enjoy it whenever we did it in class. It fit the time frame for the 20 minute session that I felt able to accomplish and seemed useful – something other instructors could try in their own classes right away to improve students' speaking.

In the future I might find other ideas about presenting by using my own classroom, asking my colleagues for suggestions or asking my students. I have seen presentations with a panel of students talking to the conference attendees and may consider doing this as well.

Checking My Facts

Before organizing my information and putting together my presentation, I checked the instructions from WAESOL and asked my colleague what she knew about presenting at conferences. The instructions let me know what kinds of equipment I would have available and other important details about where I could get what I needed on the day of the conference.

My colleague told me she had never presented before but that it always frustrated her when the presenters didn't have enough handouts. I also thought of my own years attending conferences and the types of presentations I enjoyed, remembering that I liked best the dynamic presenters with useful information.

Finally, I searched through the handouts I'd received in previous conferences, looking for examples that were similar to what I wanted to do. Finding an example helped me to craft a document that worked well.

Prepare and Organize

I put my presentation together much like I put together my lessons for class. I thought through what I wanted my audience to learn, created a handout to go with my lesson and planned the time and activities I would need to do. It was a 20 minute 'lesson' so it wasn't too complicated.

Backups

The instructions from WAESOL recommended having a backup for my information. I had a thumb drive and also emailed myself my handout so that, presuming the technology worked, I could find a way to display it on a screen in the front of the room as well as having it on a handout. I chose to make enough copies for the maximum capacity of the room because of the warning from my colleague. I am aware that this is not a green practice but, after attending several presentations that day without enough handouts, I felt relieved that I had enough copies to keep my audience from scowling at me.

Visualize

Over the years, I've found that mentally practicing before I do difficult things helps me tremendously. It is especially helpful if I supply myself with as many details as possible so that I feel fully prepared when the actual moment arrives. I had been at a few WAESOL conferences before at Highline so I knew the location well. I began to imagine the place a week before I got there. I pictured myself feeling confident and satisfied that I had done a good job after the presentation.

I arrived early on the day of the conference and looked at my room as soon as I knew where it was. I even went to a presentation given by someone else in the same room just before giving my own presentation. All of that helped me to feel more at ease.

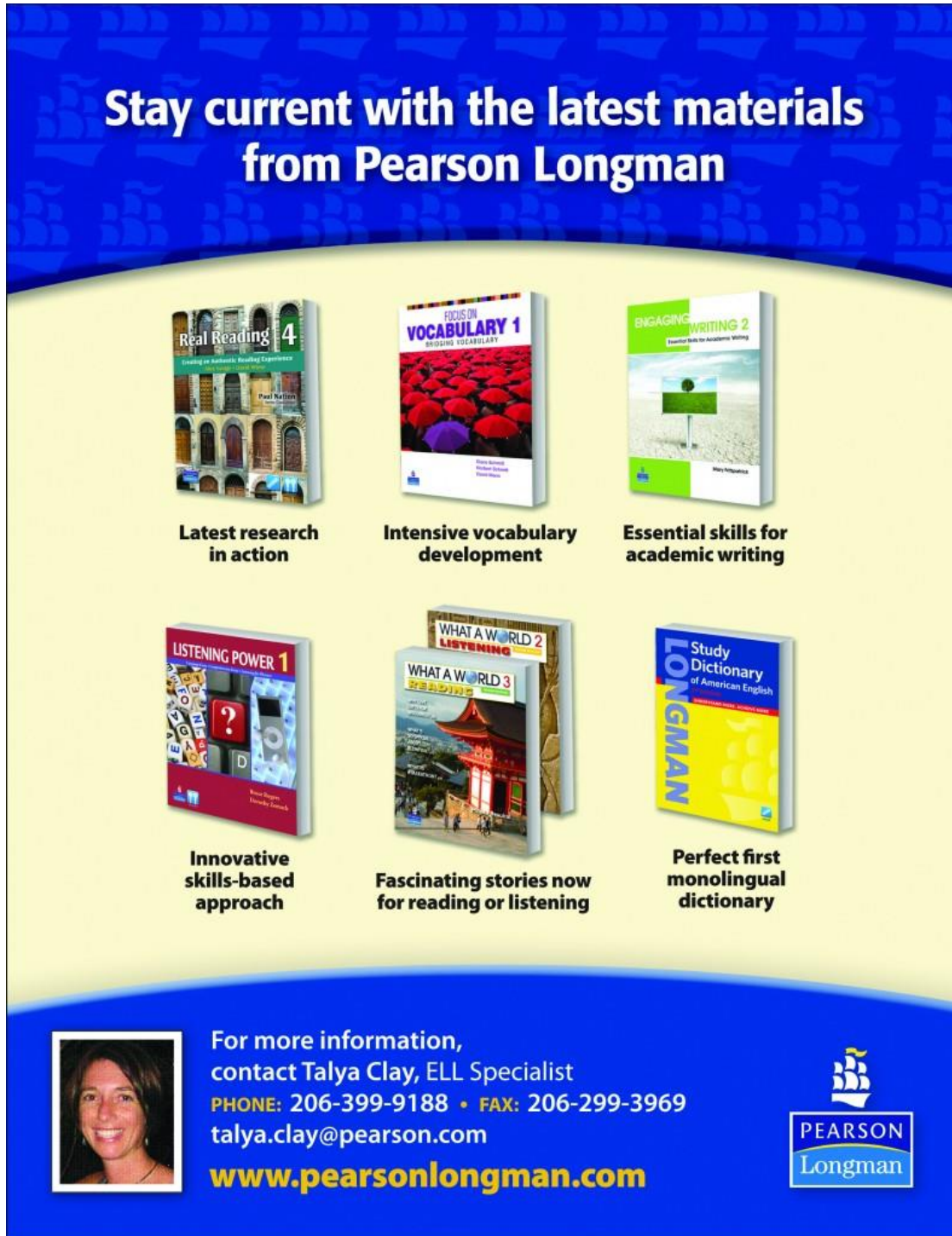
I avoided dwelling on my thoughts about teachers as a scary audience or about my lack of experience presenting at a conference. Those were not images that I thought would help me.

Overall my experience lived up to my best expectations. My audience was warm and receptive. I learned more about what I do and about how to become a better instructor by extending myself into presenting. Even the process of getting an idea got me to analyze my instruction, looking for things that others might find helpful. I now feel better able to take the next step and move into a full presentation in the future. Maybe soon I'll be presenting for longer time slots or at a larger conference like TESOL without too many butterflies crowding up into my throat.

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Sunday, January 15, 2012

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*** Eritreans and Their Coffee Ceremony**

Sunday, January 15, 2012

By:

Jennifer Semb

When I lack energy or feel socially disconnected, I indulge in a hot cup of coffee. Whether I am with my mother at her kitchen table, in a friend's living room, or at the neighborhood café, this is time for me to stop the busyness of my day and simply enjoy the moment. Sitting down to a good cup of coffee is also paramount in my personal relationships as a way to connect. There is an amusing scene in one of my favorite movies entitled, "Good Will Hunting" where Matt Damon, the protagonist, is pursuing a beautiful woman in the bar. The scene goes like this:

Skylar: So, maybe we could go out for coffee sometime?

Will: All right, yeah, or maybe we could just get together and eat a bunch of caramels.

Skylar: What do you mean?

Will: Well, when you think about it it's just as arbitrary as drinking coffee.

Ethiopia is believed by many to be the birth place of coffee (Zirkle, p. 291). Eritrea, the country that borders Ethiopia to the east, was once a part of Ethiopia before it seceded in 1993. As legend has it, in about 1000 A.D., a young goat herder and poet named Kaldi discovered the coffee bean plant one afternoon while tending to his goats. His goats neglected to appear one afternoon as they ordinarily did when he whistled for them. Kaldi searched and finally found his goats chewing on a strange plant he had never seen. He was concerned these plants may be poisonous, but by the next day when his goats were still alive and once again eating this plant, Kaldi decided to try it too. According to the story retold by Mark Pendergrast in his book, *Uncommon Grounds: The History Of Coffee And How It Transformed Our World*, "Poetry and song spilled out of him [Kaldi]. He felt that he would never be tired or grouchy again (p. 4, Pendergrast)." News quickly spread about this strange and wonderful plant and soon, "coffee became an integral part of Ethiopian culture (p. 5)."

The Eritrean coffee ceremony has been a long tradition in the Ethiopian/Eritrean culture. I was first invited to an Eritrean coffee ceremony when visiting my friends in Spokane. They had recently arrived from Eritrea with refugee status. Coffee is considered a delicacy in Eritrea and a way of showing hospitality to guests. Each time I visit, my friend Yordanos asks me, "Jennifer, can you drink coffee?" I am always secretly amused by the way she poses the question. The

warm and friendly atmosphere she and her sister's home provides lends itself to a relaxing experience where many Eritreans gather to enjoy each other's company. Yordanos begins making the coffee with white coffee beans she roasts in a pan on the stove. She then grounds the coffee and pours it into a container called a *jebena*, shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1, jebena

The *jebena* is filled with cold water and heated to a boil on the stove. The *jebena* is then transferred to a serving tray filled with small coffee cups called *finjal* in Tigrinya, the Eritrean language. From my perspective, there appears to be a moment of silence before the coffee is poured. There are no specific prayers rendered. This silent moment seems almost to possess an unspoken call to communion. However, this observation may simply be a reaction to my busy culture where we never stop moving and are obsessed with multitasking. I have never asked them to explain this. Yordanos then puts several spoonfuls of sugar in each cup, pours the coffee, and tops it off with cream before handing each person their cup. As a way of showing my respect for this tradition, I never reach for my cup on the tray but wait for her to hand it to me. I believe the hostess' desire to serve her guests is significant. There are usually four of us who enjoy this ritual together. My guess for this is because they may only own four cups. If there are more than four of us there, a playful argument usually ensues in Tigrinya about who should be served first. I look forward to this event each time I visit. I feel nurtured by my friends as we casually and playfully converse. Yordanos pays careful attention to me as I finish my first cup of coffee so she can quickly refill it. I have read that it is polite to drink three cups, so I always accept exactly that amount. Popcorn is a favorite snack to serve with coffee. I was surprised to learn in my research that popcorn is common to serve with coffee in Eritrea and not just an American snack they discovered after moving here. Figures 2 and 3 below show my friends, Yordanos, Zebib, and Semere.



Figure 2, from left to right, Yordanos Andemichael, Jennifer Semb, Zebib Andemichael, and Semere (last name unknown).



Figure 3, from left to right, Semera and Yordanos.

In villages far away from big cities like Asmara, the capital city of Eritrea, the coffee ceremony is slightly less modernized than what I have experienced. The difference lies mainly with the advantage of stovetops and electricity. Traditionally, the beans are roasted in a pan over an open fire and ground onto a mat called a *mishrafat* (figure 4) where they are then funneled into the *jebena*. The coffee and water is then boiled over charcoal. According to www.eritrea.be, it is considered “shameful to let the coffee boil over.” Additional information found at this website had this to say about the traditional coffee ceremony: “The hostess may also burn incense of frankincense. The first round of coffee is known as *awol*. The second and third round is the *kale eyti* and the fourth is *derdja*.”



Figure 4, mishrafat

The Independent, a London Newspaper had a section entitled *192-Part Guide to the World*, which featured cultural and travel information for many countries. In the section for Eritrea

written in July, 2000, it stated that The Foreign and Commonwealth Office did not recommend travel to Eritrea (probably due to the ongoing war). But, if a person was to travel to Eritrea, one item of importance was included:

“Please take note that refusing to take coffee with an Eritrean is impolite. This beverage is considered something of a delicacy so if you’re offered some, it’s not a casual invitation. Be prepared for the coffee ceremony, which includes roasting the beans, to take an hour. And don’t leave until you’ve drunk three cups.”

The website www.Kwintessential.com is dedicated to teaching general etiquette and cultural awareness globally. On the Ethiopia page, *Coffee Drinking* is given its own subheading. Under the heading, it instructs its readers that while participating in the coffee ceremony one must “Inhale the aroma of the coffee before sipping.” It also instructs a person to “always sip the coffee slowly.” This emphasizes the reverence Ethiopians have for their coffee ceremony.

So what does this tradition mean to Eritreans? When I asked my friend, Zebib, this question she thought it was important to point out that, “It is different in my country, Jennifer. We are not in a rush. There is no hurry hurry. We relax and enjoy talking to each other.” I asked if coming home to coffee and Eritrean food is something she looks forward after a long day working in Spokane as a housekeeper at a hotel. She agreed that it was an important part of her life. She also indicated to me that drinking coffee is something they do every day, at any time of the day, whenever people come to visit.

The Eritrean coffee ceremony has become a highlight of my visit to their home. My friends enjoy each other’s company in an unhurried and authentic way. It has inspired me to be more like this in my life. I am more encouraged to serve my friends when they visit my home. I am also encouraged to do less multitasking and appreciate the quiet moments more. Eritreans, especially those I know who live in a fast-paced culture unfamiliar to them still create time for joy.

I offer thanks to my MATESL colleagues, who provided valuable feedback, as well as our professor, Dr. LaVona Reeves at Eastern Washington University, because I wrote this paper in her Second Language Acquisition seminar last quarter, and she suggested that I submit it to WAESOL World Quarterly.

Filed in [Winter 2012](#) | | [Comments \(0\)](#)

*** What’s New?**

Sunday, January 15, 2012

By:

Elizabeth Claire

Publisher, *Easy English NEWS*

A teacher wrote to me and painted the picture of her new assignment: a large class of adult students, completely heterogeneous in terms of ability levels and age levels: “What in the world do I do with so many different levels?” she asked.

Adults, of course, can drop out of a class that doesn’t meet their needs, so it is a neat trick to give enough attention to each level so they come back for more. The cost of this, unfortunately is spending many hours of preparing for three or four different groups. Typically, a teacher burns out, teaches to the middle, and the class gets smaller and smaller as the beginners drop out because they are in over their heads and the advanced students drop out from being bored.

I had such a heterogeneous class of adults a few years back: Fifteen adults ranging in age from eighteen to mid seventies; their educational backgrounds ran the whole gamut: from engineers to construction workers, unemployed, housewives and home health aides. Some were newly arrived beginners, others had studied English in their home countries. All were recent arrivals. Several could speak English, but were having trouble spelling and even forming the letters of the English alphabet. The class was five days a week, provided by Jewish Family Service, but many students had part time jobs, or medical appointments, and couldn’t come to class each day. There were copies of Side By Side available for us to use, but these level-specific workbooks didn’t seem appropriate to the variety of levels in the class.

I discovered a method that would take into consideration the varieties of levels, needs, and interests, and build a socially cohesive group. The students made their own individualized text books. I called it “What’s New?”

Students sat in a horseshoe formation so they could all see each other.

I started the first day with conversational English, and made sure that they could answer questions such as What’s your name, Where do you live, Where are you from, Are you married or single, Do you have any children, and How are you?

I had a large write-on chart so our work could be preserved for later days.

I used puppets to present the following conversation several times: After exchanging *How are you’s*, Puppet One asks “What’s New?” Puppet Two answers “Nothing much.” I had students repeat this mini conversation in chorus and then practice it: Person A asked person B “What’s new?” Person B answered “Nothing much,” and asked Person C who answered and then asked person D, etc.

Then I had a student ask me, *What's new?* and I told them: "I started teaching English at Jewish Family Service." I wrote this on the board in the third person: "Elizabeth started teaching English at Jewish Family Service." I let them help each other understand the sentence, or use their bilingual dictionaries. We read it chorally, a few read it individually.

Then I asked individuals: "What's new with you?" The beginners answered "Nothing much," and more advanced students gave some news: "I started studying English with Elizabeth" "I moved to Fair Lawn." "My daughter got married," "It was my birthday yesterday," "I went to get a job," "My house has no electricity".

I helped the speaker with any grammar point in expressing himself or herself and wrote these sentences down in the third person, with the students' names. I drew tiny stick figures to help students recall the meanings. We read them chorally, then students read them individually. I gave mini pronunciation drills for the difficult sound combinations.

Then I asked questions stemming from the information, and expanding on it: *Whose birthday was yesterday? Whose daughter got married? Who went for a job? When is your birthday? Do you have a daughter?* and so forth. For advanced students, I asked, and let other students ask questions to get more details: *What can you do when the electricity is off? (call the landlord) How old is your daughter? Where was the wedding?* filling in the vocabulary they were struggling with.

After a few days of limiting themselves to saying "Nothing much," the beginners got into the act. Lev, a 65-year old retired engineer said "Me, big fish." and used his hands to show the size of the fish. I modeled the sentence, "I caught a big fish," helped him pronounce it correctly, and wrote on our chart, "Lev caught a big fish." Students asked Lev questions, so by gestures and stick figures, Lev understood the questions and we found out that Lev caught the fish in a river; Lev's wife cooked the fish; and his friends came over to eat it. These all became sentences for our What's New chart.

Students copied the sentences and I gave mini lessons to those who needed help in forming letters. The advanced students helped the slower students in this for a bit. While the beginners struggled with copying, the intermediate and advanced students had the assignment of writing a more detailed explanation of whatever was new in their lives, and working in groups of three or four to read their stories to each other. There was a lot of individualization for grammar as needed. Sometimes a grammar point was relevant to the whole class, so I'd teach the group.

What happened in the class was remarkable, and I didn't plan it that way. It became like a little soap opera, with daily developments in people's lives, and the focus was on the relationships and each others' stories. Each level of student got something out of the lesson, as they could express and get coaching on their expression on their own level. Some learned through their ears, some through reading. There was progress in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary building, self expression, cultural awareness, like a smorgasbord. I think attendance was good not only because students could feel their progress in English, but because they were engaged with each other and formed a caring community.

The young man later was able to tell us that his landlord explained that he had to pay the electric bill and the electricity would be turned back on... He had no idea he was supposed to pay it. A lesson in culture awareness for all.

The best part of this was that I did not need to prepare multiple lessons for the multiple groupings. The lessons needed became apparent, and I could teach them on the spot, tuck them in between the real part of the lesson, sharing ourselves.

Filed in [Winter 2012](#) | | [Comments \(0\)](#)

*** Waves of Change in the Hermit Kingdom**

Sunday, January 15, 2012

By:

Young-Kyung Min

Korea was once known as the Kingdom of Hermit. As a country of one culture and one people, the Korean people were known for not opening themselves to other cultures and other peoples. I had an opportunity to experience the changing landscape of Korean society when I travelled back to my native Korea this summer. In June 2011, I was invited to give a talk at the Gwangju International Center (GIC) in Korea. Under the title of "Images of Writing across Cultures," I gave my talk about culturally embedded writing practices across nations and presented some practical strategies that the audience could use in various writing contexts. There were about 60 people in the audience. Half of them were Korean and the other half were expatriates, which included high school students, teachers in private language institutes, K-12 schools, colleges and universities, house wives, retired professors, government officials, and publishers.

The GIC was established in 1999 by the Gwangju Citizens' Alliance to promote intercultural understanding and collaboration between international residents and local people in Gwangju, the capital of Chonnam Province. It provides international residents with a variety of programs and resources, which include home stay arrangements, cooking, calligraphy, meditation, and pottery classes, game nights, singing, dancing, and mountain climbing events. It also publishes the Gwangju News, the first local English magazine in the nation, which has played an essential role in raising Gwangju citizens' awareness of globalization. International residents often come to the GIC to check out books, videos, and other resources that have been donated by the local people in the community.

Its major intercultural events include the GIC Talk, the International Community Day, and the May Concert. The collaboration between local people and international residents in the

community is clearly reflected in the GIC activities. One of the best examples that demonstrate such collaboration is the GIC Talk. As the name suggests, the GIC Talk is a weekly talk program that covers a wide range of topics in English. The most significant aspect to be noted about the GIC Talk is the involvement of people—both the local and international residents—who participate in the event as volunteers.

The most important group of volunteers for the talk is students who attend local universities and colleges. They act as masters of ceremonies: they introduce presenters to the audience and coordinate with moderators. They also help presenters set up their equipment and prepare the resources they need for their presentations. Native-English-speaking instructors, who teach in private language institutes as well as in K-12 and university settings, volunteer as moderators for the talk. They meet with presenters beforehand to find out the areas that they should moderate during the talk in order to foster interactions between the audience and the presenters more effectively. The volunteers—both students and instructors—provide crucial support to the presenters who are invited from around the world, which include ambassadors, professors, lecturers, journalists, specialists, and so on. It needs to be noted that invited presenters do not get paid: they also participate in the talk as volunteers.

The active participation of college students in the GIC activities is crucial for the operation of the center because of the strong collaboration between the center and local universities. Since a variety of intercultural activities take place at the center almost every day, the GIC is a great place for students to enrich their intercultural experiences. By participating in the activities, students not only develop insight into other cultures and languages but also familiarize themselves with international ceremonial protocols. They get credits when they submit proof of their attendance at the GIC to their universities; thus, the GIC provides students with great internship opportunities.

One important change to be noted in the Korean educational system is that “개근상” (Award for No Absence), which was once highly regarded in K-12 institutions in Korea, has been recently abolished. Students’ field trips to museums and participation in other cultural events such as ancestral memorial services are now regarded as important as classroom learning: students do not have to be physically present in the classroom. The partnership between the GIC and local universities as well as the abolishment of “개근상” (Award for No Absence) signifies that the very concept of “배움 (learning)” has been rapidly changing in the society. The school curriculum in the K-12 settings as well as in the university setting has *greatly* expanded beyond the classroom boundary.

These days, Korean universities are facing fierce competition as an increasing number of students leave the country to be educated in English-speaking countries. Well-known universities around the world have entered the Korean education market by establishing local campuses in the country. A growing number of Korean students are enrolling themselves in their branch campuses to earn their college degrees from universities that are more internationally recognized. The GIC promoting intercultural understanding between local people and international residents, while utilizing partnerships with local universities, is an innovative way to hold out against the fierce international education market.

The spirit of intercultural collaboration between local people and international residents regardless of their nationalities demonstrates that effective intercultural literacy education essentially depends on active community participation. The way the GIC operates is a great model to explore the notion of intercultural literacy in relation to the notion of community literacy. My participation in the GIC Talk this summer has made me reflect on the social practice view of learning, which highlights that learning is not just an autonomous, cognitive activity; all learning is situated within some activity systems and people learn by *participating* in activity systems either deeply or peripherally. The social practice view of learning reminds us of the significance of paying closer attention to the student's routine interactions and their everyday activities to understand their literate activity (Bourdieu, 1980; Engeström, 1993; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). From the social practice view of learning, this kind of literacy education—to ask students to participate in activities in collaboration with the international residents in their community—can ultimately lead students to look at their everyday experiences and practices in a new lens.

Gwangju, which is known as an artistic city, is very different now from 20 years ago when I attended Chonnam National University. The spirit of intercultural collaboration between local people and international residents suggests that the very boundary between “us” and “foreigners” was disappearing. In fact, the word “international” instead of “foreign” seems to be used more often these days in the society (which is also reflected in the GIC website). The changing landscape of Korean society is also well-reflected in the rapidly increasing number of interracial marriage couples. The term “다문화 가정”, which literally means “multicultural family”, was recently coined to refer to the growing interracial marriage families. A variety of TV programs have been created to educate the public about various issues that are important in understanding multicultural families.

The shifting image of the Hermit Kingdom is also exemplified in the sweeping “Korean Wave” which is also known as “Hallyu”. The term, “Korean Wave”, was coined by Chinese journalists who were surprised by the quickly growing popularity of Korean dramas in China in the late 1990s (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008; Russell, 2008). The K-pop, which is an abbreviation of Korean popular music, has now made its way to the Billboard Chart. It has played a major role in spreading the Korean Wave around the world. Although many critics predicted that the Korean culture boom would die out, the Korean culture exports have continued to grow. The international popularity of Korean dramas has now spread into other fields such as music, food, clothing, cosmetics, computer games, and so on.

The people of Korea who were once described as the isolated people in the Hermit Kingdom have changed in a dramatic way. I am very proud of the huge strides they have made in opening the country to the world. Their earnest desires to embrace linguistic and cultural diversity while sharing their heritages and unique qualities with others are evident in the GIC activities as well as the sweeping Korean Wave phenomenon. Korea is now becoming synonymous with its innovative abilities while at the same time conserving its heritages and cultures. My trip to Korea this summer has made me deeply aware of the far-reaching changes that are occurring in the country, which will ultimately help Korea continue to grow and prosper in the direction that benefits the greater global community beyond its borders.

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*** The Station Agent: Improving Language Communication with Classroom Station Activities**

Sunday, January 15, 2012

By:

Olivia Conner

In the middle of winter, when the cold seems to slow down our minds and our bodies, it is important to promote communicative teaching methods in the ELS classroom. This focus will ensure that students do not get fatigued and that teachers do not fall into complacency. Sometimes teachers get so bogged down with marking that it is difficult to muster up that latent creativity that is especially needed in the lesson-planning process. This particular situation happened to me recently at the end of the semester when I was faced with teaching a reading class an extensive text that was accompanied by a dull set of questions that were neither creative nor communicative. It was difficult to motivate myself to work on a lesson plan that was original and interactive but the thought of delivering this lesson—knowing that I too would get bored—

forced me to get creative. This is why I adapted it into a stations activity where the students had to move between groups of tables to complete tasks and it was a success!

Basically, it was an academic reading class with a 50 minute time restriction. The specific reading objectives were to understand the main idea, define key terms, summarize a paragraph, and answer general comprehension questions. The students were broken up into four groups of four and the tasks were broken up into four stations, with 3-10 solvable problems/questions per station. Four different documents were created, with four copies of each, and each station got one document per group (per session) so the students were encouraged to work together to solve the problem at hand. For this particular activity the students had ten minute sessions to work at each station and they moved to the next station when the session was over—even if they were not finished. The groups were also encouraged to choose one “writer” per station, which changed each session so there was not one student doing all the work. Finally, the students were given a two minute warning to increase the pressure to solve the problems.

This activity would be best for a class that has a handful of objectives to cover, even if it is writing, speaking or grammar. You can manipulate this activity and get your students moving and working together while increasing their interaction regardless of the level or the area of focus.

Furthermore, this activity works for three important reasons: it discourages teacher centered teaching, encourages teamwork, and increases communicative urgency. Firstly, the teacher’s only role is to keep time, handout documents for each session and to answer questions, so the students learn kinesthetically. Also, the students must work together since they all have one task sheet per table and the time limit ensures that the students work quickly.

There can be some problems that arise like dominant students finishing most of the work or weaker students not contributing, so teachers should think carefully about their group organization if this is a worry. Conversely, this type of activity can add energy to any class and can get students working together in a creative and team oriented fashion, even if they are at different levels. So, give it a try and spice up those cold winter days with some stations.

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*** Blended Learning**

Sunday, January 15, 2012

By:

Victoria Denkus

Blended learning, brick and click, tailored learning . . . we are surrounded by these terms today. However, do we know what they really mean? Can they benefit our students? Most importantly, do we really understand the pedagogy behind them?

The **brick** is the traditional classroom setting. The traditional setting promotes a social and cooperative learning environment. It motivates learners through peer interactions and immediate teacher feedback. It allows both teachers and students to address questions and confusions as they arise. The **click** is the autonomous learning environment available through the web. Web-based tools allow learners to practice and acquire new language skills without classroom distractions, as well as self-direct their learning. Merging these two worlds together creates an environment that meets a variety of learning styles, and a variety of both student and teacher needs. This merge is blended learning.

Blended learning blends the social nature of the classroom with the self-paced environment available in a web-based setting (Clark 2001). Blended learning does not mean a reduction of face-to-face class time. Conversely, it requires greater participation of learners, greater interaction with content, and an overall greater level of engagement.

As ESL educators, we understand the importance of students being engaged. Traditionally, the more students are engaged, the more learning occurs. Following a blended learning model can increase learning by over 11% compared to that in a traditional classroom (Siltzmann, Ely 2009). The reason is simple. Students are more engaged with a digital tool over a traditional text outside of the classroom. They can interact with content at their own pace, on their own schedule, receive reinforcement of course content, and self-select exercises and activities. Students have access to their language success *outside* the walls of the traditional classroom.

Blended learning can enrich our students learning experience through interactive activities and immediate feedback. We as ESL educators can be more informed about our students successes and failures, and perhaps even our own. Lastly, it offers both teachers and students a flexible solution. Students can practice when and where they like. Teachers can choose the most appropriate activities and customize course content to meet curricular and programmatic demands.

Register today for the February 28, 2012 Webinar with Christina Cavage at <https://pearsonevent.webex.com/pearsonevent/onstage/g.php?t=a&d=599583903>

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