

Inspired and Empowered! My First TESOL Convention

by Michèle Pointel

Summary: This article recounts a graduate student's first experience attending a TESOL Convention and describes some aspects of a workshop she attended on alleviating the impacts of trauma. The instructor spoke on restoring power using the four essential pillars of addressing transition shock together with culturally responsive teaching for individuals who have experienced trauma (power interruptions).

Keywords: impacts of trauma, restorative practices, four essential pillars, transition shock, culturally responsive teaching, power interruptions

As a graduate student in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, I had been looking forward to increasing my understanding of the knowledge and scope of the field at the virtual TESOL 2021 International Convention and English Language Expo held March 24th to 27th. The live workshop by Louise El Yaafouri (2021b) of [Diversified Consulting](#), called [Mitigating Trauma in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Settings](#), gave me a lot to think about. In it, she described both culturally-responsive approaches to trauma and some of the tools we could use to apply these approaches in our teaching.

The terminology she used framed the concepts presented in a positive, life-affirming perspective. An occurrence of trauma is a power interruption. The term transition shock covers many facets of trauma that can occur in the lives of people and, more specifically, ELs. Power restoration refers to the process of an individual rebuilding their life from a traumatic event. By focusing on power restoration, an individual is looking forward and moving/growing out of a power interruption, instead of being held back by it (El Yaafouri, 2021a).

Power restoration is achieved through culturally responsive teaching in collaboration with the four essential pillars used in addressing transition shock (El Yaafouri, 2021a). The pillars are

- connect (creating and sustaining relationship with students),
- protect (generating trust and security where students learn),
- respect (encouraging and allowing students to speak, make choices, and collaborate with others), and
- redirect (supporting students as they transition to wholeness by helping them: 1) to cease engaging in

unprofitable behaviors, and 2) to develop a healthy outlook leading to healthy behaviors).

El Yaafouri demonstrated many specific activities that teachers can implement in the classroom to support students in progressing towards power restoration, including the use of transition cards. While the instructor has a schedule which she communicates in advance to her class, she can use transition cards, at periodic intervals, to notify her students of an upcoming activity prior to its starting time. This may take the form of placing an announcement on her communication board a few hours prior to an event as a follow-up to having told her students about it when they first arrived. This allows students time to prepare themselves for the event. The speaker explained that a trauma-impacted brain finds ambiguity and abrupt changes more difficult to handle, and that students' stress is reduced by knowing what is going to happen next. El Yaafouri also suggests giving transition cards to students at the start of a school break: She wants her learners to be secure that their connection with her and the school will continue despite the short hiatus.

El Yaafouri emphasized the importance of coordinating with other professionals when educating students who are working through trauma. If it is evident that a student's need is beyond our scope as a teacher, we can call upon those who are skilled in the relevant area of expertise, such as a school counselor.

For me, the workshop highlighted how important it is for teachers to be aware of this topic so they can provide a firm basis for their students' learning. Healing is a process. By championing our students' strengths, and treating them as the valuable individuals that they are—thus building towards their power restoration—we support them in their journey to illuminate the world (El Yaafouri, 2021a; Zacarian et al., 2017).

References

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

June 21-23, 2021	2021 Virtual TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit
June 30, 2021	Deadline for 2020 and 2021 Teacher Recertification in Washington state.
July 13, 2021	WAESOL Online Training: Narrative Writing: The Remix
September 12, 2021	WAESOL Annual Conference Proposals due
October 22, 2021	WAESOL Pre-Conference Workshops
October 23, 2021	WAESOL Annual Conference (Virtual with Networking Hubs)
October 22-23, 2021	WAESOL Annual Conference
November 15, 2021	WAESOL Educator Winter 2022—Articles due for submission to the editor
April 15, 2022	WAESOL Educator Summer 2022—Articles due for submission to the editor