Contact

Remembering Jura Seskus

Longtime Ontario ESL teacher noted for personal creative touch in classroom methodology

Teachers across the province and elsewhere were shocked recently to learn of the death from breast cancer of Jura Seskus, aged 56, on October 28 at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto. She was predeceased by her brother Algis two years ago, also of cancer.

Jura joined Sheridan College in the summer of 2004 as a teacher and in December, 2004 took on the role of coordinator of the ESL program. Her career in ESL spanned more than 30 years.

Tributes immediately began pouring in from colleagues, former students who became colleagues, friends, and fellow ESL instructors, many of whom learned the basics of their craft under the guidance of this gifted and unique teacher. In fact, the editor of this newsletter was a student in her classes on teaching methodol-ogy in 1991-1992 at the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto.

Jura's life was so closely bound up with teaching that it was impossible to separate that vocation from her life outside of it. Because of her outgoing nature, she formed lasting friendships with people wherever she travelled and especially wherever she taught.

The eulogy at her funeral was delivered by Dr. Sonja Tanner-Kaplash of Victoria, BC, museologist and heritage consultant and long-time friend, who met Jura in the 1980s when she was teaching English at the Gulf University in Bahrain.

Tanner-Kaplash recalls that they were neighbours, with houses back-to-back. In her inimitable practical way, Jura suggested they build

From the Editor

Contributors to this issue of *Contact* span a wide range of interests and experience in ESL, from classroom teachers to researchers to information and communication technology specialists. They hail from across Ontario and more distant points as far away as Nova Scotia and Qatar. As modern communications media draw us closer together we increasingly find commonalities in the issues that engage us, wherever we are. As we grow professionally and look for increasingly effective instructional practice, we come face to face with the implications for L2 learning and teaching brought forth by the rapidity of technological change. Luckily our profession thrives in a culture of sharing, and this issue of our newsletter reflects that spirit of collegiality.

In our opening article on classroom practice, Ottawa teacher **Marit Corbett** underlines the notion that real language growth often happens beyond the four walls of our adult ESL classrooms, in the communities where we live. As her class of newcomers laboriously pored over brochures and articles about Canadian winter, she suddenly realized that the real stimulus to learning lay outside on the tobogganing hills near her school. Her students' excited commitment unlocked the language that lay inside, as they took charge of their outdoor activity and turned it into a magical learning experience. Teachers live for this!

Toronto teacher **Martha Staigys** reflects on the cultural significance and meaning of names, beginning with her own. Of Lithuanian extraction, she ponders the reasons that immigrants sometimes change their names, adopting new pronunciations and spellings, for what they perceive as their unacceptably 'foreign-sounding' name. Some, she says, even seek her advice when they decide to assume an entirely new one. In this article, the author takes a personal perspective on the socio-cultural factors involved in the matter as she explores 'what's in a name?'

Venturing into new instructional territory, Brampton teacher **Chadwick Low** found in progressive rock music the ideal text for developing critical thinking skills and social

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Contact us

Contact welcomes articles of general interest to association members, including announcements, reports, articles, calls for papers and news items.

Contributors should include their full name, title and affiliation. Text should be e-mailed to: teslontario@telus.net or mailed on CD to:

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TESL Ontario's phone numbers are: (416) 593-4243, Fax (416) 593-0164. The website is at: www.teslontario.org

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awareness in his high school ESL classroom. Basing his instructional approach on sound theory related to problem-posing, he reports on the successful outcomes he observed in his students' talk and journal writing as they developed higher-level thinking and language skills in response to some of the songs of Radiohead, a socially-aware British band.

Janet Flewelling reports on a program developed in four Windsor high schools to help newcomer adolescents advance their speaking proficiency through a mentored academic program for learning English. The project, called M.A.P.L.E, paired fluent English-speaking teenagers with ESL newcomers, using a software application called XpressLab, for online oral communication. The success of this pilot project is promising and its participants look forward to future applications on a wider scale in other areas of the province where a similar need exists.

Two of our regular technology contributors, **Stephen Roney** and **John Allan**, respond to a recent keynote address by Jack Richards at the 2009 International TESOL conference, in which the noted authority speculated about the relevance of school-based language classes in a world in which many students turn to the internet and communications media as their primary learning mode. They pose the question: what will become of the role of the classroom language teacher? Their wide-ranging examination of the role of technological change in language learning offers some answers, and is sure to spark debate.

Three books are reviewed in this issue of *Contact*. In the first, **Ali Hadidi**, a Toronto engineer and language teacher of foreign-trained professionals, surveys the linguistic and cultural challenges faced by immigrants in the workplace as he reviews *Recruiting, Retaining and Promoting Culturally Different Employees,* a recent book by Dr. Lionel Laroche and Don Rutherford.

In reviewing *Task-based Language Teaching*, **Ken Lackman**, a language trainer and coursebook author, focuses readers' attention on specific sections of this compilation of 20 scholarly articles to those most relevant to their needs as teachers, curriculum developers, researchers and assessors. This collection of writings is a must-read for teachers who want to deepen their knowledge and heighten the effectiveness of their classroom practice in task-based language learning.

Robert Courchêne reviews Canadian author Steven Galloway's recent bestselling novel, *The Cellist of Sarajevo*. This profoundly moving work is a story about survival, the temptation to hate, and the moral courage required to resist the inhumanity that can easily overtake even the most sensitive of people in war. It is a literary work inspired by an actual event, when a symphony cellist played Albinoni's *Adagio in G minor* for 22 days in a Sarajevo square as a memorial to the victims of a mortar shell which exploded as they waited to buy bread.

Finally, **Hong Wang** reports on some of the factors that affected second language teachers' implementation of a communicatively-based language curriculum in six universities in the northwestern part of China. Her precisely-documented research will be of interest to those involved in curriculum design, provision of professional development to teachers, and program managers.

In this issue of *Contact* we hope that fellow ESL professionals will find the content informative and interesting and that the articles and reports will enhance their professional life and practice. As always, a special note of thanks is extended to all contributors and most especially to Bob Courchêne and Martha Staigys. We look forward to the upcoming 37th Annual TESL Ontario conference, from December 10-12 in Toronto, and invite submissions from readers about the exciting discoveries that they make daily in classrooms across the province.

-Clayton Graves

steps over the low garden wall so they could visit without walking around the block. Before she became sick, explains Tanner-Kaplash, Jura had a PhD "in progress" at the University of Bristol.

"Not unexpectedly," says Tanner-Kaplash, "Jura was an avid and eclectic reader. Anyone who ever visited her house knows that she ran out of book-shelf space years ago. She also traveled widely, and my husband and I have wonderful memories of several weeks spent traveling in India in the 80s with Jura and her brother. She enjoyed gardening, spoiling her several poodles, and could cook up a storm. But her real passion was–quite simply–people."

Jura spent her professional life teaching English at various colleges and universities in Canada and abroad. She had studied linguistics at the University of Edinburgh in her twenties. Later in her career she co-authored, with David Mendelsohn of York University and Rose Laufer, a highly successful textbook on speaking, *Functioning in English*, which remains in print (Pippin Publishers) and is still widely used and appreciated by ESL students.

Mendelsohn recalls his first meeting with Jura when they were both teaching at the University of Toronto's School of Continuing Studies in the early 1980s. "I recognized immediately that Jura was a very special and very talented individual," says Mendelsohn. "She was the ideal professional ESL teacher and teacher-trainer. She possessed that wonderful blend of theoretical knowledge of applied ling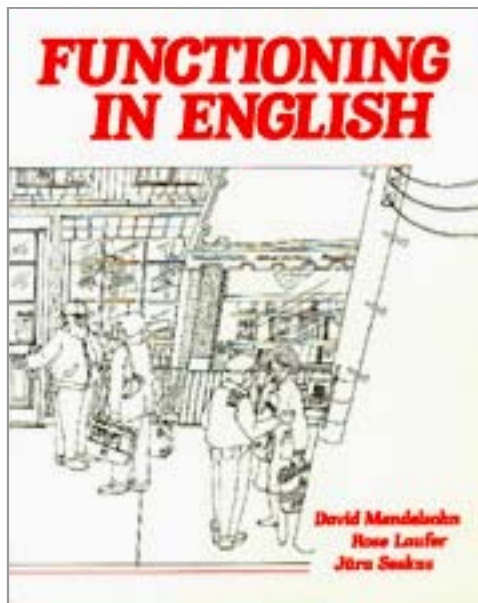uistics and a wealth of classroom teaching experience. Sadly, we confirmed in the last couple of years what we had all known, that Jura was also a fighter. She fought her cancer so bravely!"

Colleague and friend Joan Beyers remembers Jura as a new teacher, more than 30 years ago. "She was a very, very good and clever one. We shared stories and materials. Jura was the 'go to' person for exercises and activities because she kept multiple copies of everything she ever taught. If Jura gave advice, it was not sugar-coated, and it was sound."

Liz Howell, of the University of Waikato in New Zealand, met Jura in August, 1994 in Abu Dhabi. Each was absorbed in the vagaries of the Higher College of Technology orientation program. Liz was the Manager of General Education at Academic Services, while Jura was the Head of General Education at Abu Dhabi Men's College. Their meeting was by chance, though they quickly bonded and enjoyed each other's differences as well as their commonalities of profession and promising futures. As Howell remembers, "Jura began her doctorate, and I longed to follow in her footsteps. I pestered her, wanted to know how she was getting on. News came seldom. But at last she too admitted that she had been attacked by cancer, a reality that she kept from her brother who was sick himself."

Nancy Barrington, graduate of the TESL Certificate Program at the University of Toronto's Woodsworth College, recalls her fortuitous first encounter with Jura in the TESL methodology course which began her training for a new career in second language teaching. "Jura was an intellectual who insisted on the highest academic standards. She combined linguistic theory and peda-

gogical methodology seamlessly, and presented it with energy and humour, along with her own special brand of eccentricity.

Recognizing that, as mature students, we were very apprehensive during this first class, Jura put us at ease with her entertaining style and teachable moments. With her death we have not only lost a teacher and mentor, we have lost a friend. As her former students and *protégés* we will carry on her love for second language instruction with vigor."

Colleagues such as Erminia Bossio at Sheridan College recall Jura's ability to channel the strengths of a diverse group of individuals into a team who appreciated each other's unique qualities and saw the value of sharing and integrating each other's approaches to teaching and learning. "We will all remember and miss her frequent audibly distinct announcements demanding that we halt the use of the sole printer in the common staff room so that she could print her documents with the college letterhead. Her warmth and the strong sense of collegiality she was able to embed in the culture of the college will remain with us."

In memory of Jura's commitment to her students, the college has established the Jura Seskus Award, to be given yearly to an EAP graduate going on to a post-secondary program at Sheridan College. ∎

This tribute to Jura Seskus has been compiled from many contributors. These include Sonja Tanner-Kaplash, David Mendelsohn, Joan Beyers, Nancy Barrington, Heather Walker, Margaret Raymond, Diana Catargiu, Nancy Della Fortuna, Erminia Bossio, Simin Meshginnafas, Maryse Prazuch, Trudy Olsen, Martha Staigys and Liz Howell.

FOND MEMORIES

Jura was the first teacher to introduce us to the concept of fossilization in second language instruction. When I provided an example from my husband who constantly says, "Where's the keys?" to which I respond, "Where are the keys?" we were all amazed to learn that one of our hubbies had become fossilized! That became one of Jura's 'teachable moments.'
– Nancy Barrington

We often called on her for advice once we too were at the front of the classroom. She was generous with her time and resources.
– Heather Walker and
Margaret Raymond

There are so many things I remember about Jura: her sharpness, endless vitality, subtle sense of humour, knowledge of the world, and, yes, her bright red cat-shaped earrings!
— Diana Catargiu

I'm really thankful for the common sense that Jura infused into our methodology program by bringing more clarity into our lesson planning and thus bringing more simplicity into our daily teaching lives.
– Nancy Della Fortuna

The last time I saw Jura was four days before she passed away. As I stood by her bedside holding her hand, I said, "Jura – you don't know who I am – it's David Mendelsohn." Quick as a flash she replied in a strong voice, "I do so!," and winked at me.
– David Mendelsohn

IN THE CLASSROOM

Let it Snow!
Winter Fun at School with ESL Adults
By Marit Corbett

Having outdoor fun is something not many ESL students—coming mostly from countries farther south on the globe—would associate with a Canadian winter.

"No, teacher, *me no go*; sorry – going home now." The young woman holds up her hands, a little sheepishly: "No….uh…..*mit*—tens." I am dismayed; apparently, telling my students every day for a week to dress warmly today has not had the hoped-for result. I am dismayed, but not surprised, because I have seen this many times before. After all, this is an English as a Second Language class for absolute beginners: people who have not had any exposure to English or, for that matter, to school in general. Telling my students something is not enough. It has to be *seen* to be understood. The situation calls for action. I dig around in my extra-warm-winter-clothes bag. I come up with a pair of all-purpose mitts. "Here you go; now you have mittens. Come with us." She's not convinced, but she follows the group, slowly making its way out the door, into the freezing afternoon.

Fifteen minutes later, as I reach the tobogganing hill, I see a flash of red, the sled, an exhilarated figure on top—my reluctant student—grinning from ear to ear. All afternoon I'll be unable to get her off that sled, to make her share with anyone else.

We are on the hill beside our Adult ESL school, a bunch of portables stuck together in a huddle at the back of an Ottawa

Winterlude

Every February, Canada's Capital Region in and around Ottawa is host to Winterlude, a three-week mid-winter celebration, filled with excitement and activity for the whole family!

In 2010, the capital region will celebrate the 32nd edition of Winterlude, from February 5 to 21. The festival was created in 1979 by the National Capital Commission as a means of celebrating Canada's unique northern climate and culture.

From spectacular ice carvings to an amazing playground made of snow, Winterlude is a great way to take in the best of our Canadian winter.

During Winterlude, you can skate on the world's largest skating rink — right in the heart of Ottawa and marvel at majestic snow sculptures and glittering ice sculptures, or enjoy spectacular shows under the winter sky.

Winterlude's mascots, the Ice Hog Family, are present everywhere during the celebration. The members of the family are Mama and Papa Ice Hog and their children, Noumi and Nouma.

Every year, more than 650,000 fun-seekers take part in Winterlude activities. More than a third of them come from outside the Capital region. Winterlude also attracts thousands of artists, athletes and visitors from across Canada and around the world.

Most Winterlude activities are free of charge, but registration and admission fees may apply to certain sporting events and shows.

public school parking lot and we are taking advantage of one of the last days –we hope- of fine winter weather to help our students experience the fun of winter.

Having fun is not something most of our students, coming mostly from countries farther south on the globe, would associate with winter. Their winter consists of coping. Coping with pushing strollers over unplowed sidewalks, with climbing over snow banks in inadequate footwear, being too cold at the bus stop and too hot in the classroom. Winter is to be survived. Nothing less, nothing more.

In the classroom, we read about Winterlude, Ottawa's winter festival. We look at pictures of the Rideau canal: happy families skating hand in hand, kids jumping downhill on their snow riders and flying saucers. We write sentences: "I can slide on the snow." We practice questions: "Can you slide on the snow?" I look at their faces. They reflect the effort of spelling out the sentence, not the sense it wants to convey. There is no personal understanding, no real comprehension of the underlying message behind the words.

My colleagues and I are tired. It has been a long winter of shoveling out the car, driving to work over treacherous roads, trekking across the parking lot to the bathroom at the public school and trying—always trying- to make this all sound like fun. In reality we're all anxious for spring to come, the sooner the better. And yet, how can we let this winter pass, this wonderfully snowy winter, without showing our students that one can indeed find joy in this season of bare trees and picnic tables drowned in snow drifts?

So here we are, on top of our hill: a cluster of brave and bewildered students from roughly 42 different countries, asking themselves in many languages: "What are we doing here?" The wind is fierce today—

there is a -25C wind chill—but so is the sun: a sky as blue as can be and the snow sparkling like nobody's business. These are conditions any athlete in Whistler, B.C. would envy!

My colleagues and I often talk about better ways to make students learn. "How do they learn," we ask ourselves, "how can we make the magic happen: sending the message and seeing that it is received?" Our program, funded by both the federal and provincial governments aims at teaching English to immigrants and refugees but also at teaching about life in Canada in all its aspects. A very important part of that is life in winter. As Giles Vigneault sang: *Mon pays — c'est l'hiver* [My country — is winter].

At the top of the hill, there is a moment of doubt: did we make a mistake bringing them here; is it too cold, were we irresponsible? But suddenly the students take charge: they grab sleds, toboggans and flying saucers and they're off. One Kurdish daredevil snowboards down the hill standing on a kid's sled, promptly losing his balance and rolling around in the white powder, coming back up with a grin. A young woman from Burundi flies down at breakneck speed, making us gasp. Students from all different backgrounds share the big toboggan, holding on to each other's legs, ignoring cultural taboos, learning to sit just so to avoid tipping. I hear snippets of conversation: "I'm buying a toboggan"; "I'm bringing my kids tomorrow." English words, so difficult to say in the classroom, are rolling off their tongue. We teachers high-five each other: This is hands-on learning of the first order.

I have to go back to get new batteries for my camera and so must walk down the hill. At the bottom a young student from the public school stares in amazement at the adults on the hill. "What are they doing?" he asks his teacher. As I walk away, I hear the answer: "The adults are having fun. Having fun in the snow." ∎

Marit Quist-Corbett was born in Holland. An adventurous spirit drove her to leave Holland at the age of 18. She studied French and Spanish literature at the University of Geneva. Concerned for the world, she joined UNICEF and went off to Latin America where she met her Canadian husband-to-be. They moved to Canada and raised three kids. She then decided to get a TESL: certificate at Carleton University and devote herself to language teaching to those who came down the same trail as she did. She is teaching ESL at Bayshore Adult ESL School in Ottawa.

What's in a Name?
By Martha Staigys

Many immigrants to new countries, languages and cultures often face a choice of keeping their names or changing to something more locally familiar — or pronounceable.

What's in a name? I never gave much thought to my name until recently when, at a family get-together, a cousin corrected my pronunciation — of my own last name! Imagine! I thought little more about the incident until just yesterday while reading an essay taken from *The Opposite of Fate*, a book by American author Amy Tan, about the immigrant experience. The piece was a sensitive and moving reflection about her aging mother. It became a catalyst of sorts for revisiting my cousin's admonishment and prompted me to do some reflecting about names.

So, in the wee hours of the morning, I started to think about my own relationship with my name. Quite understandably that led to memories of my parents and their immigrant experience, to my relationship with my husband's name and ultimately to my students and their names.

To be frank, I never worried much about my names, except to inquire what they meant, if anything. This is no different I suppose than analyzing why my eyes are blue-green, and where that colour combination came from. They just are.

But if you come from an immigrant family as I do, you may arrive at a point when you make a decision how you will pronounce your name and expect others to say it. In my case, I had been to enough doctors' appointments with my father to know that his pronunciation of our surname is the one that I would copy. By Lithuanian standards, however, it is most probably a mispronunciation. In his English rendering of 'Staigys', he even chose to change the stressed syllable so that it comes on the first syllable rather than the last. So, what accounted for the change? I will never know.

It would now seem foreign to me, (pardon the pun) to change the pronunciation of my last name back to its original; it's such a part of me. But the change must surely have been a part of my father's assertion of a new sense of identity and integration into Canadian life.

Even my father's first name, Jonas, comes in for some scrutiny. At home we always just called him Papa, but the anglicized 'John'

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was the one he chose to use outside the home and on his documents. When did he decide to change it, and what motivated him to do so? Jonas, his birth name, could not have been a problem to spell out when required. Perhaps pronunciation was the issue: the difference being the pronunciation of "j" as a "j" or as a "y." Again, the explanation is lost.

Just as I did myself, many of my students have changed their first names for reasons of pronunciation. They've told me many times that their name changes were necessary because, as they explained, their names are "too difficult" for Canadians to say. In the case of many Sri Lankan students, for example, some have also abbreviated their polysyllabic names, perhaps to avoid the mutual embarrassment of hearing a native English-speaker yet again get tangled up in the syllables.

I have sometimes heard students defend such a change because they want a "Canadian-sounding" name to enhance their job prospects. I don't think, however, that was the motivation behind my father's name change. Most of his co-workers, like him, were post-war immigrants with names like Massimo, and Luigi. And at home we'd often hear Papa's complaints about "Cooper," whose original name was only vaguely related to the English one he had chosen. Papa was often called in to work, doing double-shifts, because "Cooper" had called in sick again.

My father's "new" first name (John) never became an issue until he died. Suddenly, we confronted the question: which name should be chiseled on his gravestone? The family decided together: the name that he had chosen for himself would be the one to mark his resting place in Canadian soil. Will a similar choice become an issue with immigrant families in the future? One can only guess.

> "I have sometimes heard students defend such a change because they want a 'Canadian-sounding' name to enhance their job prospects."

Obviously, choosing a name is a very personal matter. My father's name was easy to translate, from Jonas to John, and it must have been his considered choice to do so. He never had the option of attending English classes, so the decision to change his name can't have been suggested by a teacher, unlike today, when many students seek their teacher's advice on a new name for themselves. At various times I have been requested to offer such advice, a dubious honour which I often feel awkward in fulfilling. For one thing, by suggesting a name for a student, I don't wish to give tacit approval to the notion that there's a hierarchy among names. Invariably I try to put the onus back on them; this is something that *they* have to do.

Some are quite determined, however. A friend of my family, also of Lithuanian heritage, told me that she was relieved to have adopted her husband's Anglo-Saxon name. Why? She felt she had more job opportunities offered to her after the change. We all know that discrimination exists, and unfortunately it may sometimes be the motivating factor for a name change. As for myself, I am not aware of having been discriminated against because of the unusual configuration of letters in my surname. What I have experienced a few times, however, is the assumption that I was not born in Canada. I've been asked: "Where were you born?" (Canada); "No, *really*, where are you from?" And in my classroom I recall a similar situation, student-to-student, in which a fair-haired and light-skinned Lebanese student had to work hard to convince a classmate that not all Lebanese have black hair and olive skin.

As an ESL teacher I constantly come face to face with fundamental questions of language and identity. What are our students' assumptions? What are they based on? And why

Name those faces: (from left to right) Leslie Townes Hope, Allen Stewart Konigsberg, Chaim Witz , Norma Jean Baker, Marion Michael Morrison.

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do they persist? The issue of names is one of them.

Sometimes I question students about their choices of "new" names. Some reflect characters they've read about or people they admire; for example, Gulliver and Osmond. Some choose names that don't stray far from theirs in terms of pronunciation (Sue and *Xue*). One of my Afghan students had quite a lengthy name in which the same name appeared in both his first and last names. He chose to simplify his name in an attempt to escape the bureaucratic confusions he invariably experienced with government forms. Eliminating one of the duplicate names and using part of his given name as his new surname brought him a great sense of relief.

As for my own first name, I never gave it much thought until I started teaching. Like my students, I made allowances for difficulties in pronouncing my name, specifically the "th"

sound. As far as I'm concerned, they can call me Martha or Marta. (Although their pronunciation of Marta differs from the one I grew up with, and often comes complete with a rolling "rrr.") I suppose I allow the option for two reasons: comfort (theirs), and identification (mine with them), to make them aware that I can empathize with their immigrant experiences, at least to some extent.

I must confess, however, that my own parents had difficulties with the voiceless "th" in 'Martha', which leaves me to question: why did the 'th' appear on my birth certificate at all, when it doesn't appear on my mother's, after whom I was named? My mother suggested a religious explanation, but I have my doubts. I confess that to pronounce my name to outsiders the way my family does, with a 't' sound for the 'th', would feel strange and thus it is something I have never done. Within our family itself, however—depending on to whom one is speak-

(Continued from page 11)

ing—the pronunciation changes automatically, like an on /off switch.

The issue of formality and informality in forms of address is another aspect of this fascinating business of names. I call one older cousin by her first name. At times, I have had difficulty deciding by what name I really should be addressing my cousins who are, many of them, contemporaries of my mother. In the classroom, many students have difficulty calling me anything other than 'teacher'. I understand their insistence in wanting to do so. As a child, I would have been reprimanded for bad manners if I had addressed any guest, relative or not, without the respectful "Aunt" or "Uncle". Moreover, in our household, we didn't embrace Canadian informality, so handshakes between adults and children were also a must. I often wonder what parameters others—including my students—follow with formalities, and when do those culturally-determined practises change, if ever?

Expectations concerning how a name is selected, after whom a child is named, and name order can also become contentious issues in families. In my particular situation, it was my father who insisted that one of the daughters be named after their mother. My mother, on the other hand, had something else in mind. A friend who married into a Greek family did not want to name her newborn after the baby's paternal grandmother. Grandma (Yah Yah), was loved, but her name much less.

In many cultures, names are often chosen along religious lines. I have an Adamas and Eva in my family tree - believe it or not! - and my students are often proud of the religious contexts of their names. (As an aside, I find it interesting that the hugely popular singer, Madonna - named after her mother, I believe - with a daughter Lourdes, managed to find an *amour* named Jesus!)

The traditions, meanings, social expectations and cultural attachments around names are endlessly fascinating. For example, my mother-in-law, Ivy (my mother wouldn't approve of the informality of referring to her by her first name, though my mother-in-law in-

sisted on it) was born with a Victorian name, when those of her generation were named after plants and flora. And in the matter of changing names there is the decision to take on your husband's name or not! To change or not to change (with apologies to Shakespeare); that does seem to be the question. Moreover, should you hyphenate after marriage? And then we confront the issue of when to use Ms vs Mrs. These issues are all good teaching points when discussing personal information in the ESL classroom. I had to make note of changes in what I might be called at school after I got married. I chose to retain my maiden name, but of course could not be referred to as Mrs. Staigys, which would cause even more confusion in a family in which there are already two Mart(h)as.

How long will cultural traditions around naming survive, and how will names be chosen in the future? Will there be, for example, a blend of names, offering a whole new world of options for the next generation, as in the case of one of my Japanese students? She gave both her daughters Japanese names and their English middle names were April and May, respectively. Recognition of the girls' Japanese heritage and Canadian birth have both been documented on their birth certificates.

So, as I began by saying, I have a new interest in the topic of names. Students take an interest in each other's personal and cultural journey and identity, and I do, too. After analyzing my own name, I now have some new questions for the adult learners in my classes: would they change their names and under what circumstances? And would their names reflect their immigration, as mine does? As for myself I am still left with the thorny question: how should I really pronounce my last name? ◼

Martha Staigys teaches adults for the Toronto District School Board. In addition to art and design she has an interest in cultural studies and the personal side to immigration.
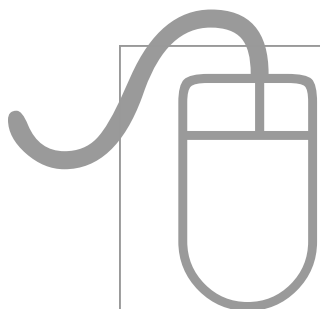
Why Immigrants Change Their Name

From March 2009 issue of Genealogy News

(**genealogy_news_March_2009.html**)

A common problem in genealogy is tracing people who have changed their name. This occurs most often when someone immigrates to another country. The general assumption in genealogy is that immigrants change their name to help them become more assimilated into their new homeland. There are, however, a variety of other reasons why immigrants may change their name.

A 2006 study just published in the *Journal of Labor Economics* provides valuable proof to the field of genealogy that money can be a major driver for immigrants that change their name. The study (**http://ideas.repec.org/p/hhs/sunrpe/2006_0013.html**) by Mahmood Arai and Peter Skogman Thoursie of Stockholm University examined recent immigrants to Sweden. In Sweden, there are only two ways for a person to change their name: by marriage and by legal application to the government. The researchers looked at immigrants who changed their name by legal application, a process that takes from one to two years to complete.

The study focused on immigrants who changed their name to make it more Swedish sounding or more ethnically neutral sounding. The researchers looked at the pay of this group of immigrants before and after the name change. What they found was that an immigrant could increase their earnings by an astonishing 141 per cent by adopting a more local-sounding name. In other words, an immigrant could more than double their earnings potential simply by changing their name! And, interestingly enough, the impact of a name change was more pronounced for women than men. The general assumption by the local populace is that the name change is due to marriage to a local husband.

According to the authors, this provides further proof that individuals are treated differently depending on their name. The United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are all examples of countries founded by immigrants. Most immigrants were motivated by a desire to lead a better life for themselves and their families. A cornerstone of living a good life is to have a good job. For genealogy, this study validates the notion that immigrants will change their name to help them improve their life prospects.

STRATEGIES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

Using Music to Teach Critical Consciousness Through Problem-Posing in the ESL Secondary Classroom
By Chad Low

Introduction

In this article, I describe a lesson designed to help ESL students develop and refine their critical thinking skills by using a critical pedagogical activity: problem-posing. (Wallerstein, 1983) The lesson stems from a theory of Problem-Posing developed by Wallerstein (1983), in which a text, or codification, is presented to ESL students for critical analysis in three stages: listening, dialogue and action. The objective of the lesson was to help ESL students develop critical consciousness (Giroux, 2000) through heightened cognitive and linguistic awareness and noticing skills. As a prompting resource, I chose songs from the British band Radiohead as the codification, or text, in the lesson. I played three pieces from the band's critically acclaimed album Ok Computer, *using the recorded music, the printed lyrics and key concepts within the texts to further the development of a critical consciousness in my high school ESL students, through talk and journal writing.*

Critical Consciousness

The goals that I set out were threefold:

- Create activities to develop critical thinking skills.

- Discourage "the Banking education model" described by Freire (1976).

- Establish a participatory learning environment for my ESL students.

Critical consciousness, in my own and others' views is also a key aspect of a participatory ESL classroom. Critical consciousness is a term expounded by Giroux (2000) that includes the ability to apply critical analysis based on evidence-supported judgments in the broadest sense (Charlebois, 2008).

According to Auerbach (2000), critical analysis involves the participants in deconstructing what they have read, heard and accepted into an ideational framework which

makes sense to them.   (Richard-Amato, p.72). Therefore, I undertook the exercise described here to discover whether it might contribute to a learning environment that would stimulate what Pennycook (1999) identifies as a "pedagogy of engagement" — where the lesson would allow for inclusivity in the discussion of issues relevant to my ESL students' lived experience, background knowledge, and social awareness.

The Rationale for Music in the ESL Classroom

The benefits of using music in the ESL classroom have been well documented. Second language acquisition research has concluded that the use of music reduces anxiety and fear while enhancing language development. The use of music can also break down personal distance in the ESL classroom by acquainting students with commonalities of life experience. At the same time it highlights important linguistic elements such as rhythm and rhyme as well as repetition and semantic predictability.

Others have noted the long-term effects of experiences involving music, quoting the Persian poet and philosopher, Kahlil Gibran: "The reality of music is in that vibration that remains in the ear after the singer finishes his song and the player no longer plucks the strings." (Richard-Amato, 2003) Furthermore, researchers have established the so-called "Mozart Effect" that aids in language development for the ESL student.

Neurologists have also found that musical and language processing occur in the same area of the brain, and there appear to be parallels in how musical and linguistic syntax are processed (Maess & Koelsch, 2001). Thus, music has established efficacy in the ESL classroom in reading, writing, oral communication and vocabulary acquisition.

The key question, however, remained for me: could music and its texts be an ideal codification for a problem-posing approach to develop critical thinking skills in adolescent ESL learners?

ESL Lesson: Problem-Posing and Radiohead

Radiohead is a critically-acclaimed progressive British rock band whose experimental avant-garde music has helped to shape much of today's popular music landscape. In fact, their 1997 album, *OK Computer*, was selected by *Q Magazine* as the best rock album ever created. (Footman, 2007) Their influence on popular music has been international.

To carry out my action research, I used Wallerstein's Problem-Posing model, organizing my lesson into three parts: listening, dialogue and action. I had my ESL class listen to the music, discern and discuss the meaning of the texts, make personal connections of the ideas to the realities of their own lives, and respond by writing personal journal entries.

The objectives of the lesson were to:

- Stimulate critical thought.

- Reduce the level of passive cognitive skills.

- Foster a more participatory classroom.

The idea for the lesson came after discovering a similar type of ESL lesson on the Internet. One teacher from Korea, for example, played *Radiohead* songs to his class in hopes of provoking a critical response from younger ESL students. (Ultratwin, 2009) The results of the Korean teacher's experiment were positive, as many of his ESL students demonstrated a heightened critical awareness by drawing pictures that articulated critical social issues in *Radiohead*'s music. I decided to further this experiment with my somewhat older ESL secondary school students within the framework of the problem-posing approach. I selected three songs from the album — *Let down, Karma Police* and *No Surprises.* I then observed my students' reactions and responses, in hopes that the experience would stimulate critical thought, the analysis required for that, and enhance linguistic growth.

The Lesson

I handed out the lyrics of the three songs to allow the students to preview the text. Following Wallerstein's notions, I started the lesson by asking inductive questions to identify some of the central issues explored in the songs. After reading the lyrics, I assigned a word list to analyze and define key terms such as: *down, crushed, useless, bounce back, emptiest feelings, silence, government, Karma, ill* and *arrest*. I followed that, as Wallerstein suggests, by prompting students responses with some basic direct questions: "What is happening here? Have you ever been in a similar problem situation? What can we do? (Wallerstein, 1983)

These activities prompted the students to activate their own prior knowledge when critically thinking about social issues exposed in the texts and allowed them to bring their own personal "horizon of experiences" to the texts (Jauss, 1982). Such activity helps students to express these opinions through brainstorming and thus create networks of ideas and associations, i.e. schemas. This preparatory activity thus lays the groundwork for activating critical thinking skills to engage the three stages of the problem-posing model.

1. Listening to the Songs

I then played each song, noting their emotional responses and reactions. As students listened, I observed that most referred to the printed lyrics, probably because the lead singer's (Thom Yorke's) voice was somewhat difficult to comprehend and indistinct, especially for ESL learners.   We reviewed key terms once again: *down, crushed, useless, bounce-back, emptiest feelings, silence, government, Karma, ill* and *arrest*, to practice word and concept recognition and invoke prior knowledge and personal associations.

2. Dialogue

After the songs were played, it was time for part two of the lesson: dialogue. The discussion engaged almost everyone, including even the most reticent, and students quickly related the content to their own personal experiences. For instance, one Tamil student reflected that "Karma Police" reminded him of a situation in Sri Lanka where Sinhalese students had bullied, teased and picked on him. He stated that "What goes around comes around", meaning that the attacking students would eventually get what they deserved, i.e. punishment and retribution. That discussion quickly developed to the ongoing social and political problems Sri Lanka faces and the recent terrorist attack (March 4, 2009) against their national cricket team in Lahore, Pakistan, while on tour.

Another student, this one from India, discussed the historical foreign domination and colonialism of India's history. After listening to the song, *Let Down*, the student stated how her family "felt crushed like a bug…" and that, as she observed, sometimes Indian-Canadian students do not get fair treatment in Canadian society, due to the perpetuation of negative stereotypes. She stated that after listening to the song she felt disappointed and disillusioned. Lastly, a student from Iraq, an Assyrian student, told the class that many people in Canada and elsewhere view Iraq as a backward nation and because of this he felt like a second-class citizen in Canada.

In addition, the students also pointed to

other types of discriminations they experience in Canadian society. They discussed how their parents had been passed over for jobs due to their accents and intonations, which were not "Canadian" enough. In addition, the students also identified racism and ageism in their daily lives, not only in school, but in the wider society today. It seemed safe to conclude that Radiohead's music succeeded in provoking critical thought about Canadian social conditions as experienced directly by my ESL secondary students.

3. Action: Personal Journal Writing

The last stage of the problem-posing model is the action stage. I had each student write a personal journal response to our discussion of the songs' texts. Each student had to write two paragraphs. I noticed a recurring motif of inequity and discrimination in the responses, reflecting an attempt at grappling with their nascent critical consciousness. Each written response seemed also to reflect a personal "horizon of expectations", a notion in contemporary literary criticism expounded by Jauss in his 'reception theory' (1982)in which critical interpretations of works are not fixed, but derived from what readers understand as significant in their own lives. While every student reacted differently, based on their culture and experiences, most identified a similar set of ideological and social barriers present in Canadian society. Interestingly, the students were comfortable in relating and sharing their own personal experiences, making a critical correlation between the music, text and critical ideology through their writing.

A closer examination of the students' journal writing also revealed a recurring empathy with the social idealism inherent in much of *Radiohead*'s music, a human value which they seemed to share. In their journal writing, for example, many pointed to social problems such as the inequitable distribution of wealth and material possessions in our society. I was impressed that my ESL students made this connection between *Radiohead*'s music and their own worlds and expressed this critical awareness.

All in all, my classroom experiment was a success in engaging my ESL students to think critically and apply their personal understandings of the wider world to an accessible text presented through music. ■

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PROJECT REPORT

The M.A.P.L.E. (Mentored Academic Program for Learning English) Program: Helping ELL Students to Improve their Oral Language Skills

By Janet Flewelling

According to the document, *English Language Learners: ESL and ELD Programs and Services* (Government of Ontario, 2007a), although English Language Learner (ELL) students will likely achieve a high enough competency in English to function effectively in every day situations within one to two years of English instruction, it will take longer for them to catch up to their age peers in terms of English proficiency. Since classroom instruction time is limited, strategies that enable English language learning students to continue to develop their English language skills beyond the classroom could be very beneficial.

In the 2008-09 academic year, a project called Ontario M.A.P.L.E. (Mentored Academic Program for Learning English) was piloted in four Windsor, Ontario secondary schools. The goal of the project was to link English language learners at the secondary level with secondary students having strong English skills who would act as online oral language mentors for the English learners. The secondary school students would mentor their ELL peers as part of the community service requirement for graduation.

A decision was made to focus on the development of the ELL students' oral skills. Local English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers indicated that their ELL students have few opportunities to speak English with non-newcomer students since newcomer students in Windsor attend a school with programs designed for ESL study. And once at home these students tend to interact with their family members, where they usually speak their mother tongue. As such, typically their only opportunity to speak English is in class at school. Research suggests that the more opportunities students have to use the target language, the more likely they will be to develop proficiency (Swain and Lapkin, 1995). Furthermore, some researchers believe that time on task in language learning has a direct bearing on the development of language proficiency (Serrano and Munoz, 2007; Turnbull, Lapkin and Hart, 1998). By providing the ELL students with an opportunity to practise their oral language skills outside the classroom, it was hoped that their oral language skills would improve.

(Continued from page 18)

Writing can be done in isolation, and frequently only the student and the teacher see what is being written. However, speaking skills are usually developed in front of not only the teacher but in front of the students' peers. This can be intimidating for students and frequently students are reluctant to speak more than necessary. In this project, the ELL students did not have to speak in front of other people. They used a software application called XpressLab[1] which allows for online oral communication. Their oral recordings were done on computer and only their student mentor—someone they never saw—heard what they were saying. Students using XpressLab have reported that they feel less insecure when talking to their computer. They don't feel they are being judged, something they do feel when speaking in a classroom situation. They further confide that they feel more confident when speaking in the target language when using XpressLab for oral communication (Student Interviews, 2004).

It was felt that the ELL students would respond well to the opportunity to speak with other students of a similar age. The *Impact Measurement Pilot Peer Mentoring Report* (Mentoring + Befriending Foundation, 2006) found that peer mentoring can have a positive effect on the pupils directly involved, on the school environment as a whole and on the achievement of educational goals. The ESL teachers involved in the M.A.P.L.E. project indicated that, more often than not, their students had little or no contact with similar-aged students whose mother tongue was English and who grew up in the Canadian educational system. An assumption made for the project was that the ELL students would benefit from contact with English-speaking students both in terms of an improvement in their oral language skill development and increased cultural understanding.

Both ESL teachers also saw value in having the ELL students use computers during the

Read the project M.A.P.L.E. final report at:
http://web4.uwindsor.ca/units/
researchEthicsBoard/studyresultforms
.nsf/b16c81cd4c873b9085256f31005fff04/
68624b4726bb1872852575eb006a1a1d/
$FILE/Final%20Report.doc

project. They indicated that some, and often many, of their students come to Canada with little computer experience and felt that the students would gain valuable computer experience while communicating with their mentors online. They also recognized that computer use would support a Ministry expectation for ELL students: "Whenever appropriate…students should be encouraged to use ICT to support and communicate their learning" (Government of Ontario, 2007b, p. 53).

Project Development

The first task was to identify ESL teachers who would be interested in participating in the project. Two local teachers expressed an interest and with the author they decided on a group of students in each of their schools who might benefit from additional opportunities for oral language development. The teachers indicated that they believed the project was best suited to

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1. Xpresslab is an internet-based software application designed for oral language reinforcement and assessment. It is available at no charge to all Ontario teachers in publicly-funded schools. For more information about the software, contact Don Snider (NetSoftware Inc.) at **dsnider@netsoftware.ca**.

(Continued from page 19)

ELL students at the 3 level since they would have enough basic oral language skills to be able to understand what their mentor would say to them and they would be able to be understood by their mentor.

Subsequently, the author and the ESL teachers collaborated on the development of language topics that would be presented to students as discussion topics. The goal was not to focus on language instruction but rather on authentic communication. It was felt that the teachers could focus on formal language instruction in class. What the students would most benefit from would be opportunities to engage in authentic language use with their peers. Topics conceived for the project included the following: Weather and Seasons, Families, Special Days and Holidays, Food and Drink, Shopping, School, Animals and Pets, Clothing and Fashion to name a few. For each topic, a list of discussion points was developed. An example of a topic with discussion points is as follows:

TOPIC: Food and Drink

Every culture has food and drink that is associated with that culture and when people move to a new country, they will find new foods and drinks to try. Here are some things to talk about:

ELL Students:

1. What kinds of foods and drinks did you have in your home country that are different than the foods and drinks here? Describe an everyday meal in your home country.

2. Did anything surprise you about the foods and drinks here in Canada? Why?

3. What was your favourite food in your home country?

4. Is there any food from your home country that you can't get here? If so, do you miss it?

For Everyone:

1. What kind of foods and drinks do you like and dislike?

2. What do you like to eat when you go out to eat in a restaurant? Do you have a favourite restaurant here in Windsor?

3. Who does the cooking in your family? Is there anything that you like to cook yourself? Is there a special food that you eat on the weekends or on special days?

4. What do you normally eat for breakfast, for lunch and/or for dinner?

A goal of the project was to not only focus on oral language development but also to help the ELL students learn more about Canadian culture and to help the student mentors learn about the culture of their ELL partner's home country. Understanding of each other's cultures could lead to a stronger appreciation of the value of our multicultural society and an increased tolerance of cultures different to one's own (Moodley, K., 2000).

All of the discussion topics were linked to curriculum expectations outlined in the Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum document *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9-12: English As a Second Language and English Literacy Development, 2007 (*Government of Ontario, 2007b).

An additional task was to identify secondary students with strong English skills who would be interested in acting as language mentors for the ELL students. Two secondary school English department heads indicated they were interested in the project and they selected students from their schools who expressed an interest in being language mentors.

Pre-Implementation Activities

Once the curriculum was developed and the students who would participate in the project were identified, decisions had to be made about how to prepare the students for the project. It was decided that the author would plan two workshops: one for the ELL students and one for the mentors.

In each workshop, the students would be introduced to XpressLab which would allow

Figure 1: Audio conversations between two mentors and an ELL student.

Every culture has food and drink that is associated with that culture and when people move to a new country, they will find new foods and drinks to try. Here are some things to talk about:

ELL Students:

1. What kinds of foods and drinks did you have in your home country that are different than the foods and drinks here? Describe an every day meal in your home country.

Food and Drink	Post Date
Posted by: Roland Ng Topic: Post Subject	21:25 on Mon May 25 2009
Posted by: Lisa Topic: Re: Post Subject	23:13 on Mon May 25 2009
Posted by: Ryan El-baba Topic: Re: Post Subject	15:29 on Tue May 26 2009
Posted by: Roland Ng Topic: Re: Re: Post Subject	19:37 on Tue May 26 2009
Posted by: Lisa Topic: Hey Roland!! (I'm not sure if this will work.)	19:24 on Wed Jun 3 2009
Posted by: Roland Ng Topic: Post Subject	21:29 on Mon May 25 2009
Posted by: Lisa Topic: Re: Post Subject	23:36 on Mon May 25 2009
Posted by: Ryan El-baba Topic: Re: Post Subject	15:48 on Tue May 26 2009

them to communicate orally with each other. One of the tools available in the software is an oral discussion forum. It functions exactly like a text-based discussion forum except that the postings are made orally. The students were shown a typical text-based discussion forum and were then shown how XpressLab could be used to make oral recordings that would be posted to a discussion forum that could be accessed by themselves and their M.A.P.L.E. partner.

In the ELL workshop, the students were told about the goals of the project and then they were each given a headset with a microphone. They were shown how to access an activity created in XpressLab and they then recorded a message for their mentor in which they introduced themselves. Most of the ELL students were paired with one mentor but a few were paired with two since in one of the boards there were more mentors than ELL students.

In the mentor workshop, mentors were told about the goals of the project. They also listened to a presentation about the value of peer mentoring by an expert on mentoring and participated in a presentation by one of the board's diversity officers who talked with the students about issues related to cultural diversity. One of the ESL teachers then did a presentation on what the mentors could expect regarding the language ability of the ELL students they would be mentoring and how they could help the ELL students to correct language mistakes. They stressed that the mentors should not try to take on the role of a teacher. Rather they should provide friendly support to their ELL peer. The students were told that if they found themselves in a situation where they were unsure about

(Continued from page 21)

how to respond to an ELL student, they could contact their English teacher or the ESL teacher for advice. The mentors were given a headset and on a computer they accessed XpressLab in order to listen to the recordings made for them by their ELL partner. They then recorded a message back to their ELL partner introducing themselves and making relevant comments to their partner.

Implementation of the Project

At the training sessions, the ELL students and the mentors were told that they should monitor the XpressLab site on a regular basis to watch for postings from their M.A.P.L.E. partner. They were encouraged to listen to recordings and respond as often as possible. They were told that a topic would remain active for about two weeks and then the topic would change. Postings were done asynchronously thus allowing the students to make their recordings at a time that was convenient to them. The student mentors were reminded that they needed to do their postings outside of school hours in order to qualify for community service credit.

In the course of the project, the author monitored the students' recordings and sent e-mails or contacted the ELL or English/ESL teacher if students fell behind in their postings. Sometimes a gentle nudge was needed to remind a student to do an oral post but many students did their postings regularly and good conversations occurred between the mentors and their ELL partners.

Figure 1 shows a screen capture of a discussion forum between two mentors and an ELL student. At the top of the page students can read the discussion topic and they can click on the link beside "Food and Drink" to listen to the discussion topic. Below are excerpts of recordings made by the three students.

Roland (ELL student)

Because I am uh Chinese and I came from Hong King so I had Chinese food in my home country, I had rice , vegetables, pork. chicken every meal. Um, we had soup to drink after dinner so is very different from Canadian food which is faster and so maybe I think I like Chinese food better. I miss them so much.

Lisa (Mentor)

Hi Roland. I want to say that I can actually say that I like eating rice, pork, chicken and vegetables. I love those foods. I actually don't like eating fatty foods like the Canadian foods that are unhealthy. I'm really into eating healthy foods. It was nice to hear that you like eating healthy foods too. Most people like my friends, they don't care about eating healthy even though they should.

Ryan (Mentor)

Hi Roland. Like Lisa said, over here the food can be kinda bad - too much fat, sugar salt that kind of stuff so you just have to make sure you know what you are eating so you will be fine.

Roland

I think that the Canadian food is quite greasy compared to Chinese food but um usually people in Hong Kong choose some healthy food to eat when they are at home and maybe they bring their own food to school to eat so it is ok for us to eat those oily foods once in a while and there are some fast food shops in Hong Kong too and we go there maybe once a week and I think that it is better for us to bring our food to school for lunch, ya, and drink some more water.

Ryan

Yeah, the food over here has a lot of oil in it. I guess they just have that so it cooks faster. But I've been to other countries and what I noticed there was a lot less oil and smaller portions too. There wasn't as much food. I guess over here we eat unhealthy and a lot more of it too. Lucky us, right?

Lisa

Hey Roland, ok wow. I can just imagine the difference between the foods here

(Continued from page 22)

in Canada and in Hong Kong because it is more unhealthy over here cause it's greasy and oily, the food over here. So anyways, the word oily, I was wondering if maybe you want to try to pronounce it like this: oily, oily. Ya right. I want to make sure that you hear that right. But I understood what you were saying, though, so it's ok if you can't say it like that. But if you want to try, there you go.

Roland

So I want to try to say that word again. I think it is oily. Yeah. Oily. It's good to re-fuse to eat oily food because it would be good for our health.

Outcomes and Learnings

At the end of the project, a number of conclusions were made. Both Boards of Education indicated that they believed that supporting English Language Learners is important not only for the ELLs themselves but also for the community at large that they will be entering once they graduate. They also strongly sup-ported the idea of student volunteerism and they saw value in having similar age students mentoring the ELLs as part of their community service requirement for graduation. Both Boards favoured continuing the program in coming years.

One of the English Department Heads involved in the project indicated a strong desire to implement the project next year. She com-mented that one of the other English teachers in her school was extremely keen to make the M.A.P.L.E. project a part of her overall teaching program for her students.

Key learnings that came from this pro-ject were:

1. Students really liked the idea of acting as language mentors for similar-aged students who are learning English, and the English language learners enjoyed working online with their language mentors.

2. Support from the schools was invalu-able for the project. In particular, hav-ing support from the school principals, the ESL teacher and the English teacher in the school the mentors at-tended made a real difference to the success of the project.

3. In the early stages of the project, en-couragement and support by the ESL teachers and the English teachers were crucial.

4. Training for mentors that included a presentation by an expert on mentor-ing was very beneficial for the stu-dents. The mentors also indicated that they learned a lot from the presenta-tion by the diversity officer.

5. The XpressLab software that was used to enable the online oral communica-tion between students performed with-out issue in both school and home set-tings. Students found it intuitive and it didn't present any challenges to the IT infrastructure at the schools.

6. ELL student and mentor comments suggested that they gained an appre-ciation for each other's culture during the project.

7. Some ELL students reported that they felt more confident in using computers as a result of the project.

8. Both ELL students and the student men-tors indicated that they felt they had made a new friend as a result of the online communications and many indi-cated a desire to meet their online partner.

9. Many ELL students indicated that the program helped them to improve their listening and speaking skills.

Conclusion

According to Statistics Canada, over 600,000 foreign immigrants moved to Ontario between 2001 and 2006. Over the same period,

there has been a 24 per cent increase in the average percentage per school of students requiring ESL support (*People for Education*, 2007, p. 1). With increasing numbers of recently-arrived newcomer students in our school system an ongoing challenge for ESL teachers is to help these students achieve the highest level of English language proficiency possible so that they can experience success in school and beyond. Response to the M.A.P.L.E. program has been positive from local school boards, teachers and students. It is hoped that other teachers in the province will consider implementing the program as a means of supporting ELL students in their quest to improve their oral language skills and at the same time provide secondary school students having strong English communication skills with a meaningful and rewarding activity that can contribute to the community service requirement for graduation. Teachers who would like more information about the M.A.P.L.E. project should feel free to contact the author at: flewell@uwindsor.ca. ■

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TESL and the technology revolution
By Stephen Roney and John Allan

Today's students are learning not just in the classroom—and not just from teachers. New technologies require new thinking from teachers.

In his plenary address at the 2009 TESOL International conference, "The Changing Face of TESOL," Jack Richards stated that, "today's learners are not as dependent on classroom-based learning and teaching as they used to be." This was an eyebrow raiser, since Richards is one of the leading thinkers of our profession.

In the same section of his address, "Learning Moves Beyond the Classroom," Richards was referring primarily to the observation that many students successfully learn English from media outlets. These traditionally have been television, radio and the movies. But with the appearance of extensive new media such as Twitter, the Web, YouTube, and FaceBook, Richards continued, "the challenge for us is how to make the most of the new opportunities that the Internet, new technology, the media, and blended learning offer." Inspired by this portion of his speech, we offer some observations on the matter of the TESOL profession's adapting to the current digital revolution.

In terms of technological revolution, the results the last time this sort of thing happened were fairly extensive. The obvious analogy is the invention of the printing press in the Renaissance: a new medium that vastly reduced the cost of knowledge. Before Gutenberg, access to knowledge was limited, and acquiring it was expensive. People who had it were exceedingly disinclined to distribute it without charge.

If a glazier discovered a new technique to tint glass, or a monastery perfected a new formula for a liqueur, or a fisherman discovered a new land across the sea, the automatic instinct was to maintain secrecy—it led to an advantage in trade. To learn it, you would have to sign on as an apprentice and labour for the Master more or less until he himself felt ready to retire.

With the printing press, however, a new impulse appeared, the impulse to share knowledge. In a sense, the printing of books was the first open source movement—the second being the publication of new discoveries we know as the "scientific method."

A privileged group could no longer realistically hoard knowledge. On the other hand, by publishing — and publishing first — one could achieve a fame and fortune previously unattainable. Much else followed: not just science, but democracy, the free market, industrialization, Protestantism, the rise of the middle class, the end of a hereditary upper class, the idea of human rights, and the first great wave of globalization, beginning with Columbus and the Portuguese drive East.

It could happen again. In fact, we can already see it happening. Look what is already occurring with print newspapers. Only yesterday they were one of the most profitable and established institutions. Now CanWest, one of Canada's largest international media companies, is in bankruptcy protection, and the *New York Times* must sell its headquarters building to keep going for a few more months. And isn't what we're seeing there precisely the democratization of knowledge?

Just as the invention of printing made it possible for everyone to read and write for themselves—and necessitated learning how— now everyone can be a journalist, publisher, broadcaster. Just as the printing press ended the existence of a class privileged by birth, which had a monopoly on most knowledge, so this new phase, which McLuhan called 'the electronic age', may end the existence of the privileged class of knowledge workers we know as "the professions." Already the privileged "fourth estate" of journalists seems to be tottering. In a few years, it may well be the lawyers; or the doctors; or the engineers. Or, perhaps, the teachers?

John Sturm, the President and CEO of the Newspaper Association of America, states that recent trends are a "terrible stretch of bad road." He feels it is possible, however, that newspapers will again become profitable, if they learn to adapt to the new tools: "The latest data from *Nielsen Online* indicates more than 70 million people visited newspaper Web sites in June" (of 2009). He hopes, that "When the economy eventually begins its recovery, advertisers will return to spending, and newspapers will find themselves extremely

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well positioned to harness the strength of their print and digital platforms to build a brighter future." However, it is worth noting that, despite the recession, advertising revenues for online media continue to rise.

In fact, the book publishing industry publishes over one million unique print titles as a result of integrating advanced technologies and techniqies. According to Darnton (2009), this industry has already scanned more books than were housed in the ancient library of Alexandria. However, publishing houses sell more paper books by using web-based outlets such as Amazon and Chapters online. They also release descriptions and chapters of books online at social networking websites.

Additionally, these sites provide a direct communication with the author through email or a blog, participatory commenting ability for the community, rating ability, illustrations or pictures, reviews, summaries, links to other related works, details about the

author's credentials and a means of buying or reselling books.

Harnessing Web 2.0 technology has thus been an asset for the publishing industry rather than an enemy. After all, how many teachers have asked their students to get out their Kindles and start reading?

"In this electronic age we see ourselves being translated more and more into the form of information, moving toward the technological extension of conscious-ness." (Marshall McLuhan in a TV interview, 1967) Digital natives, those born since home computers became pervasive, do not require this transformation. They *are* the electronic age. Digital natives are driving this revolution.

They possess com-prehension, technical abilities and information-processing skills that allow them a richer experience with media. Rather than being receivers of information from media outlets, they are the contributors and creators who make these resources interesting, rich and engaging. Warlick (2009) defines these information-processing skills as a series of interactions with information, which he terms "grazing," "the deep dive" and "the feedback loop." He describes digital natives who "graze" through enormous amounts of information offered by digital media. When they locate pertinent information, they "deep dive" to locate the information they require, perhaps through several layers of hyperlinks within and across web resources. In the end, they have the option of posting responses through comment boxes, polls, blogs, social networks or wikis such as *Wikipedia*.

The TESOL community must adapt to this learning style and behavior in order to connect with the modern learner. Just as the cost of covering news — and so getting news —

> "...professional teachers will now need to compete with 'citizen teachers.'"

has dropped dramatically with the Internet, so has the cost of providing or getting an education.

First, the cost of entry for setting up a school or college is now vastly lower. If 'the school' is formed online, the capital costs are negligible; especially with open-source packages like Apache, Linux, Moodle and free Web 2.0 tools. The library is on the Web; students can be anywhere. Tools like Elluminate or DimDim duplicate the essentials of the entire classroom experience.

All an on-line school requires is Internet access and instructors. But in a way, that increases our value as teachers in the equation. First-rate instructors can now bypass the institutions and set up their own schools. And if they cut out the middlemen, their pay should rise, and tuition should drop, letting more students in.

Students, conversely, are bound to prefer this new approach, not only because it is inexpensive, but also because they can learn wherever and whenever and with whomever they desire. This, of course, is truly unpleasant news only for teachers who are not ready to adjust; and for school administrators.

For those who do adapt, however, opportunities in the learning profession should be greater. The educational workers will have taken over the means of production; we have nothing to lose, it would seem, but our chains.

Online offerings such as LiveMocha.com provide a community of live language partners through a social network that allow individuals across the globe to teach each other their native language by interacting in total immersion on line. Members can be supportive, just as in a classroom situation, by working with each other through the free curriculum provided at the site. The members of this community use a myriad of on line lessons supported by multimedia. LiveMocha

already has a published registration of over two million users. Some of these might even now be in your sessions during the day, and augmenting your instruction on line at night!

While the credibility of any given online learning site may be questioned, it is simply a matter of time before many of the mainstream institutions adapt this model for their offerings.

But that's not the complete story. Just as professional journalists now have to compete with "citizen journalists," (to use Matt Drudge's phrase, see *Glazer*, 2005), who are doing journalism as a hobby, so professional teachers will now need to compete with "citizen teachers." The age of automation, as McLuhan foresaw, is the age of "do it yourself" (McLuhan, 1997). Everyone is teaching everyone else in Web 2.0; in a real sense, this is what Web 2.0 is. Everyone is an amateur teacher in LiveMocha, in *Wikipedia,* in a dozen web sites that collect instructional videos. If a person knows a useful fact or skill, they can make a video or write an article and put it on the web. Learners then string together the information they need, "just in time," as and when they need it..

Web resources such as eHow, TeacherTube, Google Translate, VideoJug, and BBC's *Learning English* allow learners to access innumerable resources. These include multimedia, computer interaction, remote human interaction, predefined learning objectives and full tutorials.

Will we, as professional teachers, be able to compete? After all, this model is inherently superior to the old walled schoolhouse we used to love to burn in effigy on the last day of school in June. In a rapidly changing world, we cannot afford any longer to sit in school for twelve or sixteen or eighteen

> "Plato, the founder of our education system, felt the superiority of being taught to learning on one's own was unassailable…"

years, and expect the knowledge absorbed in that span of years to keep us going for the rest of our working life. Not in any technical field, at least.

The model must be of continuous learning: the walls between the school and the world must therefore come down. We must all be continuous learners.

Beyond traditional "bricks and mortar" schooling there are five general life-long learning models. These are:

1. Home schooling.

2. Adult education.

3. Continuing education.

4. Knowledge work.

5. Self-directed personal learning.

New technologies enable all of these, through access to data, peers, tutors, animated models, interactive learning assessments and countless learning opportunities. Life-long learning modes benefit from current technologies through rapid materials production and access, as well as adaptable and efficient course creation. Curriculum learning opportunities can be encapsulated into electronic learning objects, stored in databases that have friendly interfaces. So far, it must be said, many of these learning object repositories have failed to realize their promise. However, with proper design, standards and support they will be a major source of materials in the future.

Plato, the founder of our education system, felt the superiority of being taught to learning on one's own was unassailable, for two reasons: first, because no book could answer questions as they arose, and because books could not adjust to the level of the learner. It is the same with written words: they seem to talk to you as though they were intelligent, but if

you ask them anything about what they say, from a desire to be instructed, they go on telling you just the same thing forever. And once an idea is put in writing, it doesn't know how to address the right people, and not address the wrong. (Phaedrus, 275 D-E, trans. R. Hackforth).

For two thousand years and more this argument has stood unanswered. It is now no longer true. Teachers may now be functionally obsolete. Computers indeed can tailor the lesson to the student's ability, and to the individual student, while a teacher must strike an average over an entire class. Realistically, it is also much faster to do a Google search than to hire a private tutor for a half-hour session on a topic of immediate interest. And, compared to the average teacher or professor, Google really does seem to be far more erudite, to have a much better memory, to have a lot more valuable information at its beck and call.

In the case of language teaching, in particular, much of the TESL profession was based on the need to practice with a native speaker—as hypothesized by Krashen and his communicative approach (originally in Krashen & Terrell, 1983). That professional model has been among the walking dead for several years now. Today, and even more tomorrow, that native speaker is available for free at any moment on the Web. There is no need to fly us over to Japan any longer. Anyone with the coinage to attend the nearest Web Cafe in China or Korea can chat with North Americans through some social network.

Sites such as italki, EnglishBaby!, LiveMocha, and Lang-8 offer language exchange partners that mirror the model of computer dating sites. People can browse through welcoming databases to locate a chatting or talking partner over the Internet. If it

> "We can and must now present our lesson in the medium to which it is best suited, and to best suit our students."

is just about practice with a native speaker, we are now as irrelevant as vaudeville. We must offer something more.

What is left for us teachers, and especially ESL teachers? What can we offer?

Over the long term, we really ought to be okay. The invention of printing might, after all, have killed the trade of scribe, but by reducing the cost of knowledge, it ultimately increased both the total volume of knowledge and the total demand for it—and so increased employment enormously for knowledge workers of all kinds.

The trade of scribe or clerk differentiated into all of the professions. Marx to the contrary, the automation of manual labour in the Industrial Revolution similarly led rapidly to higher production, and so more work, and more profitable work, for manual labourers generally, even if much of that work has most recently moved offshore.

The web is therefore probably producing, over time, more work for us as knowledge workers. To take the example of journalism once again, if it is now much cheaper to publish or broadcast, there will now be more publishing and broadcasting, and so more content will be needed. Moreover, the content will be more central to the success of the venture, as the cost of the media goes down. Before the printing press, some might have made a living as a scribe, but nobody could make a living as a journalist or professional writer.

We must simply judge what our new role might be, our new business model, if you will, in order to adjust properly and profitably. Essentially, we will probably be moving our activities to a higher level, comparable to the move from scribe to writer, or from village storyteller, who keeps the local traditions in memory, to scribe. What seems clear is that we

teachers will be far less than now the actual source of raw information; the Web can do that better than we can. Our role must be more creative than that.

The original and essential qualification for a teacher, in the ancient world, was skill in rhetoric, skill as an orator. That may be what we are returning to. It will no longer be enough just to know the information to be transmitted. The knowledge will be too easily available elsewhere. To compete, we must be able to present it better than the next teacher.

Where that once meant being able to give a stem-winding lecture—and that will probably still be a valuable skill—what it may also mean now is skill with multimedia. We can and must now present our lesson in the medium to which it is best suited, and to best suit our students. We need to be experts on the technology and in the techniques of knowledge transfer as much as on the subject matter. We probably need to know how to make good videos, write good articles, make good recordings, create good illustrations and page designs, take good photos, make engaging simulations and/or interactive educational games; and most of all understand how to integrate them one with another. These will be the future toolbox of a teacher. Talk, that old standby of the lecturer, is proverbially cheap. But now, so is every other medium. If we do not use them, we will never be able to compete with YouTube.

That is perhaps a lot to learn, It may be, however, that we will specialize in different media, rather than all doing the same job in different classrooms: one of us will develop audio learning objects for history classes, another visuals for teaching molecular biology, and so forth. We might then pool resources on our own teaching knowledge networks, like

> "We as teachers need to make ourselves the experts in this new rhetoric; if we do, our new role becomes obvious and vital."

vast interconnected teaching wikis, on the model of open online communities such as Classroom 2.0, a Ning network that currently reaches more than 30,000 teachers daily through "webinars", emails, blogs, and shared resources. At sites like this one, educators can contribute to and enhance methods, techniques and experiences that can further enrich the teaching experience.

In terms of education, the most conspicuous result of the invention of the printing press was the sudden need for almost everyone to read and write. "Grammar schools" sprang up across Europe — each requiring its complement of highly literate instructors. Today's new multimedia revolution similarly requires a vast new set of skills from the average man or woman, precisely so that he or she can be a "citizen journalist," and a "citizen teacher."

Not everyone needs to learn how to program, any more than they need to know how to repair a computer. But everyone now needs to know the "grammar" of visual communication, of animation, of interactive games, of mixed media, or they will be at a disadvantage in any knowledge job. We as teachers need to make ourselves the experts in this new rhetoric; if we do, our new role becomes obvious and vital. We must learn and teach what McLuhan calls these "new languages with new and unique powers of expression." (McLuhan, 1957, quoted in McLuhan, 1997, p. 272).

Multimedia authoring tools and techniques are now being taught and used as early as elementary school. Scratch, for example, an open source interactive multimedia and scripting program created at Massachusetts Institute of Technology is designed to assist children as young as 8 to develop up-to-the-minute learning skills. Students create and share interactive projects

(Continued from page 30)

over the Internet or with their peers at their schools. They discover important programming basics and concepts. Project creation also invokes creativity, logic, and collaboration. There are now over half a million Scratch-generated projects of all genres available that were produced by children. Scratch can be learned in a blended fashion, with a teacher's facilitation, or online from the resource site itself. Just-in-time multimedia tips, FAQs (frequently asked questions) and sequenced tutorials provide the modern continuous learner with enough support to succeed.

Professional qualifications will be discounted in the future, as well. Anyone can now play. A profession is, to speak bluntly, ultimately a cartel in restraint of trade, and it cannot maintain itself when knowledge is too freely available, just as the old hereditary ruling class and the old trade guilds could not hold with the advent of the printing press.

Success as a teacher will require not holding the right degree, or working for the right institution, but actually being able to do the thing better than the next individual. We will be judged as professional public speakers are judged, or professional authors: will people buy or use your learning objects? It will be the customer - the learner - who decides, not some accrediting body. In a way, we will see a purer meritocracy.

This too is ironically a return to the true roots of higher education. In ancient Athens,and most other ancient civilizations, individual masters sat in the marketplace, the local deer park, on some hilltop, or in their home, and gathered students around them, ad hoc. Pure merit as a teacher will count for more - and will be better rewarded.

Change is already occurring at many institutions. Harvard University has recently put

> "A profession is, to speak bluntly, ultimately a cartel in restraint of trade, and it cannot maintain itself when knowledge is too freely available."

an entire first-year philosophy course on-line (www.justiceharvard.org) complete with multimedia and interactivity. Consider what this means: all first-year philosophy teachers must now compete - in principle, worldwide - to be the most compelling to students. Nobody will have a captive market. But on the other side, if one has an obscure specialty of little interest to the vast majority, one might nevertheless find a good audience, and income, by drawing from the entire world population for your class.

Will it work? A recent multi-year meta-analysis commissioned by the US Department of Education, and undertaken by the independent think tank SRI, concluded that "Students who took all or part of their class online performed better, on average, than those taking the same course through traditional face-to-face instruction" (SRI, 2009).

To survive, though, one thing we must lose is our habitual assumption as skilled professionals dealing with "laymen" that "the customer is always wrong." That cannot work so long as the customer is free to go elsewhere. Like a privilege of birth, the privileges due for knowing a specialized body of knowledge are likely to become a thing of the past.

Arguments can be made to delay this revolution of course; for example, there are predators on the Internet hunting our children; information posted is not vetted, and could be wrong; non-professionals cannot be relied upon to provide an integral education; pranksters can spread false or misleading information. But none of these objections seems in principle insurmountable, or decisive. Most of the same arguments were once made against democratic voting, and that seems to have turned out reasonably well.

In 1957, Marshall McLuhan stated, "As technology advances, it reverses the

characteristics of every situation again and again. The age of automation is going to be the age of 'do it yourself.' We cannot afford to block anything from the outside world from the classroom. Just the reverse is needed: tear down the walls. If we do not, we might preserve the integrity of our classroom - but there will be nobody in it.

In the end, Jack Richards remains hopeful:

"Today's English teachers are better prepared than ever before; the teaching resources available to us are providing new environments for teaching that were not available to us just a few years ago, and the professional support provided through our schools and professional organizations enables us to learn from participation in a worldwide community of teachers. And technology is offering exciting new opportunities for teacher development too. Technology is providing new dimensions to campus-based teaching (for example using internet-based resources) as well as for distance teaching through on-line learning. "

The times ahead will be challenging — but they will be challenging for everyone. We must all learn many new things. What time could be in greater need of good teachers? ■

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Classroom2.0; education community; **www.classroom20.com**

DimDim; web conferencing; **www.dimdim.com**

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Google Translate; language translation;
italki; language teaching exchange; **www.italki.com/partners**

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LiveMocha; synchronous on-line language; **www.livemocha.com**

Moodle; Learning Management System; **www.Moodle.org**

MovieMasher; on line video editor; **www.moviemasher.com**

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VideoJug; cooperative video community; **www.videojug.com**

BOOK REVIEW

Recruiting, Retaining, and Promoting Culturally Different Employees
By Dr. Lionel Laroche and Don Rutherford
Review by Ali Hadidi

Recruiting, Retaining, and Promoting Culturally Different Employees. Laroche, L. & Rutherford, D. (2007). Burlington, USA: Butterworth-Heinemann

When **invited to** review Laroche and Rutherford's *Recruiting, Retaining, and Promoting Culturally Different Employees,* I first wondered what a book about human resource practices might have to offer an ESL practitioner. A cursory look indicated a lot. The book reads like an executive's guide for a virtual trip around the world, preparing him or her for a multiplicity of linguistic and cultural challenges to be faced. In the case of this book, the cultural data was collected in a North American context. The book's rhetorical style combines the flare of a globetrotting travel writer with the analysis and rigor of technical writing.

Whether you are an ESL practitioner teaching culturally-diverse classes (preparing them for workplace communication), an employer aspiring to optimally manage your diverse workforce, an employee striving to maintain and upgrade your position, or a job seeker

searching for the right niche, you can benefit from the insights, analysis, and wisdom offered by this book.

Providing an outline of the book by reviewing its chapter titles might leave the impression that the book only addresses North American recruiters, which could lead some ESL practitioners to believe it is irrelevant to their practice. This is a conclusion I will try to correct. The book begins by defining its two authors' understanding of culture, making it clear that the generalizations made in the book should be distinguished from the stereotyping pitfall into which a prescriptive book of this genre could potentially fall (p.11).

Because the focus of the book is cultural, individual differences that could account for the range of observed behaviors of professional immigrants is not generally discussed; cultural factors are mostly assumed to have been responsible for those behaviours. For example, the Dutch engineer who finds that Canadians do not tell him what they think (p.142), might leave the impression that *all* Canadians behave this way, whereas in fact, individual, idiosyncratic differences may help to account for that impression. As such, when read critically with an awareness that the book is not set to treat idiosyncratic differences, Laroche and Rutherford offer valuable insights into cultural factors that could explain workplace behaviors deemed 'foreign' in the North American context. Thus, the book's classificatory attempts should be considered, in part, *a posteriori* cultural assessment tools of immigrant behaviour for Canadian and U.S.-born readers, and not an *a priori* instrument to judge immigrant behaviour with.

> "Laroche and Rutherford offer valuable insights into cultural factors that could explain workplace behaviors deemed 'foreign' in the North American context."

Additionally, by providing numerous examples and anecdotes about cross-cultural encounters in the workplace, the book helps to inform immigrants about other immigrants' observed behaviours and offers strategies to foster "cultural fluency" (York University Media Relations, 2009), the lack of which is said to hinder immigrants' full integration into the workforce. Such cultural fluency can create leadership and teamwork capabilities that seem to be the hallmark of the North American knowledge economy.

Armed with a knowledge of cultural differences and employer expectations, the immigrant worker can adopt certain coping strategies, two of which are accommodation and explanation. Accommodation concerns the immigrant adopting the employer's expected behaviour, as explained in the book, provided he or she has no conscientious or religious objection to it. But the book can also be used as a reference for explaining and expressing their reservations, by practising the (para) language that will explain the behaviour to the employer or colleagues and thereby help facilitate cross-cultural communication, demonstrating the candidate's cultural understanding and the ability to articulate their beliefs, a job skill in and of itself.

Four of the book's many language-related topics will help to inform both the ESL practitioner and student in cross-cultural encounters: communication channels, cross-cultural feedback, teamwork styles, and decision making.

Laroche and Rutherford categorize organizations into three types: hierarchical, moderately hierarchical, and egalitarian; each one

has fairly predictable channels for communication among its layers. For instance, when foreign-trained ESL professionals from a hierarchical background enter an egalitarian North American workforce, they sometimes expect the same level of deference extended to them previously by their clients within a hierarchical structure. Therefore, if untrained, they may use language and show manners that are inconsistent with the expectations of a customer-oriented egalitarian workforce. Training, say these authors, will help prevent such miscommunications.

To explain the challenges of feedback, the authors introduce the concept of the feedback axis. The axis graphically represents the non-alignment of the meaning of the feedback given and received by different cultures. For example, feedback that may fall within the 'neutral range' of the axis for a North American may well be perceived as positive or negative by a Mexican (p.203). Hence, the authors recommend, among other suggestions, checking the feedback interpretation to ensure there is alignment between the intended and extracted message and to help employees avoid taking it at face value.

Another section of the book examines the approach to teamwork within an organization. Effective outcomes often depend on whether the individual comes from an individualistic or a collectivist background. Communication and information flow in an individualist team hinges on a relatively clear assignment of responsibilities with relatively clear demarcation lines.

For example, in an individualist team, a worker (person A) who has not received a deliverable item of work from a colleague (person B) will first initiate a conversation with the team member before proceeding to the team leader. The communications are all focused on how B's failing to meet A's expectation can adversely affect A's deliverables and thus the team as a whole.

In a collectivist team, by contrast, if B has not delivered to A, then A can bring up the matter in a group meeting and treat it as a panel discussion to collectively solve the problem.

Dr. Lionel Laroche, co-author of *Recruiting, Retaining, and Promoting Culturally Different Employees.*

Individual A can also offer to help B with performance of the task, acknowledging he or she may be overworked. There are also examples of hybrid teams consisting of collectivist and individualist members, which further delineate the communication challenge.

Decision-making is, in part, related to the individuals' attitude to risk. Classifying teams into risk-tolerant and risk-averse, the authors explain how the former tend to take

planning decisions as the need arises whereas the latter spend an extensive period planning at the beginning of the project. Because a team can consist of members with both types of attitude to risk, the authors suggest solutions to help create efficient teams. For example, if the team in general is risk-tolerant, a risk-averse member should be reminded or counseled about the cost associated with spending a long period collecting data and making decisions.

The chapter on cross-cultural communication covers culture-specific topics, such as non-verbal communication, which can involve observing or violating personal space, proper or improper use of gestures and body language, display of emotions, and implications of an expressive or monotonic tone of voice. For instance, speaking with hands on hips is said to imply overt aggression in much of the world, whereas in North America it is believed to have no meaning or to only sometimes imply aggression.

The verbal communication section of the book covers topics such as ESL, sociolinguistic variation, language assumptions, background noise, accents, abbreviations, direct and indirect communication, humour, connotations, sports English, and greetings. Background noise, for instance, is shown to reduce comprehension much more drastically in a second language than in a first language.

To conclude, the book at times might — inadvertently — ascribe some fixity to the cultural observations of its authors, which may run counter to the literature on cultural hybridity, e.g. culture as an emerging "interstitial" space versus an "authenticated cultural tradition" (Bhabha, 1994, p.3), or culture as a continual process and not a product, which explains the creation of an "*inter*national culture… [with the prefix *inter*] …carrying the meaning of culture" (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p.124 citing Bhabha, 1994, italics as in original).

That said, for all intents and purposes, the book has a pragmatic focus. Its objective is not theoretical analysis, but to offer descriptions of cross-cultural communication to facilitate the integration of the foreign-trained professional into the North American job market.

To achieve this goal, it cannot help but define, categorize, and classify. In doing so, it creates a frame of reference for both job-seeking immigrants and employers to form intelligent opinions about norms and expectations in the workforce. Equipped with such knowledge, internationally educated professionals can hope to achieve the upward mobility for which many of them immigrated to Canada and the U.S. ■

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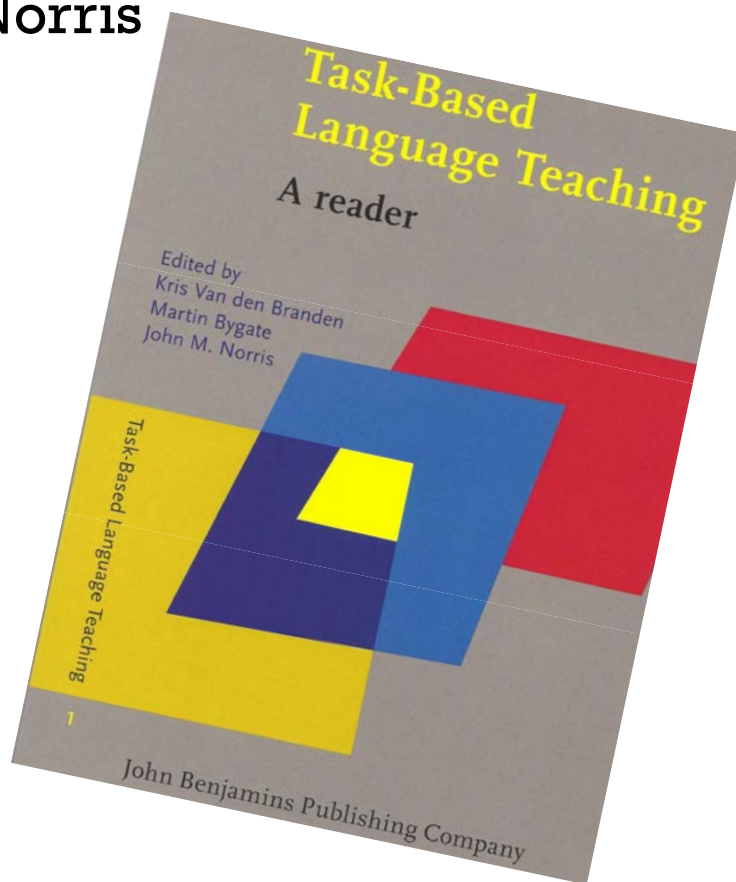
BOOK REVIEW

Task-based Language Teaching
Edited by Kris Van den Branden, Martin Bygate, and John M. Norris
Reviewed by Ken Lackman

Task-based **Language** Teaching (TBLT) seems to have suffered from the same fate as the major development in the field which preceded it, Communicative Language Learning. In both cases the name given to the development so aptly represented its basic concept that it was just the basic concept that ended up being adopted by many teachers. The result was that the superficial application of the principles became so widespread that many teachers remained completely unaware of what underpinned both developments, specifically extensive research in second language acquisition and the resultant methodological systems.

For many teachers, communicative lessons became just those where students communicated with other students and task-based language teaching just meant that students were given tasks to do cooperatively in the classroom. Kris Van den Branden, Martin Bygate and John M. Norris felt that this superficial application of task-based methodology was at least partly due to the lack of a single volume which brought together the myriad of writings on the topic. This led them to assemble 20 essential articles and book chapters into *Task-Based Language Teaching*.

This comprehensive collection is broken down into four sections, each dealing with a different aspect of task-based learning research or methodology. Of particular interest to English language teachers will be the second and third sections. The second section consists of five chapters dealing with designing classroom tasks and creating task-based syllabi. The third

Task-based Language Teaching: A reader. Edited by Kris Van den Branden, Martin Bygate, and John M. Norris. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2009. Paperback, 512 pages.

section deals with classroom variables which may influence the effectiveness of task-based instruction. The book's first section, logically, consists of writings outlining the origins of the task-based approach while the final section provides results of research aimed at determining the effectiveness of task-based instruction.

Readers who start with the second section will perhaps be the most familiar with the work of Jane Willis. Her chapter outlines the task stage of the teaching framework proposed in the influential guide to task-based instruction that she published in 1996. In the introduction to the second section, the editors point out that the

Willis chapter "provides a teacher-friendly framework for implementing task-based teaching in a systematic way at the classroom level." The Willis framework is perhaps the best starting point for readers unfamiliar with task-based learning methodology. Some of the other writings in the second section deal less explicitly with classroom application as they take a more academic approach in discussing why a task-based approach should be adopted. Other writings in the section deal with the intricacies of designing individual tasks or, on the other extreme, designing an entire task-based syllabus.

However, Peter Skehan's article concludes with a useful methodological framework for task-based lessons which shares some features of the Willis model and was definitely influenced by the work of Jane and Dave Willis. Certainly teachers who are already somewhat familiar with task-based methodology will find many of the writings in the section quite useful, particularly those that deal with creating tasks which appeal to learner needs.

The third section features findings from eight researchers on variables affecting the effectiveness of a task-based approach. These variables are task design, learner roles and teacher roles, and the results of the research outlined here will offer teachers ideas on how to manipulate the three variables to achieve the best results with their students. This section will be most useful to teachers who have already been using task-based methodology and want to experiment with it further.

The first section of the book will appeal to readers interested in the origins of task-based learning, particularly in its relationship to Communicative Language Teaching, and the drawbacks of CLT that it was designed to address.

However, even those with just a passing interest should read the article by Rod Ellis as it raises most of the issues introduced in the other chapters of the section as well as establishing reasons why a task-based approach needs to involve a lot more than simply getting learners to do tasks. This should be essential reading for those thousands of teachers who feel that putting students into groups and giving them tasks to do qualifies as task-based language teaching.

The final section is entitled "Task-based Language Assessment" and would be most applicable to teachers who are already teaching from a curriculum that is largely task-based. The writings in this section argue that learners need to be assessed and tested on their ability to use language to complete tasks rather than in the more traditional way of discrete point testing, which is too indirect to really indicate a student's ability to use the language for functional purposes.

Each section of the book is preceded by an excellent overview by the three editors and the entire volume begins with an informative introduction which includes an interesting explanation of the lengthy procedure employed to narrow down the selection of writings to 20.

The final selection should prove invaluable to second language researchers and to teachers who have already implemented task-based learning in their teaching.

However, for those instructors relatively new to task-based teaching, it is unfortunate that another chapter from Jane Willis' book was not included in order to provide the entire task-based teaching framework. The Willis method consists of a pre-task phase, the task cycle and a language analysis phase. Only the chapter dealing with the task cycle is included here.

For those teachers wishing to implement task-based instruction, it's probably best that they obtain the book by Willis first and then, once they have learned the framework, they can tweak it according to some of the ideas presented in the rest of *Task-Based Language Teaching*. ■

Ken Lackman *taught in Prague from 1996 to 2002, before spending five years as Director of Studies at EF Toronto. He is currently working as a coursebook writer and freelance teacher trainer.*

BOOK REVIEW

The Cellist of Sarajevo
By Steven Galloway
Reviewed by Robert Courchêne

Steven Galloway, a native of British Columbia, is the author of three novels: *Finnie Walsh, Ascension* and *The Cellist of Sarajevo*. With the publishing of *The Cellist,* translated into over 20 languages, he garnered national and international fame as a writer. The novel, set during the siege of Sarajevo (1992-96), paints a picture of the day-to-day life of four different people as they try to create some semblance of normality: Arrow, Dragan, Kenan and a sniper whose mission it is to eradicate the cellist. A bomb that strikes and kills 22 people in front of a bakery leaves a huge crater in the street. This incident is witnessed by Vedran Smailovic, the first cellist with the Bosnian Symphony Orchestra. To pay homage to his 22 friends who were killed, he decides to play Albinoni's *Adagio in G Minor* for 22 days in a row, once for each of his friends
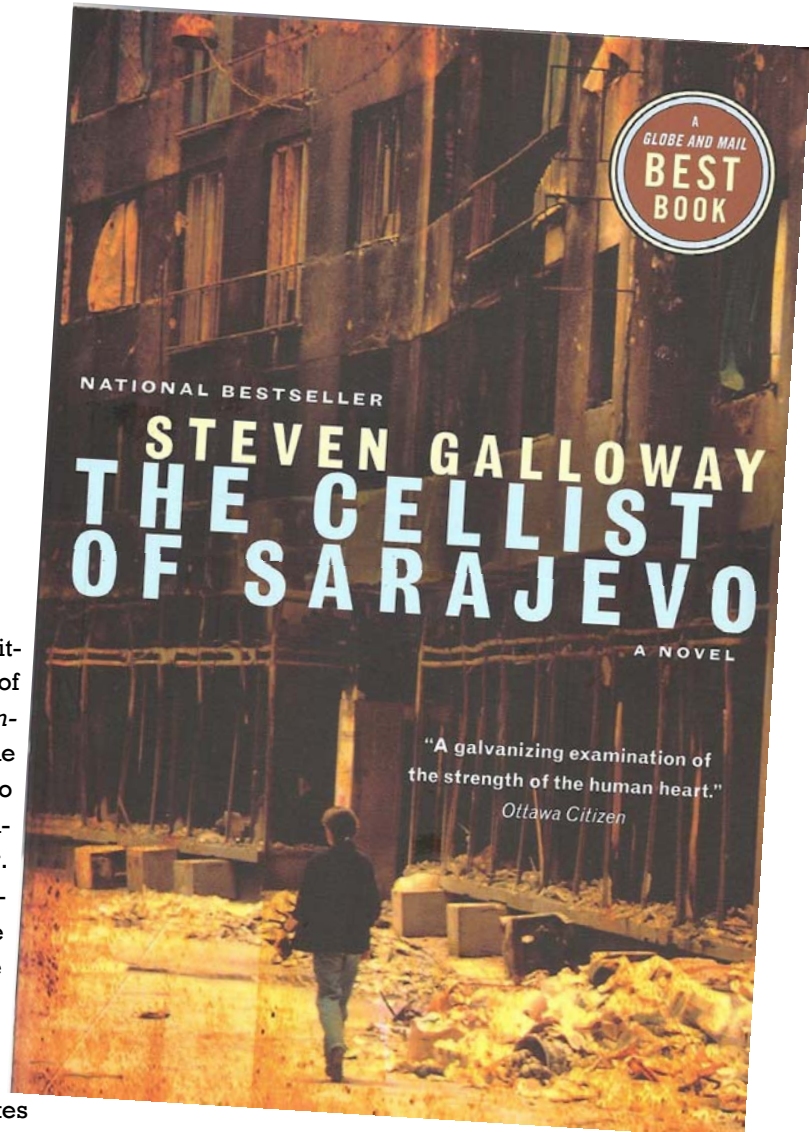
The Cellist of Sarajevo by Steven Galloway. Toronto: Vintage Canada Edition (2009), 261 pages.

who was killed. Using this event as his backdrop, Galloway develops a meditation on war, a parable about life that is threatened at every moment of the day by sniper fire or falling bombs.

In addition to the musician who plays the adagio at exactly 4:00 every day, there is Arrow, a female sniper who takes on the responsibility of protecting the musician from snipers she knows are going to strike one day. Then there is Kenan, who must make the trip across the city to get water for his family and for a very inhospitable and thankless neighbour (she refuses to supply him with containers that would help him to transport the water). Dragan, a baker by trade, must journey across the city to his work on a daily basis. The sniper, a nameless figure, who is waiting for the ideal moment to eliminate the cellist, plays a game of cat and mouse with Arrow. In the novel, Galloway gives voice to these three people as they relive their lives before the siege and seek to accomplish their self-assumed tasks, each hoping to stay alive and protect his or her family and friends.

Despite the enormous difficulties that must be overcome to navigate in the city, Kenan, Dragon, Arrow and the Cellist decide not to let the conditions of war destroy their humanity, to be reduced to a vegetable-like existence. In the words of Khaled Hosseini, author of *The Kite Runner,*

This gripping novel transcends time and place. It is a universal story,

> **"Why do you suppose he's there? Is he playing for the people who died? Or is he playing for the people who haven't? What does he hope to accomplish?"**
>
> *—The Cellist of Sarajevo*

and a testimony to the struggle to find meaning, grace, and humanity, even amid the most unimaginable horrors.

In his novel, Galloway, who interviewed many Sarojevans as part of his research, demonstrates the importance of resistance in the face of what appear to be insurmountable odds. Every day, the four principal characters must decide if they are going to risk their lives, to resist the temptation to capitulate in the face of danger. Part of the universal message of this novel is that in all wars there are such heroes who are willing to risk their lives, to preserve their humanity and that of others in a threatening context. ∎

Robert Courchêne is a teacher/ teacher trainer at the University of Ottawa. His research interests include testing, curriculum design and multicultural and antiracism education.

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CLEO gratefully acknowledges the financial support this project has received from The Ontario Trillium Foundation and Legal Aid Ontario.

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RESEARCH

What Influences Implementation of Language Curriculum? Perspectives From Language Teachers

By Hong Wang
Mount Saint Vincent University

Abstract

This paper investigates factors affecting teachers' implementation of English as a foreign language (EFL) curriculum reported by 248 teachers in six universities from the northwestern part of China through a structured questionnaire. Findings of the study, from exploratory factor analyses and regression analyses of the questionnaire data, revealed that six external and internal factors were significant predictors of successful curriculum implementation. Among the findings, the presence of resource support, teachers' use of a communicative language teaching approach, and teaching experience positively predicted the teachers' curriculum implementation; on the other hand, teachers' use of a grammar-translation method, English proficiency, and inadequate professional development negatively predicted their curriculum implementation. The implications of this study point to the importance of providing professional development support to teachers for successful implementation to occur within the Chinese EFL context.

Introduction

Research in English as a second or foreign language education has revealed that teachers play a key role in curriculum implementation (Karavas-Doukas, 1995; O'Sullivan, 2002). However, classroom reality often constrains teachers from closely following the curriculum as intended, especially within a highly centralized educational system such as China's. Therefore, the intent of this survey study was to investigate factors affecting teachers' implementation of English as a foreign language (EFL) curriculum in the Chinese tertiary context. The two research questions addressed were:

1. What perceptions do teachers have about the EFL curriculum and its implementation?

2. How is the intended curriculum interpreted by teachers?

Perspectives of factors affecting curriculum implementation

Researchers have been cognizant that teachers are the most important players in the process of curriculum implementation, and that they do not always do as they are told, nor do they always act in a way that will maximize curriculum objectives (Cohen & Ball, 1990; McLaughlin, 1987). A review of the literature in both general and language education has shown that there are various factors affecting teachers' curriculum implementation. As far as external factors are concerned, these include testing (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Cheng & Watanabe with Curtis, 2004; Turner, 2000); textbooks (Richards, 1998; Woodward, 1993); teacher training (He, 1998; Li, 1998); and resources in terms of human, financial, and teaching material support (Carless, 1999; Fullan & Miles, 1992; Li, 1998). In addition, internal factors affecting teachers' curriculum implementation include their beliefs and decision-making in innovation (Farrell, 1999; Kagan, 1992; Peacock, 2001; Woods, 1996); teachers' attitudes towards innovation (Bailey, 1992; Gahin & Myhill, 2001; Karavas-Doukas, 1996); teachers' knowledge, understanding, and ownership of innovation (Beretta, 1990; Carless, 1998; Palmer, 1993); as well as their involvement and participation in innovation (Punch & McAtee, 1979; Wang & Cheng, 2005). However, there is no existing research that has examined the impact of both external and internal factors together on teachers of English within the Chinese tertiary context.

Methods

Participants

EFL teachers from six universities in one northwestern city of mainland China were invited to participate in the study. Altogether 248 teachers responded to the survey, among which 193 were female (78%) and 55 were male (22%). Their ages ranged from 22 to 59, 83% being under 40 years old. Their educational qualifications were as follows: 137 participants (56%) with a B.A., 20 (8%) with an Advanced

Teacher Training Certificate, and 89 (36%) with Masters degrees. As far as their teaching experience was concerned, 98 participants (40%) had taught for one to four years, 52 participants (21%) for five to nine years, another 52 for 10 to 14 years (21%), 23 participants (9%) for 15 to 19 years, and 21 (9%) for over 20 years. More than half of the participants had large classes of over 50 students.

Instrument

A questionnaire was employed in the study, which consisted of four parts, with a total of 64 items. Section A (14 items) and B (30 items) included statements about the external and internal factors affecting teachers' curriculum implementation. All the items were designed on a five-point Likert scale of agreement. Section C (14 items) included statements about teachers' curriculum implementation activities in the classroom, which measured what teachers actually did in practice. These items were also designed on a five-point Likert scale of agreement or frequency. Section D (6 items) asked demographic questions about the participants.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics of all 64 items were first examined to understand the overall pattern of the teachers' responses (n=248). To address the second research question, EFL teachers' implementation activity scores (Section C) were calculated from their responses to the 14 statements. A high score implied high fidelity to the curriculum implementation and a low score would suggest low fidelity.

To address the first research question, three steps of analysis were carried out. First, exploratory factor analysis was employed to identify EFL teachers' perceptions about the external factors (Section A) and then the internal factors (Section B) which might impact on their curriculum implementation (Section C). Specifically, principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was conducted. Through the resultant factor solution from PCA, items that were loaded onto a factor were examined and each factor was subsequently labeled. Then, employing Cronbach's alpha, the reliabil-

ity coefficients of the external and internal factors were calculated to assess the level of internal consistency.

Secondly, the mean, standard deviation, and internal consistency of each factor scale were calculated respectively under the external and internal constructs to demonstrate the pattern of the teachers' perceptions. Then interscale zero-order correlations within each respective construct were examined to reveal the intercorrelations among the dimensions of the constructs as a result of the factor analysis.

Thirdly, two sets of multiple regression analyses using the "enter" method were conducted to explore the relationship between teachers' curriculum implementation and the external factors and internal factors that might impact on them. The exploration was to discover which factor(s) as independent variables appeared to have a significant effect on the dependent variable—teachers' curriculum implementation activities in the classroom.

In reporting regression results, the standard of *p* < .05 was used to determine the significance level, and *R*, *R²*, unstandardized coefficients *B*, standardized coefficients Beta (β), t-value, and significance level were reported.

Results and discussion

Factor analysis

Factor analysis was performed on the external factors and internal factors separately. In terms of the external factors, a five-factor solution was decided upon based on the screen

> "...resource support in terms of material, financial, and human factors was indispensable in determining successful implementation of curriculum innovations..."

diagram and the eigen values greater than one. These five factors accounted for 60.63% of the total variance in the variables and were labeled as: *teachers' evaluation* (F1), *teaching conditions* (F2), *testing* (F3), *textbooks* (F4), and *resource support* (F5). In terms of the internal factors, an eight-solution was decided upon. The total variance accounted for by the eight-solution was 59.76%. These eight factors were defined as: *teaching experience* (F1), *knowledge and understanding of the syllabus* (F2), *professional development needs* (F3), *communicative language teaching* (F4), *professional development activities* (F5), *grammar-translation method* (F6), *English proficiency* (F7), and *language learning background* (F8).

Regression analyses

The external factors

Regression analysis was first performed between teachers' classroom curriculum implementation scores as the dependent variable and the five external factors as the independent variables to examine which factors had more effect on teachers' fidelity to curriculum implementation. The results indicated that only one of the five independent variables, *resource support*, was the significant predictor (β=.186, *p*=.003) which contributed to teachers' curriculum implementation activities in the classroom. In addition, *resource support* positively predicted teachers' curriculum implementation. However, the *R²* value was very low, only .072, which means that *resource support* explained 7.2% of the total variance in teachers' curriculum implementation (*F*=3.783, *p*<.05). This result did not reveal a strong relationship and, therefore, did not predict much in terms of teachers' curriculum implementation.

Such a result corroborates with the studies conducted in other EFL countries, where re-

source support was essential in determining successful curriculum implementation. For example, O'Sullivan (2002) ascribed limited financial resources in terms of space, resources, and small classes as an obstacle to the successful implementation of the English syllabus in Namibia. Likewise, in Greece and Egypt, both Karavas-Doukas (1995) and Gahin and Myhill (2001) found that sufficient funding was needed to obtain materials such as resource books or photocopies for assisting teachers to prepare and present teaching materials in line with communicative language teaching (CLT) principles. Li (1998) particularly mentioned that the lack of human resource support undermined South Korean teachers' efforts to conduct communicative language activities because these teachers failed to receive expert advice on how to apply CLT in classrooms. All these studies confirmed that resource support in terms of material, financial, and human factors was indispensable in determining successful implementation of curriculum innovations within these EFL contexts.

The internal factors

Regression analysis was then performed between teachers' classroom curriculum implementation scores and the eight internal factors. The results indicated that five of the eight independent variables contributed to the significant prediction of teachers' curriculum implementation activities in the classroom. The most significant predictors were:

- *Communicative language teaching* (β=.223, *p*=.001).

- *Grammar-translation method* (β=-.179, *p*=.004).

- *Teaching experience* (β=.186, *p*=.005).

- *English proficiency* (β_ς= -.163, *p*= .011).

> "This finding suggests that the better English proficiency teachers have, the less likely they are to implement the curriculum."

- *Professional development needs* (β=-.154, *p*=.022).

As well, 15.7% of the total variance in teachers' classroom curriculum implementation (*F*=5.566, *p*<.05) was accounted for by these five predictors. Among them, following a *communicative language teaching* approach and *teaching experience* positively predicted teachers' curriculum implementation. *The use of a grammar-translation method, English proficiency,* and inadequate *professional development* negatively predicted teachers' curriculum implementation.

Very few empirical studies corroborated the findings of this study that teaching methods—*communicative language teaching* (CLT) and *grammar-translation method* (GTM)—were the most significant predictors in contributing to teachers' implementation endeavors. Yet, the findings, to a large extent, resonated strongly with what had been discussed in the literature about the debate on communicative language teaching and grammar teaching in both ESL and EFL contexts. Researchers (Gahin & Myhill, 2001; Gorsuch, 2000; Karavas-Doukas, 1995; Li, 1998; O'Sullivan, 2002) found that applying CLT in EFL contexts proved to be extremely difficult and problematic, and therefore recommended integrating traditional grammar instruction with communicative approaches (Gabonton & Gu, 1994; Rao, 1996; Wang, 2001).

Other studies showed that *teaching experience, English proficiency,* and meeting *professional development needs* are also central elements in teachers' successful curriculum implementation (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977; Li, 1998; Richard, 2001). The positive effect of *teaching experience* in this study was supported by conceptual studies but challenged by empirical studies at the same time. For example, Gahin and Myhill (2001) found that experienced teachers tended to hold the least favorable attitudes toward the newer, more communicative approach when compared with their less experi-

enced counterparts in the EFL context of Egypt, which is also true for this study. What is intriguing in this study is the negative effect of *English proficiency* in predicting teachers' implementation. This finding suggests that the better English proficiency teachers have, the less likely they are to implement the curriculum. These teachers tended to be those who are younger or less experienced teachers in China (Wang & Han, 2002). Thus, the findings on the relationship between the internal factors and teachers' curriculum implementation are inconsistent and need further research.

In terms of the negative effect of *professional development needs*, the findings from this study supported both sides of the controversy in the literature regarding the role of teacher education. For example, Fullan and Pomfret (1977) and Gahin and Myhill (2001) found that teachers with in-service training had a higher degree of implementation than those who did not. However, studies conducted by Young and Lee (1987) and Peacock (2001) demonstrated that professional training programs brought little or no change in teachers' instructional behavior in the classroom. All this suggested that teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward curriculum implementation are hard to change, and that even teacher education programs may not have facilitated the perception change in teachers required by the curriculum. The result reminds policymakers and administrators in China or elsewhere that they need to be aware of the two different outcomes when planning similar programs for their teachers.

Implications

This study has provided empirical and methodological implications for any future research on curriculum implementation to be conducted within other ESL and EFL contexts. As language curricula share commonalities in practice, the findings of the study have contributed to our understanding of the factors affecting teachers' curriculum implementation and of the complex reality of classroom teaching. Specifically, lessons learned for the EFL context such as China, are that teacher educators, especially local ad-

ministrators, should consider how to develop professional development (PD) programs with more pedagogical support. Since the current study demonstrated that teachers' most urgent professional development needs were working on a graduate degree, more emphasis should be put on what kind of PD programs teachers actually need in that particular setting. ■

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Various events and activities will take place across the province to mark ESL Week. These include writing contests, spelling competitions, film festivals, special class activities, art displays and more. We have now posted the winners of the 2009 Poster Contest. Please take this opportunity to visit the poster web page.

We encourage instructors and teachers to participate in celebrating ESL Week by planning special activities in your classroom or organization. We are also interested in posting your ideas, pictures, or artwork on our website!

Email us your plans at **membership @teslontario.org**, or write to: TESL Ontario Head office located at 27 Carlton St., Suite #405, Toronto, Ontario M5B 1L2. We would ask that groups document their events as they occur, so that we can continue to promote ESL Week in future years.

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