President’s Corner

Dear MITESOL Members,

Happy New Year! 2014 was a busy and productive year for our organization. We moved our website onto a new server (http://mitesol.wildapricot.org); sent a member of our board (public relations officer, Sally Freels) to the national TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit in Washington D.C.; and hosted another successful and inspiring annual conference.

In addition, in October, member Patrick T. Randolph won a Best of Affiliate award from TESOL International for his presentation at MITESOL 2013. Each year, TESOL selects eight affiliate conference sessions that showcase the best of professional learning and research to include in its program. Patrick will be presenting his award-winning session, Breaking the Ebbinghaus Curse: A guaranteed technique for vocabulary acquisition, at the International Convention in Toronto, on Friday, March 27, at 3:00 p.m. See the online program (http://www.tesol.org/convention2015/education-br-sessions) for more details, and to plan your agenda.

I hope to see many of you at TESOL 2015, and to welcome you, MITESOL will be hosting a reception on Friday evening 5-7 pm, March 27, at the Hothouse Restaurant & Bar (35 Church St.) in Toronto. There will be an array of hors d’oeuvres, a cash bar, and opportunities to connect with fellow MITESOL-ers from across the state (notice the RSVP link on p. 7 and see the website for more details later this month). Come, help us celebrate our accomplishments.

The past year has also been marked by some big changes in MITESOL’s leadership. We had a new Membership Coordinator (Jane DeGroot, Literacy Center of West Michigan) and a new Treasurer (Jim Desler, MSU) in office—both of whom did outstanding jobs in the first of their respective three-year terms on the Board. In our annual election, we voted in two new Executive Committee members—a new Communications Coordinator, Stacy Tanner (Novi Woods Elementary), and a new President-Elect, Andrew McCullough (MSU), who will be chairing the 2015 Conference next fall. We also welcomed three new members to the Advisory Committee, including Ildi Porter-Szucs (EMU), as Co-Editor of the newsletter; Cynthia Macknish (EMU), as Post-Secondary Ed SIG leader; and Ashley Garrigan (Literacy Center of West Michigan), as Exhibits Manager of the 2015 Conference and Adult Education SIG leader.

Regrettably, we also had to say a fond farewell to two long-term Board members. We will greatly miss Past President Andrew Domzalski (Madonna), a consummate leader whose work on behalf of the organization has been steadfast; and Communications Coordinator Heidi Enck (Cornerstone), who was instrumental in transitioning MITESOL’s website to its new platform. We thank them for their service, and wish them a happy, healthy, and more restful 2015.

In closing, I also want to thank everyone who has volunteered for MITESOL in the past year. Your dedication and generosity have made this organization great.

Colleen Brice, President
Greetings Fellow MITESOLers!

Out of doors, Michigan is in a deep freeze, blanketed by layers of snow. All but the most avid nature enthusiasts will find the sub-zero temperatures more pleasing from the inside than from the outside. While nature is fast asleep, though, the MITESOL community is sizzling indoors. Nothing proves this more clearly than a glance at the February 2015 MITESOL Messages. From this issue, we learn that last October 326 of us attended the annual MITESOL conference in Grand Rapids. This coming March, dozens of Michiganders will descend on Toronto first for the AAAL and next for the international TESOL conferences there. April will bring two more professional development opportunities to the state: at Cornerstone and Michigan State Universities. Finally, as the outdoor temperatures catch up to those inside, in July and August MITESOLers from K-12 settings can attend regional workshops in Southeast, Central, and Northern Michigan.

This issue of the newsletter showcases the hard work of our colleagues from around the state. Many members of the MITESOL Board and their associates made the 2014 conference possible. But even before the chatter of the conference attendees died out, the organizing committee had started planning the 2015 conference. Another intrepid team has been busy arranging the MITESOL reception at the Toronto TESOL conference. Fifty presenters from Michigan will contribute to the quality sessions at TESOL. As the Member Accolades and Updates from the Field clearly prove, our members have not been idle, either. Whether you are interested in EFL, ESL, or EL issues, you will find something to suit your taste in this publication. And to those not featured in this issue, we hope that in the next issue in August we will be able to share your professional activities with the rest of the MITESOL community as well.

Sincerely,

Ildi Porter-Szücs & Aiman W. Mueller

MITESOL Messages Co-Editors

ildips@yahoo.com
aiman.w.mueller@att.net
First, the MITESOL board and membership would like to send out a thank you to the outgoing board members. Heidi Enck (photo near right) served as our Communications Coordinator, Andrew Domzalski (photo left) served as Conference Chair, President and Past-President, and Allie Piippo (photo far right) was co-chair of the newsletter. Again, we can’t thank these wonderful members enough for their service to MITESOL. We wish you all the best in the future.

The MITESOL Board also would like to recognize the continued support from the following members who have changed positions for the upcoming year. Andrew McCullough (photo near left) is the new President-Elect/Conference Chair. Colleen Brice (photo far left) is the new President, with Jeanine Clever (photo near right) moving to the Past-President position. Also moving positions is Akiko Ota (photo far right), now the CALL SIG Leader.

MITESOL welcomes to the board several new members as well—four in all:

Communications Coordinator—Stacy Tanner (stacytanner@novischools.net), Novi Community Schools

From teaching to volunteering, Stacy Tanner has worked in the field of education for nearly 15 years. Born and raised in a family of educators in Southern California and from a father who immigrated to the United States, Stacy’s love of teaching, learning, and language was nurtured from an early age. As a young professional, Stacy served as a teacher, site director, and family consultant in early childhood. After completing a graduate degree from the University of Michigan (ELMAC), she’s been teaching English Learners for the last 3 years in Novi Community Schools. She has four curious and creative children and an amazing husband of 20 years. When she’s not in a school, you’ll find her outside teaching horsemanship to people of all ages. She looks forward to working on the MITESOL board and supporting ELL teachers, who dedicate their time and efforts to these amazing learners.

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Review of Shifts in Leadership (cont. from previous page)

**Adult Ed SIG & Exhibits Manager—Ashley Garrigan** (garrigal@mail.gvsu.edu) **Literacy Center of West MI**

Ashley Garrigan, the new Adult Education SIG leader, is taking over for Akiko Ota. She is also conference exhibits manager. An M.Ed. in TESOL graduate from Grand Valley State University, she works with ESL and ABE students at both the Literacy Center of West Michigan and Grand Rapids Community College. She is pleased to be the new Adult Ed SIG leader and welcomes your ideas to make this an active and informative SIG that meets your professional development needs.

**Post-Secondary SIG—Dr. Cynthia Macknish** (cmacknis@emich.edu) **Eastern Michigan University**

Cynthia Macknish has experience teaching from elementary and secondary to undergraduate and graduate levels in Canada, the Bahamas, China, and Singapore. Currently, she enjoys teaching ESL and TESOL as assistant professor at Eastern Michigan University (EMU). Her research interests include second language teaching and learning, teacher education, language assessment, EAP, and critical reading and writing. Prior to coming to EMU, she worked in Singapore where she developed, coordinated and taught post-secondary ESL courses and EAP programs, as well as teacher education courses. Importantly, Cynthia values her interaction with colleagues concerning educational improvement and professional development. In this regard, she chaired a committee for her former institution’s English Entrance Proficiency Test, was a Cambridge-certified IELTS examiner for 11 years, and sat on the executive committee of the Singapore Tertiary English Teachers’ Society. These and other activities enable her to contribute to the professional community in a way that is connected to her work in second language education. Now she looks forward to being more involved in the MITESOL community and making a contribution as head of the postsecondary SIG.

**Newsletter co-Editor—Ildi Porter-Szucs** (ildips@yahoo.com) **Eastern Michigan University**

When not co-editing MITESOL Messages, Ildi Porter-Szucs is Assistant Professor of ESL/TESOL at Eastern Michigan University. She earned an M.Ed. at Temple University and a Ph.D. at Michigan State University. In the past Ildi has served the Michigan TESOL community as Treasurer and Secretary. She is looking forward to serving in her new role.

Pictured below are leaders who are diligently continuing in their same positions on the executive or advisory boards:

- **Jim Desler**
  Treasurer
- **Marian Woyciehowicz Gonsior**
  Conference Proceedings Editor
- **David Van Over**
  Workplace & ESP SIG
- **Jane DeGroot**
  Membership Coordinator
- **Ellen Brengle**
  Secretary
- **Sally Freels**
  Public Relations Officer
- **Michael Pasquale**
  Professional Dev. SIG
- **Aiman W. Mueller**
  Newsletter co-Editor
- **Jaana Terhune**
  K-12 SIG
- **Pamela Bogart**
  Listserv Manager
Board Notes

Ellen Brengle, Secretary

August seems far away and long ago in this chilly month of February - especially when so much has happened since our last publication. While we all returned to the joys and challenges of teaching and learning in September, the MITESOL board also redoubled its efforts in organizing for our annual October conference.

- Capably led by our Conference Chair, Colleen Brice, endless details were hammered into place: keynote speakers, proposal reading, presentation selection, conference registrations, exhibitor solicitations, program timetables and design, hotel, food, and entertainment arrangements and on, down to conference bags and name tags. With the beautiful venue of the Eberhard Center in Grand Rapids and their excellent support team, MITESOL was able to offer 326 participants another well-received conference.

- November brought our annual transition meeting. We extended thanks to our Past President, Andrew Domzalski, for his excellent leadership. His caring participation will be greatly missed. We also said goodbye to five other board members (Heidi Enck, Susan Naoumi, Allison Pippo, Sharon Pearce, and Harry Posner) with thanks for their service and best wishes for the future. New member, Stacy Tanner, has agreed to take on the important position of Communications Coordinator, Ashley Garrigan, who so ably stepped in as Exhibits Manager in October has agreed to take on this position officially, as well as serving as Adult Ed SIG leader, while Akiko Ota moves to the CALL SIG. We are pleased to welcome Ildi Porter-Szucs and Cynthia Macknish, both from EMU, as our co-editor for MITESOL Messages and as Post-Secondary SIG leader respectively. Web Master and Socio-Political Concerns Chair are vacant positions at this time.

- It was decided that we should hold an additional session in the afternoon after our February 7th board meeting, in order to address a variety of topics in need of extra consideration. Executive board members attended this meeting and began discussion of the following:
  * MITESOL mission, By-Laws, and Standing Rules
  * Board structure, including rights and responsibilities of SIG leaders
  * Duties of president and past president
  * Possibilities for mentoring and supporting the incoming president as conference chair

Post-Secondary SIG Update

Cynthia Macknish

Welcome to 2015 and the MITESOL Post-Secondary SIG! I am excited to be a part of the MITESOL organization, and, as new leader of this SIG, I look forward to learning from and exchanging ideas and opportunities with such a friendly and collaborative community.

Through an active network of post-secondary ESL educators, we can continue to work to meet the goals of this SIG, which include promoting recognition of ESL as an established academic discipline, promoting professional standards and practices, communicating professional development opportunities, promoting research on pertinent issues, discussing issues relevant to ESL in higher education, etc.

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I encourage you to contribute to this community by sharing current research, new publications, relevant ideas, upcoming events, useful resources, and comments on issues that may be of interest to our SIG. Please send your articles and contributions to cmacknis@emich.edu and I will make sure they are shared.

To start, I would like to pose two questions for discussion and remind you of some upcoming events:

Issues for Discussion:

1. What impacts do you think there will be on post-secondary ESL programs if the government proposal to fund 2 years of community college education is passed? (read more at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/01/08/president-proposes-make-community-college-free-responsible-students-2-years)

2. U.S. News and World Report ranked 102 US colleges according to percentages of ESL students in their 2012 graduating class. A Michigan school, Lawrence Technological University, topped the list at 12% (read more at: http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/the-short-list-college/articles/2013/12/24/10-colleges-with-the-highest-percentage-of-students-in-esl). What are the implications of this?

Upcoming Events:

- 14th Annual ESL Conference at Cornerstone University, April 11, 2015, Grand Rapids, MI https://www.cornerstone.edu/esl-conference
- International Conference on Language Teacher Education 2015, May 14-16, Minneapolis MN, USA http://www.carla.umn.edu/conferences/
- TESOL Worldwide Calendar of Events: http://www.tesol.org/attend-and-learn/calendar-of-events

I look forward to hearing from you and wish you all the best for an exciting and productive semester.

K-12 SIG Update

Jaana Terhune

Please note the dates for "Language and Literacy for English Learners" Regional Workshops during summer 2015 (fee for the regional workshops is $40 to cover lunches): July 14-17 at Wayne RESA in Romulus, July 21-24 at Okemos Conference Center in Okemos, and August 10-13 at Traverse Bay Area ISD in Traverse City.

As well, here is further information from the Special Populations Unit. The United States Department of Education (USDE) is still reviewing MDE’s request to revise the AMAO targets and their calculation methods. Therefore, AMAOs for 2013/14 will not be calculated until further notice. In the meantime, please ensure your Title III plans are implemented with fidelity.

Exchange students may be potentially eligible as English learners based on the home language survey information. District teams must use the W-APT Screener to assess these students’ language proficiency to determine eligibility and follow criteria delineated in the MDE-OFS Entrance and Exit Protocol (EEP). In order to ease the burden on districts, exchange students’ content assessments such as reading (brought from their home countries), may be used to determine level of proficiency in the content areas.

You can find more information by contacting Education Consultant Manager Shereen Tabrizi, Ph.D. or Admin Asst. LaTrese Royal at the Special Populations Unit at the Michigan Department of Education: 517-373-9524 (LaTrese Royal) or 517-373-6066 (Main line).
MITESOL Members, please join us in Toronto for a reception at the award-winning HOTHOUSE

RESTAURANT AND BAR

35 Church St.

http://www.hothouserestaurant.com

Friday
March 27, 2015
5:00-7:00

RSVP here:

Reflections on MITESOL 2014

Colleen Brice, Conference Chair

I am pleased to report that our annual conference, Expanding our Perspectives: From the Classroom to the Community, held October 17-18 at Grand Valley State University, was a great success. We welcomed 326 attendees from across the state, who had the opportunity to visit eight exhibitor booths and choose from among 70 presentations given by more than 100 speakers in 12 concurrent sessions during the two-day event.

Sessions included an array of presentations on policy, research, practice, and technology, as well as ten hands-on workshops, and two inspiring keynote addresses. Many addressed the conference theme, focusing on the needs of low-educated, low-literate adolescent and adult immigrants and refugees. Others focused on crucial issues in K-12, IEP, and university ESL contexts, including the use of technology to enhance L2 learning and instructional strategies for facilitating L2 reading comprehension and vocabulary development. In a special session sponsored by Cambridge University Press, National Institute for Literacy fellow and author, Kathy Olson, gave a dynamic workshop on ways to incorporate novel and varied repetition into L2 reading lessons to maximize student learning. MDE Manager of Special Populations, Shereen Tabrizi, unveiled a draft of the MDE’s guidelines for identifying and placing English learners with special needs.

MITESOL attendees were welcomed to GVSU by the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Dr. Fred Antczak, who offered inspiring comments to open the conference. Friday’s keynote speaker, Dr. Andrea DeCapua, explained how cultural differences in educational expectations undermine the achievement of students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), and then she showed us a culturally-responsive approach—the Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP)—that we could adopt to help transition SLIFE to the ways of learning that are necessary for academic attainment in US classrooms. Dr. DeCapua also offered a two-hour workshop on Saturday, in which she taught twenty lucky participants how to use MALP to design projects for their own learners.

(continued on next page)
Saturday’s keynote speaker, Dr. Patsy Vinogradov, used a clever metaphor—that of a rock tumbler—to show us that we can learn a great deal by connecting with educators outside of our field. Speaking to a ballroom packed with MITESOL members, she shared the fascinating discoveries made by two teams of teachers of LESLLA (low educated second language and literacy acquisition for adults), who engaged in cross-context research. One team studied mainstream L1-English elementary reading instruction, and the other studied dyslexia instruction. Both investigations yielded valuable findings that had implications for low-literate adult instruction, which Dr. Vinogradov shared with us.

In addition to sharing our scholarship and engaging in various professional development activities, we did a lot of networking and socializing at MITESOL 2014. There was good food and drink, live music, and enthusiastic dancing (see photos). At Friday night’s reception, sponsored by GVSU’s College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Michigan’s own Gerund and the Infinitives played a rousing set of Americana that kept us dancing until nearly midnight (making it difficult to get back to the conference by 7 am the next morning). We hope to be able to book them again for the forthcoming conference, at MSU’s Kellogg Center, on October 9 & 10, 2015. So, keep your dancing shoes ready, everybody—and meet me on the dance floor in East Lansing.

This wonderful conference was the result of the hard work of many members who contributed their time and expertise to the endeavor. Exhibits co-managers, Ashley Garrigan and Sharon Pearce, did a masterful job of securing exhibitors for the conference—and managing them at the event. Thanks to Communications Coordinator Heidi Enck for setting up the online proposal submission and review process. Thanks to CALL SIG leader Akiko Ota for creating all presenters’ certificates and session evaluation packets, and to Treasurer Jim Desler for his timely attention to all matters financial. Thanks to board members Pamela Bogart, Ellen Brengle, Sally Freels, Aiman Mueller, Jaana Terhune, and David Van Over, for their help with pre-conference preparations and on-site registration. Thanks to Marian Woyciechowicz Gonsior, our Conference Proceedings Editor, for arranging to compile a proceedings of this event. Thanks to our IT-support person Eric Stevens for his indefatigable, cheerful help with all problems technological.

I also want to thank Membership Coordinator Jane DeGroot for her careful administration of our online conference registration system and her tireless help with everything else—from creating name tags to supervising the on-site check-in process. Finally, I want to thank my predecessors, Andrew Domzalski (Past President) and Jeanine Clever (President), for their tireless help, moral support, and wise counsel. The conference would not have been possible without the help of all these individuals.
Member Accolades

This is the section where we share your recent and upcoming presentations, publications, awards, and other accomplishments. Everyone please submit your professional achievements for publication in future MITESOL Messages editions! Send an email to Ildi Porter-Szucs at ildips@yahoo.com or Aiman W. Mueller at aiman.w.mueller@att.net.

Randolph Receives “Best of the TESOL Affiliates-2015”

MITESOL's own Patrick T. Randolph has been nominated and chosen for “The Best of the TESOL Affiliates-2015.” His presentation, “Breaking the Ebbinghaus Curse: A Guaranteed Technique for Vocabulary Acquisition” was voted as the “Best Session” of the 2013 Michigan TESOL Conference held in East Lansing, MI. He was then nominated to represent MITESOL for the BEST of the TESOL Affiliates—an award given to only a select few worldwide.

He will present on Friday, March 27th, 2015 at 3:00 p.m. in room 201B at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. He will also present on his book of idioms, “Cat Got Your Tongue!,” with Paul McPherron on Thursday, March 26th, 2015 at 2:00 p.m. in room 202B.

TESOL Virtual Seminar-June 2015

Randolph and McPherron will conduct a Virtual Seminar, “Demystifying English Idioms: Helping Teachers Help Students Learn Idioms,” on Wednesday, June 3rd, 2015 from 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. (Eastern Time). For more information, go to edprograms@tesol.org.

Publications by Zuzana Thomaš (look for a review of her book in this same issue)


EMU Students win Mary Finocchiaro Award for Nonpublished Pedagogical Materials

For the third consecutive year, three MA TESOL students from Eastern Michigan University—Kim Specht, Alyssa Anders, and Richard Lysogorski, mentored by Professor Zuzana Tomaš—have been the recipients of this prestigious award. Congratulations for your fine achievement!

While all these are fantastic achievements and even though there are so many MI presenters set for TESOL 2015 (see next page), we know there are many accolades we did not hear about. Please be sure to give us notice of your accomplishment by the end of July, 2015 to appear in the next issue.
Congratulations to the following individuals from Michigan accepted to present at TESOL 2015 in Toronto, ON, March 25-28. Please look for their presentations in the program and support your Michigan colleagues by attending their presentations!

Michigan Presenters at Upcoming TESOL 2015

Alyssa Anders, EMU
Laura Ballard, MSU
Colleen Brice, GVSU
Susan Brokaw, EMU
Clarissa Codrington, EMU
Alissa Cohen, MSU
Thomas Cullen, EMU
Virginia David, MSU
Peter De Costa, MSU
Matthew Deroo, MSU
Trisha Dowling, EMU
Chrstine Feak, UM
Donald Freeman, UM
Carmela Romano Gillette, MSU
Luca Giupponi, MSU ELC
Kathleen Graves, UM
Vera Grishkina, MI Dept. St.
Ashley Hewlett, MSU ELC
Jolene Jaquays, UM-Flint
Jiheang Kang, MSU
Debi Khasnabis, UM
Any Kroesche, MSU
Diane Larsen-Freeman, UM
Guofang Li, MSU
Xingiang Li, MSU
Erin Luyendyk, EMU
Cynthia Macknish, EMU
Natalie Marzonie Parra, CMU
Jason Moore, UM
Che Moya, SVSU
Sara Okello, UM-Flint
Akiko Ota, MSU ELC
Dinah Ouano Perren, EMU
James Perren, EMU
Danielle Petersen, CMU
Allison Piippo, EMU
Khila Pokharel, CMU
Ildiko Porter-Szucs, EMU
Laura Ramm, MSU
Patrick T. Randolph, WMU
Catherine Reischl, UM
Renée Sautler, UM-Dearborn
Kimberly Specht, EMU
Kay Stremler, EMU
John Swales, UM
Kristin Tenney, EMU
Zuzana Tomaš, EMU
Wendy Wang, EMU
Carol Wilson-Duffy, MSU ELC
Clare Zuraw, MTU
National Geographic Learning | MSU Learning Symposium 2015

Austin Kaufmann, Michigan State University English Language Center
akauf@msu.edu | Work: 517-884-4325 | Mobile: 517-512-4539

Now in its third year, the annual National Geographic Learning | Michigan State University Learning Symposium will be held from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm on Saturday, April 11th, 2015, in East Lansing at Michigan State University.

This year’s theme is “Grammar and the Four Skills: Exploration and Integration.” Grammar is often decontextualized and taught in isolation. However, more contemporary models encourage integration with the four skills – reading, writing, listening, and speaking – and distribution throughout the curriculum. This has implications for nearly every aspect of a program, including digital technology, assessment, and course planning. This year’s presentations will focus on links between grammar and other aspects of ESL instruction.

The Learning Symposium Planning Committee is pleased to announce that our keynote author presenter is professor and author Dr. Keith Folse (photo right), who will present on integrating grammar and writing. Dr. Folse is a frequent presenter at conferences worldwide, especially on topics related to best teaching practices for vocabulary and grammar. Many second language writing instructors will, of course, be familiar with Folse’s award-winning Great Writing series, published by National Geographic Learning.

Again this year, National Geographic has invited an Emerging Explorer to present. Asher Jay, who calls herself a creative conservationist, uses art, sculpture, design, and advocacy advertising campaigns to advance animal rights, sustainable development, and humanitarian causes. Much of her best-known work spotlights the illegal ivory trade, including a huge animated billboard in Times Square and an ambitious project aimed at reducing ivory demand among China’s rising middle class.

Between the keynote opening and closing sessions, there will be two rounds of concurrent break-out presentations, led by TESOL professionals from around the Great Lakes region. Currently, presentation proposals are being reviewed by the Learning Symposium Presentation Proposal Review Committee. Speakers and abstracts will be available on the website as soon as the selection process has been completed.

This year’s symposium will feature one new addition to the agenda: poster session presentations. Similarly to the sessions at the annual TESOL International Conventions & English Language Expo, our Learning Symposium poster sessions will provide a forum for short, informal discussions with other participants while the exhibit is on display. Posters can display research, teaching tips, curriculum development ideas, and many other areas of interest.

In 2014, the Learning Symposium nearly doubled in size from 2013 and expanded its presenter line-up, with speakers representing universities and institutions from four states. Last year also featured a panel discussion of experts, a part of the agenda we will continue this year.

The day’s expenses – registration, parking, and meals – will be covered by National Geographic Learning, so there is no excuse for missing out on this high-quality professional development conference for Great Lakes-area post-secondary ESL professionals.

For details or to register, please visit the Learning Symposium website: ngl.elc.msu.edu

Keep up to date and follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/learningsymposium

See you in April! If you have questions, please contact Learning Symposium organizer Austin Kaufmann: 517-884-4325 | akauf@msu.edu
Updates From the Field

The Community and the ESL Curriculum: Ann Arbor’s Summer ESL Academy

Catherine Reischl and Debi Khasnabis

The community became the curriculum for seventy 4th – 8th grade English Language Learners in the Summer ESL Academy (SESLA) of Ann Arbor Public Schools (AAPS). Through site visits, conversations, and informal gatherings, kids and adults came together to discuss their educational and career choices and built friendships and literacy skills in the process. Ten Ann Arbor businesses on the corner of Packard and Platt and Ten Thousand Villages in downtown Ann Arbor generously welcomed students through their doors and shared their knowledge about life and work. In response, students created informational promotional brochures for the businesses—the kind of brochure that customers pick up at the cash register—and, in the process, learned to refine their writing and technology skills.

SESLA has, over the last five years, developed its own brand of community-based curriculum. The program’s unique curriculum is based on a set of principles designed by UM faculty members Dr. Catherine Reischl and Dr. Debi Khasnabis, who serve as part of the Mitchell Scarlett Teaching and Learning Collaborative, a partnership between AAPS and the UM School of Education. The goals of the program are to prevent “summer slide” and help students continue to improve their language and academic skills in a highly interactive setting. The curriculum works toward these goals by providing opportunities for students to develop rigorous language and literacy skills, all founded on the Common Core State Standards. Most prominently figured are informational writing skills and oral language skills that require students to conduct research and collaborate. However, the key to the program’s success has been its commitment to drawing upon community-based funds of knowledge, whether those knowledge bases are located in local museums, parks, businesses, families, or cultural groups. This orientation ensures that learning opportunities reside in contexts that are relevant to students’ lives and have authentic implication for their experience.

In addition to these guiding principles, the SESLA program offers a model for collaboration between university ESL teacher education programs and local schools where faculty, experienced ESL teachers, and ESL teacher candidates teach and learn in each other’s company—all in the service of providing a high-quality summer program to young English Learners. The program is housed at Scarlett Middle School, led by principal Gerald Vasquez, and is supported by Title III federal funding. In 2014, Reischl and Khasnabis worked with AAPS SESLA teachers Saina Sajjadi, Candy Justyna, Katie Gibson, Diana McDiarmid, Nurit Oren and Barbara Kalisewicz, as well as University of Michigan ESL teacher candidates, Annie Markey, Roni Petroelje, Iris Macadangdang, Kristina Jaeger, Brittny Hahn, and Renee Gantt to design a three-week unit for students from five area elementary schools and one middle school.

In this unit, titled “Making a Living/Making a Life,” 5th – 8th graders at the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of English walked 6 blocks from Scarlett Middle School to restaurants, beauty salons, grocery stores that specialized in foods from particular cultures, and even a car re-sale lot on the corner of Packard and Platt and began conversations with the owners, most of whom are immigrants themselves. Drawing on “culturally responsive” pedagogies that view students’ families and communities as resources, teachers taught students to interview store owners about their life choices and work. Students took written notes, photos, and video to record what they had learned. They also ate a few quesadillas and samosas, drank a little mango juice, and learned techniques for eyebrow plucking and selling a fine used car! Participating stores included: Mansha’s Salon and Spa, Aladdin’s Market, City’s Pizza and Subs, Binh’s Place, Tma Taqueria and Goodies Grocery Store, Cromax Automotive, Golam Produce Market, and Hut-k Chaats Nutrilicious Indian Food.

Drawing on information gathered over several visits, students worked in groups using computer graphics programs to produce high-quality brochures to promote the businesses. These brochures were shared at a culminating Family Celebration, when business partners were honored and students informally presented their brochures to an audience of more than 175 people, who browsed tables displaying wares from each store or restaurant. All of this work supported informational literacy learning goals named in the Common Core State Standards.

Fourth grade students participated in a similar project, but focused on learning about “fair trade” products. Ten Thousand Villages, a fair-
The Community and the ESL Curriculum (cont. from previous page)

trade store on Main Street staffed almost entirely by volunteers, hosted the students. Kids delighted in choosing a product that they found particularly compelling, learning about the people across the world who had created the product, and the working conditions and fair trade practices that are required to be in place. Fourth graders also produced brochures about their products that were given to the store to be shared with customers.

This content-based ESL program also included a morning of interviews with adults in professional roles in the community, most of whom were also immigrants. These included several lawyers, a police officer, a thoracic surgeon, the vice-president of the YMCA, a computer application programmer and others. Students practiced interview skills prior to this event and put them to use as they explored a range of possibilities for their own lives in conversation with adults. All students participated in a field trip to the University of Michigan School of Engineering to learn about math and science-related careers. Throughout the program, students created life maps, highlighting key events in their lives so far and, by the end of the three weeks, they added possible careers they are considering and the educational moves they will need to make to achieve these goals.

A video that offers images of Making a Living/Making a Life can be found at http://youtu.be/fQTVFZBQwwI

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Teaching Teachers to Address Ineffective Source Use Pedagogically:
Highlights from a Successful Professional Development Workshop

Zuzana Tomaš

Being on the MITESOL list can lead to many wonderful professional experiences and this brief article describes one such example. A year ago, I followed up on a MITESOL email message by Sherrin Francis, First-Year Writing Coordinator at Saginaw Valley State University, who was looking for a speaker on addressing ineffective textual borrowing in L2 writers’ academic writing. In the fall, I traveled to the beautiful SVSU campus to give a workshop on the topic to over thirty enthusiastic writing instructors, eager to learn about better meet-
Teaching Teachers to Address Ineffective Source Use Pedagogically (cont. from previous page)

ing the needs of L2 writers at their institution. What follows is a brief description of the workshop, including a link to all the relevant materials for those MITESOL Newsletter readers who wish to learn about the topic or who would like to adapt the materials when offering professional development at their own institutions.

Workshop Format and Objectives

The 90-120-minute-long workshop entitled “Departing from Punishing Plagiarism: Toward Addressing Ineffective Source Use Pedagogically” revolves around a video-recorded student-teacher writing conference—a resource originally co-developed with my colleague and Eastern Michigan University librarian, William Marino. The goals of the workshop are to:

- help teachers understand the complexity surrounding source use, especially in the case of second-language writers;
- problematize the punitive approach to dealing with ineffective textual borrowing;
- discuss the spectrum of textual borrowing strategies in student writing, ranging from direct, unattributed copying to effective textual borrowing;
- provide teachers with effective and non-punitive ways of responding to problematic textual borrowing.

Workshop Content and Activities

I started the workshop by activating instructors’ background knowledge about writing from sources and teaching writing from sources. Specifically, I asked instructors to freewrite for a few minutes about their relevant experiences revolving around the two topics. I related a few example answers from volunteers to the workshop goals and then segued to the main part of the workshop.

The first main workshop activity asked writing teachers working in small groups to consider an excerpt from a student’s paper in light of the source used. Workshop participants were challenged to decide whether the student’s attempt at using the source was an example of an effective use of sources or whether it was ineffective and why. Teachers discussed examples and placed them on a continuum on the board.

After a somewhat controversial discussion of what constitutes effectiveness in using sources, participants were asked to think about their likely response to the instances of ineffective uses: Was the nature of the ineffectiveness due to the mechanics (e.g. forgetting to use quotation marks) or did it signal a lack of understanding of the purpose of citation? Would they address these examples of ineffective textual borrowing and, if so, how (e.g. via written feedback, a student-writer conference)? Would they fail the student on the assignment? An informal poll revealed a high variability in teacher perceptions of effectiveness in using sources.

The next activity involved having workshop participants watch an innovative video of a mock teacher-student writing conference during which the student’s ineffective source use is addressed. The first scenario captures an undesired response (e.g. the teacher directly accuses the student of plagiarism, focuses solely on the problematic parts of the paper, and does not allow opportunities for revision). The second scenario models the best practices in responding to ineffective source use, including discussing ineffective source use from the perspective of voice and argument development rather than mechanics, focusing on the process and strategies, and encouraging the student writer. The video resulted in rich small-group discussions, followed by a whole-class group discussion of key takeaways from the video.

Workshop Assessment

The assessment was twofold. First, to evaluate what the instructors got out of the workshop they were asked to complete the following
Teaching Teachers to Address Ineffective Source Use Pedagogically (cont. from previous page)

When I respond to instances of excessive copying or otherwise ineffective textual borrowing, I will always/never…” Second, the coordinator asked participants to complete a formal workshop evaluation, the results of which she relayed to me after the workshop.

Overall, the workshop appeared to be very successful. Teachers’ completion of the formative assessment task suggested their increased sensitivity to responding to ineffective source use and their improved confidence in using effective strategies for addressing ineffective textual borrowing. The formal workshop evaluation form suggested that over 90 percent of participants were “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with the workshop. In fact, the only source of dissatisfaction seemed to be that the workshop was not long enough.

Workshop Materials

The workshop materials, including the link to the video-recorded student-teacher conference, can be accessed via the links below. If you use them, please leave feedback on the MERLOT website or email me at ztomas@emich.edu. My collaborator and I are always looking for ways to improve our work!

http://www.merlot.org/merlot/viewMaterial.htm?id=899906
http://people.emich.edu/ztomas/DepartingPlagiarismWorkshop/

Final Thoughts

As the participants indicated, an improved workshop would be longer in duration or, better yet, offered as a two-presentation series, with one focusing on teaching students to write effectively from sources and the other on responding to ineffective textual borrowing. Additional activities that would likely further enhance the workshop would engage workshop participants in role-playing student-teacher conferences and working in small groups on preparing specific lessons and activities about effective source use, with the workshop leader facilitating the process and providing feedback.

Nonetheless, I am confident that even in the current form, the workshop meets its four target goals since participating teachers 1) appeared to gain an appreciation for the inherent complexity surrounding writing from sources, 2) became more critical of the punitive approach to ineffective textual borrowing, including the use of the label “plagiarism,” 3) critically examined a spectrum of source use, and 4) engaged in discussing effective and ineffective ways of responding to ineffective writing from sources. Above all, however, this institutionally supported opportunity to come together with like-minded colleagues invested in meeting the needs of L2 writers has engaged teachers in reflection on teaching and learning and thus, I’d argue, fostered the participants’ sense of purpose and self-worth as TESOL professionals.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language in My Home Country After Being Away for Many Years

Zuzana Hodkova

Speaking my own language sometimes feels like a foreign language in the country of my birth these days. You understand what people say, you answer with no trouble, no strange accent, yet you can’t help feeling you are misunderstood!

That’s what years in my adopted country have done to me: I see now a completely different way of thinking; a different way of approaching problems (and finding solutions for them); different attitudes toward failures when one just doesn’t give up succumbing to brain-deadness, weakness, despair, and avoidance; instead one attempts to accelerate one’s own creativity. With faith, one has learned to overcome difficulties by being proactive, inventive, internally resolved to find solutions with courage. A very strange feeling, indeed: Alice in Wonderland. So is my TEFL experience.

(continued on next page)
TEFL in My Home Country After Being Away for Many Years (cont. from previous page)

Only a very few interested people—like intelligent journalists who publicize debates on important educational themes, offering other aspects from various informed sources, or some teachers who truly care about what and how children learn—can open parents’ and school officials’ eyes and ears. All the while, educational institutions limp behind, struggling with administrative tasks, budgets, old ways of thinking of what is really important to tackle. They question: Are admission exams to the first grade of public school a fair and necessary step in education? or Do handicapped children belong in the classes with “normal” kids? (I have to say that the majority of the public, including professional educators, even some politicians, reacted with anger after such a question was answered “no” from a top state official.)

I began to question in my classes if foreign language learning is too early starting in the first grade of the public school when students don’t know yet how to write or read in their mother tongue. Then again, if the parents can afford a private English preschool, those kids have an advantage later in the public school compared to those who are just starting with such learning.

And so I appreciated an intelligent article in the magazine Respekt about why it is more important for children to be lively during the classes than just sit quietly and obey, why it is not so important what they learn by command but that they remain curious, that they ask questions, that they keep on being involved. Since information is everywhere, it’s overwhelming; children need guidance in their choices. They certainly need a trustworthy grownup to discuss their concerns, fears, insecurities with; they need our ears and hearts. The children mature fast and the sooner they are exposed to wonders of nature, literature, art, science, speak with people who enjoy what they do—who can inspire and navigate them—the stronger, more loving, and more caring they’ll grow. What we are leaving for the young generations to wrestle with needs real superheroes everywhere, brave, well educated, inventive, creative, caring minds. We need to nourish them, help them in any way we can with patience, understanding, good examples, sincerity, good humor, play, thoughtfulness, and our own learning and understanding of what’s going on in the world.

University of Michigan-Flint and Proyecta 100,000

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The University of Michigan-Flint hosted 57 students from Mexico, who participated in the Proyecta 100,000 scholarship awarded by their government in November, 2014. Students began with an orientation of academic expectations, and cultural awareness. We provided an overview of the ELP, their meal plan, their housing arrangements, and also gave them a calendar of activities. They took placement assessments, where we analyzed their language proficiency in reading, writing, listening, vocabulary and speaking. After that, they were placed in one of our six levels, along with other international students studying English.

Students were expected to attend all classes, do their homework, and participate in class. Students from Proyecta 100,000 were extremely dynamic and enthusiastic. They got along with other students in our program and many friendships and bonds were created. Very few students missed classes; they demonstrated that they were ready for the challenge.

In addition to classes, students had a full schedule of activities, accompanied by ELP staff, and/or the International Center staff. Activities were carefully designed to provide opportunities to use acquired language skills in an authentic setting, to create opportunities to meet Americans, and to understand American culture and tradi-
University of Michigan-Flint and Proyecta 100,000 (cont. from previous page)

Response was overwhelmingly positive. Students were engaged, took part in all the activities, and made a positive impact on our program, campus, and community.

Feedback was an essential component of the program. The following testimonials were from an anonymous survey given to the participants in the program. No edits were made:

It was an incredible experience! Everyone was very friendly! And expectations were surpassed for much! I learned a lot, not only in the classroom, but also due to all the activities in which we participate, as we face real life to practice English! I am very grateful to have had this opportunity and especially it has been in the University of Michigan-Flint!

This experience definitely change my life. I met people from all around the world, so I did not only learn English, I learned a lot from them and from all the moments we share together. I learned about the different cultures, the way of life, traditions, and life lessons that will last forever. I’m very thankful for all the attention the staff of UM-Flint gave to us. The teachers were so patient, people from the UCen so carrying, and the ambassadors and students … We really had fun!

I learned of American culture and its lifestyle. I had the opportunity to speak with people from other countries, I improve my fluency, I learned more vocabulary. As a teacher of English I understood how important is to develop more speaking and listening comprehension skills on the learners.

YOUR ARTICLE HERE!

Even while this issue may seem jam-packed, we’re a digital publication without the strict space limitations of print publications. If you’ve got news from the field, let us take a look! We publish in February and August each year; watch the MITESOL listserv for the call that comes out two months prior (deadline one month prior) and take time to let us know what you’ve been up to in the world of TESOL. Have you read a new related book, tried a new teaching technique, or developed a research project? This is your chance to share your experiences with the rest of the MITESOL community.

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Fostering International Student Success in Higher Education, Review

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In Fostering International Student Success in Higher Education, authors Shapiro, Farrelly, and Tomaš present both challenges and opportunities for growth among international students and their instructors within the realm of U.S. higher education. While the recent influx of international students in U.S. institutions of higher learning offers significant benefits to both entities, the level of support these students receive is directly critical to their success in their host country and indirectly essential to their future success as global citizens. This book explores the role of cultural factors in the international student experience, and utilizes anecdotes, scenarios, quotes, and research to thoughtfully connect existing instructor knowledge to pedagogical practices and activities solidly grounded in second language acquisition (SLA) theory. Accessible to teachers in a wide variety of disciplines, Shapiro, Farrelly, and Tomaš provide examples of and information on inclusive activities, assessment writing, and rubrics to aid in the empowerment of international students to succeed academically and at the community level.

Content is clearly presented throughout each chapter, and reflection questions play an integral role in connecting this content to the specific pedagogical and personal experiences of the reader. In addition to the quotations and shared anecdotes demonstrating the vast perspectives among international students and their instructors, this allows each reader to participate in a uniquely personalized way. Three essential concepts of SLA theories (scaffolding, interaction, and noticing) accompany the role of language proficiency and appropriately structured activities and assessments without the use of excessive or intimidating subject-specific language. Furthermore, utilizing international students as a resource is encouraged exactly in the manner that instructors are advised to encourage these same students to make use of their own available resources. These consistencies and clearly outlined responsibilities not only render reader participation possible at an individualized level that may evolve over time, they explicitly mimic the scaffolding in the hands-on activities provided for both teacher development and classroom use throughout the text as a whole. Whether functioning as an introduction or serving as a renewed foundation upon which to establish improved practices, the nature in which the text presents this information lends itself flawlessly to the task at hand.

Through its accessible and personalized presentation of content and materials, this book’s promotion of inclusion and empowerment for both international students and their instructors creates an ideal stage for international student advocacy to occur at an institution-wide level. Not only would the text be ideal for instructors of all disciplines who are working with this demographic for the first time, but it also offers all English as Second Language (ESL) professionals the opportunity to serve as advocates for international students both inside and outside the classroom. This advocacy may present itself in the form of offering professional development seminars to educate general faculty about the challenges these students face, serving in an administrative capacity, or identifying and sharing additional resources and opportunities for their students. In addition to assisting the very demographic they aim to support, international student advocacy among ESL instructors would contribute to the creation of global citizens within an institutional, community, national, and increasingly expanding context.

Kimberly Specht first began teaching in Leipzig, Germany, and will graduate with her master’s degree in TESOL from Eastern Michigan University in 2015. Currently, she works as an ESL teacher and tutor at various institutions in the Ann Arbor area. Her areas of interest include program administration, curriculum development, and assessment.
Machine Translation and L2 Writing

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Second language writing teachers often fear the presence of translating devices in their classroom. Although the devices can be potentially beneficial, teachers may wonder if allowing their students to use machine translation would foster dependence on the device. They may also wonder if it is ethical to let their students use translators when the ultimate goal of writing instruction is to help students improve their writing ability so they can independently compose English sentences without relying on teachers, peers, native speakers, or machines. Students, on the other hand, may turn to these devices not fully understanding the limitations of translating tools when confronted with challenging writing tasks, by first composing sentences or phrases in L1 and then translating them to L2.

The role of L1 in L2 writing has been actively researched by various scholars in various contexts. Although differing results have been reported regarding the amount of language switch between L1 and L2 based on students’ English skills, there is a general consensus that all students, regardless of their levels, switch to L1 at some point, and less skilled writers tend to switch to L1 at a much higher rate. Several scholars have noted that although students may not necessarily construct sentences in L1 and then translate them to L2 word for word, translation is a frequently used technique (Van Weijen, 2009; Veerappan, Yusof, & Aris, 2013; Wang, 2003; Wang & Wen, 2002). While some teachers may strictly ban using machine translation in their class, others may feel that using a translation device is not very much different from receiving help from a more capable peer, teacher, or native speaker. Therefore, they may argue, instead of prohibiting the usage, writing teachers should teach their students how to use the device properly. Furthermore, no matter how strongly a teacher may discourage the usage, there are virtually no means of monitoring students’ usage outside the classroom in completing their writing assignments.

If prohibiting the usage is not a viable solution due to the ubiquitous nature of technology as well as the pressing need of students to receive help, teachers will first need to understand what machine translation can and can’t do for their students. This understanding will not only help L2 writing teachers to come up with sensible class policies concerning the usage of translators, but also enable them to effectively guide students in the proper usage.

In this article, I demonstrate the potential usefulness and limitations of machine translation for L2 writers by analyzing various Korean-to-English output results using Google Translate. The reason for choosing Google Translate is because it is one of the most widely used translation tools. The aim of this study is to show how accurate the translations are at different levels, thereby providing necessary knowledge for both teachers and students regarding the potential benefits as well as limitations so that they can make informed decisions regarding the allowance and usage of the device.

Method

I analyzed various translations provided by Google Translate using an abstract of a Korean academic paper entitled “The Globalization of Korean Popular Culture and ‘Han Ryu’” (Son & Yang, 2003) as a sample Korean text. Since it is a published academic paper, it provides rich academic vocabulary. Also, the topic covers a somewhat general sociocultural issue and therefore includes relatively low usage of jargon. In addition, the construction of Korean sentences includes a variety of sentence structures such as simple, complex, and compound sentences, allowing us to examine the capabilities of Google Translate at different levels of sentence complexity.

Results

1. Single-word translation

Single-word output showed a high level of accuracy. The translation of common academic vocabulary was relatively accurate. However, it failed to provide correct translations for homonyms and jargon. For example, 부상 (busang) is a homonym, which can mean either... (continued on next page)
Machine Translation and L2 Writing (cont. from previous page)

‘injury’ or ‘rise/soar.’ Google’s sole output both as a single word and as a word in a phrase was ‘injury’ whereas the target output was ‘rise.’ 장면화 (jangmyunhwa) is Korean film jargon, meaning ‘scene-creating,’ but was translated into the nonsensical ‘fire scene.’

2. Two-word phrase translation

The translation of two-word phrases that did not involve jargon was mostly accurate. In terms of comprehensibility and acceptability, two-word phrase translations were relatively reliable.

3. Phrases including postpositions

Translations of phrases that involved postpositions (which function as English prepositions) were highly inaccurate. Only the first three out of the 12 were acceptable translations, whereas the rest included either wrong lexicon or jumbled phrase structure. The following table illustrates this point.

Table 1. Google Translation of Korean Phrases Including Postpositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Korean phrases</th>
<th>Google Output</th>
<th>Target Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>정제된 대사 등을 통해서</td>
<td>Refined through metabolism to</td>
<td>Through refined lines and so forth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>감수성의 부상</td>
<td>Susceptibility to injury</td>
<td>The rise of sensitivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>유교문화적 잔재들에 대해서는</td>
<td>Confucian cultural remnants are</td>
<td>Regarding the residual cultural elements of Confucianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>discussed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As these examples illustrate, without a doubt, the use of machine translation at this level is highly risky as the output can either be semantically anomalous or syntactically inaccurate. Moreover, subtle nuances were not effectively translated by Google.

4. Sentence-level translation

Google Translate had severe limitations at the sentence level. All the sentences that were translated were far from being acceptable as they resulted in highly unintelligible, inaccurate sentences. Examples are provided below to illustrate this point.

**Target English Translation:**

This study seeks to examine the globalization of the Korean popular culture and find an alternative through the study of Hallyu phenomenon.

**Google Translate Output:**

In this paper, through the study of the phenomenon of Korean popular culture, the globalization of Korea to examine the status of the study was to explore alternatives.

As we can see, the Google output has completely wrong phrases as the subject and the direct object, and gibberish-sounding sentences are produced due to the jumbled word order.

The case of a complex sentence also resulted in a highly inaccurate, incomprehensible sentence.

**Target English Translation:**

While young people in China find the residual cultural elements of Confucianism found in the Korean drama rather strange (new), they pay attention to, and are entertained by, consumerism-oriented lifestyles and cultural tastes.
Machine Translation and L2 Writing (cont. from previous two pages)

Google Output:

Young people in China Confucianism in Korea’s drama about the strange cultural remnants that, while the new consumer culture and the way of life to pay attention to cultural tastes are feeling the joy.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis shows that the potential benefit of machine translation lies only at the single-word or basic, two-word phrase levels for Korean L2 learners of English, and anyone who resorts to this device for translating sentences beyond these levels takes extreme risks in both comprehensibility and accuracy. It would be important for L2 writing teachers to alert students to the inadequacy of machine translation for translating complex phrases or sentences and also to the importance of acquiring essential grammatical knowledge needed in sentence composing, such as use of the correct word order, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, and conjunctions to be able to write acceptable English sentences. As Kay (1997) put it, “To understand language is to understand how it works” (Kay, 1997, p. 4), and the best available artificial intelligence is still far from being able to function as an effective scaffolding tool beyond a simple word or basic phrase level. Another implication of this analysis is that teachers may be freed from the fear of the computers ‘doing the work’ even if they would allow their students to use translation devices in their writing classroom.

I do not assume that the same type of limitations would also be present in the translation of other languages; translation of languages which have similar phrase structure rules to English may yield different results. However, as more and more language learners employ various types of technology in their learning, it would be important for both teachers and students to be clearly aware of their potential benefits and limitations in order to make informed decisions.

References


Assessing Vocabulary Development Needs via a Vocabulary Profile Tool

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It has become commonplace to incorporate vocabulary into the classes we teach; yet this is not always a simple task. As teachers, we are often not fully aware of the amount and extent of language-learning activities that our students are engaged in outside of class. This, we suspect, is especially true for our students’ use of vocabulary learning strategies. From research we conducted on how students prepare outside of class for vocabulary assignments and quizzes, we learned about vocabulary learning strategies and preferences from a student perspective. We drew on the results of this research to design a vocabulary needs assessment tool that teachers can use at the start of a class to make vocabulary instruction more responsive and effective.

We designed the diagnostic tool with a graduate-level ESL class in mind, but it can be easily adapted for any level of adult learner. The diagnostic could be administered in class and used immediately to generate discussion and sharing of strategies. The focus on academic vocabulary could be replaced with everyday vocabulary to fit a non-academic class. Recently, we replaced questions #5, #6 and #7 with questions that asked about prior exposure to formal vocabulary study (see alternative questions at the end of the diagnostic tool).

The diagnostic tool allows us to better see how to proceed with vocabulary instruction in class. For example, it provides us with insights into the practices and strategies students engage in when learning vocabulary (although we are aware of the limitations of self-reported strategy use.) It provides basis for addressing the time involved in learning new words and in studying for vocabulary assessments. Finally, it allows us to consider the vocabulary-related requirements of our own class within a larger ESL curriculum, resulting in an increased awareness of our colleagues’ expectations for vocabulary development. Such awareness can be a useful first step in making vocabulary instruction and support for students more consistent across different courses in the ESL curriculum.

For a full copy of the vocabulary needs assessment tool, including instructions and guidelines, please visit https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i6GDX8Lis0alyFHw4sy-zb37ZPC9DD192pnjtv0m3s/edit?usp=sharing
Assessing Vocabulary Development Needs (cont. from previous page)

3. How many hours a week do you spend on learning new vocabulary?
   a. 0-1
   b. 2-3
   c. 4-5
   d. 6 or more

4. How do you learn vocabulary?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Strategies</th>
<th>Technology-Based Strategies</th>
<th>Social Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary journal/list/notebook including the word, definition, and example sentence</td>
<td>Dictionary/ies: definitions/synonyms</td>
<td>Listen to radio, get general meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index cards</td>
<td>Online vocabulary notebooks</td>
<td>Listen to music, get general meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouncing words after listening</td>
<td>Google Translate</td>
<td>Watch TV and movies, get general meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw pictures</td>
<td>Online quizzes</td>
<td>Work with family or study partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use colors, music, dance, gestures or movement</td>
<td>Look up sentences/collocations</td>
<td>Mentor or tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing practice</td>
<td>Other ____________</td>
<td>Other ____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tying meanings to personal experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ____________</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Do you use different ways/strategies for learning day-to-day vocabulary as opposed to academic vocabulary? Explain.

6. Of the strategies for learning new words that you use, which one do you find the most effective and why?

7. Overall, how would you evaluate your strategies for learning new words?
   a. I use excellent strategies.
   b. I think I mostly use good strategies but I could use help learning some new ones.
   c. I don’t think I use very useful strategies.
Assessing Vocabulary Development Needs (cont. from previous two pages)

8. How do you study for a vocabulary test?

9. Write notes below to describe what you do to study academic vocabulary for tests. Identify both web-based and hard-copy tools (be specific, identify the websites and specific sources), and how you use them. Be prepared to demonstrate to your peers.

10. How many minutes a day are you willing/able to study new words?
   a. 0-10 minutes
   b. 11-30 minutes
   c. 30-60 minutes
   d. 60 or more minutes

11. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your strategy use for learning new vocabulary? (Feel free to use extra paper.)

Alternate Questions

12. Do you currently keep a list of new words you want to learn? If yes, how do you keep the list? (In a notebook? On your computer? On your phone?)

13. Have you ever used a vocabulary journal in a class?

14. Are you currently enrolled in another class that has a vocabulary component? If yes, how many words a week are you required to learn? List all classes.

I Teach Academics to Non-Academics!

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As ESL/EFL instructors, we wish to always adhere to standards-based ESL teaching and to pursue pedagogical goals in our classes. With all of the pressure we get from teaching students coming from distinct backgrounds and aiming for different learning goals, many of us sometimes feel that teaching plans and learning goals should be brought closer. There is nothing unrealistic about standardized teaching, nor is this a call for revolutionary actions against institutional policies; however, especially in EFL contexts, the matter of unattainable learning outcomes is more complicated than what one can possibly imagine.

I have taught at an institution in Saudi Arabia, where there has been noticeable mismatch between the pedagogical plans teachers utilized in classes, and the learning goals the students aimed for; teachers have taught academic English while students looked for more basic English. Even with the dominance of English worldwide, there have been times when all that the students needed to know was simply communicational English, with no focus on the academic side of the language, despite their study in a purely academic higher-education institution. It might be surprising for some to know that the reason why these students attend academic institutions although their needs are

(continued on next page)
I Teach Academics to Non-Academics! (cont. from previous page)

not academic is that, in Saudi Arabia, the vast majority of English language institutions are academic, and the few non-academic ones suffer from poor planning and outdated teaching practices.

The gap has been too huge, to the extent that there seemed to be no way out of it; teachers wanted the students to write coherent, cohesive, and well-structured five-paragraph essays and read 250 words per minute, while the students needed only to express themselves orally with acceptable English. I have to state that this was not the case for all of the students; some had made their decisions to study abroad or get higher degrees, so academic English was their ultimate goal.

"Why don't learners learn what teachers teach?" (Allwright, 1984, p. 3)

At first glance, the question itself looks disappointing, but the solution is, in fact, attainable. There are few steps along the path of narrowing the gap between teaching and learning. First, a teacher needs to ensure that their pre-planned curriculum matches whatever goals the students come to class with. It is understandable that there are institutional policies and regulations that might hinder this, but the issue is still under control. The first step is to use the students' perspectives as parameters of the quality of teaching. Taylor is correct when asserting that “Our particular students’ needs and the dynamics of our particular classes become major factors in deciding what to teach and how to teach it” (1983, p. 70). Offering students comfortable, open discussions, where they express what they like and what they wish to be changed in the course opens a vista of opportunities for the teacher to have a second look at what they are doing in class.

The second step is maximizing learner-centered classes and allowing opportunities for students to speak out about teaching when given the opportunity. If institutional policies force a teacher to work towards a certain pedagogical goal that is alien to students, they need to get it accomplished, but should also not forget that these policies are not and cannot be comprehensive enough to meet every student’s need. Therefore, by investigating students’ needs, a teacher can find ways to advance their students’ communicative competence, since the majority of ESL/EFL learners seek this particular type of competence. Academic and non-academic students look to enhance their command of oral English, so this should be a main objective of pedagogical practices. When students are advised to be more responsible for their learning process, they will be able to state what their learning goals are exactly, and the teacher will know which direction they should go in their teaching.

The next step relates to grammar instruction. There have been various approaches to grammar instruction for teachers to choose from based on their students’ goals and learning styles. Grammar matters, and there seems to be no way for teachers to avoid teaching grammar directly or indirectly. Even when teaching students whose needs are non-academic (no focus on academic reading and writing), it is still crucial to devote some of the class time to grammar, as this language skill is looked for to evaluate the production of the other language skills; if one speaks or writes with poor grammar, their language proficiency is considered low. Regardless of the students’ proficiency level, grammar must be taught in its three dimensions: form, meaning, and use (Larsen-Freeman, 1995). Teachers are encouraged to design in- and out-of-class activities, whereby the students utilize the grammar structures they have learned in class in a way that promotes their understanding of the target structure and takes it to the next level: production. Doing this, students can improve their productive skills and satisfy their needs.

The last step to reduce conflict between pedagogical goals and learning outcome is to grant students a space to suggest strategies they find useful for their communicative competence. While one should not assume that students come to class with natural ability to participate in making academic-related choices, it is evident that every person knows well what works best for them in whatever life activity they do, and language learning is not an exception. This strategy allows them, not only to learn the language in the light of their own goals, but also to generate in them with a deeper sense of self-confidence helpful by itself as a life skill: identify issues they have in every life situation and suggest solutions for these issues.
I Teach Academics to Non-Academics! (cont. from previous two pages)

Student-teacher interaction involves a lot more than instruction, and when personal needs are concerned, it is a likely source of conflict. Nonetheless, it is always in the teacher’s hand to minimize such a conflict as long as the supreme goal of teaching, making a difference in others’ life, is made ‘the happy end’.

References


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Fostering the School-to-Home Connection Benefits English Learners and Their Families

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“A mother is a school; preparing her is like preparing a nation.” — Arabic proverb.

This quote struck me as I was sitting in my graduate class last semester. Our class was centered on the teaching of writing to ESL students. During one of our discussions, one of the students in the class mentioned this Arabic proverb. She is Lebanese and I had been seeking her advice on how to help one of my students and her family at the elementary school where I am employed as an EL paraprofessional.

My beautiful Yemeni kindergarten student greeted me daily with an energetic wave hello and a bright smile followed by a string of sentences in her native language. Of course, I had no idea what she was saying to me but it never stopped her. Some EL students are quiet and shy and don’t speak in their native language for just that reason. Not this animated little girl. She was bursting with language and full of enthusiasm for learning English.

Two months into the school year and her backpack was overflowing with papers. It was never emptied nightly like all of the other students’. She continued to eat her lunch for snack, run up a bill in the cafeteria, bring juice instead of water and hadn’t stayed current with her immunizations. This was the most concerning as she would not be able to attend school without current shots. The teacher had sent notes in English at first and then in Arabic. She even tied a little string to the little girl’s wrist with a note, but nothing seemed to work. It was time to call home.

When I telephoned her home her mother answered. As I asked to speak with her or her husband, she repeatedly stated, “Call back.”
Updates From the Field

Fostering the School-to-Home Connection (cont. from previous page)

found out later from the school office staff this was her normal response. She could not speak English well enough to speak to us and she relied on her working husband to communicate with the school.

It saddened me that she was so isolated and couldn't take part in conversations about her delightful little girl who was so willing to chatter away with no inhibitions. Yet, she sat at home only able to answer the phone in order to tell the caller to call back. I wanted to help her-- invite her to school, show her the classroom, show her how to unpack the backpack, give her guidance about snacks, but most of all I wanted to impart how impressive her daughter is and what an inspiring attitude she possessed toward school. I wanted her to know what a magnificent little girl she was raising and that she could be proud of her.

This situation made me realize how important it is to welcome our EL students' families into our school communities. Ideally, the school community could offer support when needed, educational opportunities to learn English, or simply inclusion in their child's education. The Arabic proverb communicates how important a mother's education is to future generations. The strengthening of the school-to-home connection only serves to facilitate the progress of our English language learners. Working with EL students has been such a gift. I learn just as much from them as they could ever learn from me. They and their families offer rich information about different cultures and ideas, as well as inspiring lessons about hard work and perseverance.

In such a short time, my little friend has blossomed into quite a savvy English-speaking kindergartener. My goal is to communicate to her about how to empty her backpack and other school responsibilities, but my dream is that someday I can relay those same messages to her mother.

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Speaking Assignment: Club Connection

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This assignment incorporates several principles that many teachers agree help students to improve their speaking ability:

1) Doing an activity they like while using/practicing English
2) Integrating with domestic university students/making friends with Americans
3) Doing a presentation on a topic that includes first-hand experience

I taught Level 3 Speaking and Listening (pre-intermediate to intermediate) during the Fall 2014 semester. For most of my students, this was their first semester in an Intensive English Program.

Prior to giving the assignment, I met one-on-one with students to ask what kinds of clubs they might be interested in and did a little research/brainstorming with them at that time (this was incorporated into a standard 5-week progress meeting). In mid-October, I gave them the following assignment sheet:

Over the next 5 weeks, you need to accomplish the following:
1) Find and decide on your first and second choice of student clubs
2) Find out when and where they meet
3) Attend three meetings/activities by Friday, Nov. 21
4) Take pictures and write down information and thoughts about each meeting/activity
5) Prepare a presentation about your Club Connection experience
Speaking Assignment: Club Connection (cont. from previous page)

Simultaneously, I gave students a worksheet on which they had to list their first and second club choices; the contact information; the next meeting date, time and place; and how they found the club. About three weeks later, I asked for a progress report on which they had to list the meetings or activities they had attended so far, say how the project was going and if they needed my assistance.

On the activity completion deadline (November 21), I gave students a speech outline to complete. The body had three main sections: 1) club information, 2) description of club activities, and 3) lessons learned/recommendations. They had to include pictures from their activities in the visual component. Presentations had to be 5 to 7 minutes long and almost everyone was at or over the upper limit.

Despite three of the students belonging to the same club, each presentation was unique to the person and still interesting, and the quality of the presentations was high. Students knew the information intimately, which left them room to concentrate on other aspects of presenting such as body language and audience rapport.

Next time I give this assignment, I will start earlier. A number of clubs stopped their activities two weeks before Thanksgiving, making the three-activities requirement more challenging for some.

It was especially rewarding to see that the process really helped (forced!) some students to make connections. One student got really excited after he was able to show off his knowledge of turtles to students of the Herpetology Club. Another student who was floundering decided to try the Swing Dancing Club just to meet the assignment and is hooked! Even those students who did not successfully find a club they wanted to attend long-term said they still found the project interesting and were determined to keep looking.

If you would like copies of the materials I used or have questions, please feel free to email me at ssabraw@msu.edu.

Stacy Sabraw is in her third year of teaching in the English Language Center at MSU. She received her master’s degree in TESOL & Applied Linguistics from Indiana University. Her areas of interest include second language pedagogy, curriculum development, and assessment.