



## TESL-WW NEWSLETTER

2008

### Welcome From the Editor

Undeniably this year has been off to a busy start. Please take a moment to read through this edition of the TESL WW newsletter to find updates on some of the happenings of the committee in terms of changes to your executive team, excerpts from the most recent TESL WW professional development event, "Roundtable—Your Turn To Talk," (which 91% of attendees seemed to enjoy according to the feedback surveys) as well notes on upcoming events. Please feel free to get in touch with any of the Executive Committee members to voice your needs, concerns, or interests in terms of what you would like to see in the future for various events and PD. As well, please do not hesitate to contact your newsletter editor if you wish to make a contribution to the next edition. A big thank you to our photographer Serena Reis for snapping some great shots from our 'Your Turn to Talk' event in October!

Good luck with the remainder of the term, and look for another edition of the TESL WW Newsletter in the New Year!  
Your TESL WW Newsletter Editor: Kimberly Burrell [burrellk@rogers.com](mailto:burrellk@rogers.com)



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# From the President



#### Dear WW TESL Members:

It is hard to believe that on this brilliantly sunny day that Halloween has come and gone, the clocks have changed and we are marching towards winter. Many of us are at the height of the semester with marking assignments and tests and thinking ahead to a bit of a break at Christmas!

As most of you know, a couple of weeks ago, we had our first WW TESL event of this year: "Your turn: Listen and share – Roundtable discussions." This was a new format where we thought that rather than having an expert lecturer describe the latest research, we would turn to the expertise of our members and ask you share your day to day experiences in the classroom. The smaller, intimate group setting allowed for sharing of valuable professional ideas.

We must thank our TESL executive facilitators for leading the excellent discussions: Pauline Shore (To Edit or not to Edit); Nancy Oczkowski (Building Vocabulary); Lisa Vielma (Working with Literacy) and Kathryn Brillinger (Teaching a Multi-level Class). We would especially like to thank Jonay Souder for agreeing to come last minute and for facilitating the fun session "Adding Music to the Classroom." The evaluation forms you

completed show this event to have been a resounding success, and you have given us many excellent topic ideas for holding this kind of event again.

In this newsletter, you will find summaries of each of the sessions with the ideas you shared. Summaries include some of the theoretical aspects discussed along with very important practical ideas you can use in the classroom.

Your WW TESL executive has many new faces this year. With new faces, come new fresh ideas. We welcome to the executive Serena Reis, Lisa Vielma, Pauline Shore, Nancy Oczkowski, and Allah-Ditta Malik. We are already thinking ahead to February when we will have our next conference, and we look forward to seeing you there!

We always welcome ideas for presenters, contributions to our newsletters and your voice as a member of WW TESL. Please do not hesitate to contact me or any member of the executive. Have a very wonderful rest of the semester and see you in February  
 Maggie Heeney  
 WW TESL President 2008-2009

## Your TESL WW 2008-2009 Executive Committee

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# From the Affiliate Director



Greetings to all. It is such a pleasure being involved with TESL in so many areas. I teach ESL and TESL and volunteer at both the local (TESL WW) level and at the provincial level. As you may have noticed in the TESL Ontario news, I will be on the board of directors for TESL Ontario if the changes are approved at the annual conference. This will mean I have just a few more months to serve you as Affiliate Director. Next May we will need to select someone new from the next slate of TESL WW board members. I encourage all of you to think about getting involved either locally or provincially. The work that all of us do makes a huge difference in the lives of newcomers to Canada and in the success of ESL learners. Your voice can make a difference in broader practices and policies.

Check TESL Ontario's website for upcoming committee opportunities! Or nominate yourself before next May's AGM at the local level.

It was great to see so many colleagues out at the workshop!

# Your Turn To Talk

TESL WW kicked off the academic year with an innovative Professional Development morning held at Conestoga College Saturday, October 18, 2008. During this event, members came out to meet and connect with their colleagues and participate and share their ideas and concerns related to ESL teaching experiences. There were 5 various options offered which members could select to attend based on their personal interests. Each section offered a facilitator who guided the participants through some interesting topics related to:

- Teaching in the Multi-level Classroom
- Literacy
- Building vocabulary
- Feedback on writing: to edit or not?
- Adding music to the classroom

For your information and for those of you that were unable to attend this event, excerpts of each session have been provided in this newsletter. Thanks again to all of those that came out to the event and participated. It proved to be well liked by the people in attendance!

## Teaching the Multi-level Classroom

Facilitator: Kathryn Brillinger

Information Compiled By: Dara Lane

In the multi-level session each participant was given a piece of paper. Their paper started off with one colour and once they participated by contributing an idea they were to flip their paper to the opposing colour to indicate to the rest of the participants that they had already taken their turn. Participants were not to participate a second time until everyone had participated once. This was a technique that the facilitator, Kathryn, had used previously in her own multi-level classrooms and decided to share with participants at the roundtable sessions. This session was divided up into different focuses related to teaching multi-level classes. Issues were discussed related to the biggest plusses, challenges, pet peeves, best practices, burning questions, and future workshop ideas. The information from this session has been included in a chart below for you to review at your leisure.

### Biggest Plusses:

- In a multi-level classroom, students look after each other
- The lower/weaker students learn from the stronger students
- Higher level students can feel good about themselves
- Students are motivated by others who are lower
- It's never boring!

### Biggest Challenges:

- Covering grammar for all levels is a challenge.
- Teaching to both levels so no one gets bored is challenging.
- Students tend to be strong in some language aspects and weak other aspects; for example, they may be strong in reading and writing but weak in speaking and listening.
- How to keep students from getting discouraged is a challenge.
- It is difficult to deal with high students who find their comfort zone and don't want to go higher
- Smoothly integrating a latecomer into an established classroom is difficult.
- Weak students are often intimidated by strong students.
- As a teacher, attending to everyone's need is a huge challenge.

### Pet Peeves:

- The range of levels in the class is too wide.
- Attendance of adults is often spotty making teaching any subject a challenge.
- Higher-level students *always* answer for the lower levels!

### My Best Practices to Share:

- Use the same exercise but design the handout so it works at different levels. For example, for the comparative structures, the lower levels would get a more controlled paragraph (cloze items) while the advanced students can deal with the same reading with more complex items to work on.
- Grouping by level; each group would work on an aspect of a reading; the readings would be different, but everyone would be learning the same language point, but at their own level
- Give a different picture to each student and let him/her work on that picture at his/her own level while targeting the intended language point.
- Group people by their L1 and allow them to use L1 as a starting point.
- In some settings, husband/wife teams can help each other
- Have students compare L1 and English in the context of writing a paragraph or telling a story; it stimulates the more timid students to speak up; it can be a confidence builder.
- Allow planning in their first language.

- The use of board games allows students to mix the different levels and different L1s.
- Do not group husbands and wives or same-language students. It makes the class environment too relaxed.
- In a multi-level class, following class rules is imperative: when class rules are arrived at through consensus, peers will keep the more gregarious classmates in line.
- Establish a problem-solving procedure.

**Burning Questions:**

- How can we get the weaker students feel at ease?
- How can we make the different levels work together?
- How can we find the balance between the different levels in one classroom? How can we take care of them all in a balanced way?

- Should I prepare for different levels every day?
- How do I do justice to everyone?

**Future workshop ideas/themes that arose from this session:**

- Use of L1 in the classroom
- How to create opportunities for students to shine
- How to deal with prejudice as it manifests itself in multi-cultural classes
- Histories of other cultures: to raise awareness of in-class racial tensions and clashes
- A workshop on the strengths of multi-level classroom

## Feedback on Writing: To edit or not to edit!

Facilitator: Pauline Shore  
Andre

Information Compiled By: Deb

In the sessions concerning feedback and editing, there seemed to be two kinds of feedback discussed: correction of grammar and spelling mistakes at the sentence level and editing of student work with the focus on content. To answer the question why we edit, we explored:

- student expectations that teachers correct spelling and grammar mistakes
- institution requirements that teachers correct spelling and grammar mistakes
- teacher desires to help students avoid 'fossilization' of errors through non-correction

Pauline presented an article by Ronald Gray, Beijing Language and Culture University (Beijing, China) that suggests a number of reasons why time and effort spent by numerous teachers every day in the correction of student work may not be worth the effort. His paper says that both direct and indirect correction methods do little to actually improve the student's spelling and grammar skills, but may actually discourage students in their writing efforts and be harmful to their writing ability. Some in the sessions indicated their feeling that hours were spent correcting student writing without producing worthwhile results.

**Best Practices:**

- include the students in the editing process and include a rubric to explain what you are looking for in the piece
- give credit for organization and ideas in the writing piece, not just grammar and spelling
- look at general errors made by the group and gear lessons to those errors in class
- group correction- collect sentences to put on the board and correct them as a class- involve the students
- regard errors not as a bad thing, but as 'arrows' to improvement. Some mistakes are indicators that the student is moving forward in their writing
- peer editing is good if the class is ready- it has to be voluntary and people have to trust their classmates
- dictogloss- students listen to the dictation and write what they can catch, going to classmates to help fill in what they missed
- work on a quiz as a group- each member of the group has to arrive at the same answer and must check each other's work. They can ask anyone in the class except the teacher for answers.
- remember the impact of reading on writing. Most of what we write has been written before.
- the best way to learn to write is to write- journal entries every day-be positive and encouraging
- use different media- chart paper, white boards, computers

## Working with Literacy

Facilitator: Lisa Vielma Information Compiled By: Lisa Mitchell and Carrie  
Baumken

The literacy session began with a discussion on the different types of literacy recognized by scholars and teachers; these include: preliterate, nonliterate, semiliterate, non-Roman alphabet literate, nonalphabet literate, and Roman alphabet literate. For a full explanation of the six types of English literacy go to the CAELA: ESL Resources website, click on digests, and scroll down until you find the article, [Reading and Adult English Language Learners: The Role of the First Language](#).

The discussion then turned to various techniques used in literacy training. Ideas such as repetition, use of short dialogues, and matching are effective activities. Furthermore, teachers should focus on the immediate needs of the students; therefore, learning the alphabet, numbers, days of the week and months of the year, and money should be taught first and continual spiraled throughout following lessons.

Another issue discussed was the various approaches to teaching literacy skills in the classroom. The Laubach approach, phonics, and the use of sight words were all mentioned. It was suggested that memorization, as a method, could prove to be more helpful for students who are not familiar with the sound/symbol correlation used in the phonics approach.

Some students come from cultures that have long histories of storytelling. Keep this in mind. You could use their storytelling abilities.

Furthermore, a major concern in the classroom is the teaching of cultural rules and expectations. Because this causes stress in our students' lives, it is important to address issues of personal hygiene, cultural expectations, polite and impolite behavior. Realia was seen as an essential part of teaching literacy; as was the ability to teach learning strategies. Because money can be an issue for many newcomers adapting to life in Canada, a few organizations that can offer help were mentioned. They include: The Working Centre, The Kitchener-Waterloo Foodbank, The Multicultural Centre, and the Salvation Army.

## Adding Music to the Classroom

Facilitator: Jonay Soudar      Information Compiled By: Lisa Mitchell and Carrie Baumken

The music session was an excellent session which had the teachers sharing our ideas as well as our voices. Jonay Soudar facilitated the event. Firstly, a song was introduced and all the teachers joined in singing. The teachers were from various departments and taught various levels, so there were many ideas on how to modify activities to suit higher or lower levels. For literacy, it was mentioned that pictures or word cards could be used. The students are asked to hold up the corresponding card each time they hear the word. For all levels, the song lyric can be cut up into to chunks and ordered by the students as they listen to the song. Another activity involves the students writing in missing words, phrases, or completing words. The choice of activity depends on the level of the students. Some songs which had been used successfully in the classroom included: Cats and the Cradle, by Harry Chapin; Basement Apartment, by Sarah Harmer, Never Give up on a Dream, by Rod Stewart; What a Wonderful World, by Louis Armstrong. A particularly interesting short jingle went like this:

*" Tony chestnut knows I love you; knows I love you; knows I love you. Tony chestnut knows I love you, that's what Tony knows."*

## Building Vocabulary

Facilitator: Nancy Oczkowski      Information Compiled By: Maggie Heeney

The session began with some general information about vocabulary learning and particularly focused on the number of words a person needs to read effectively. The following describes what our learners need to know depending upon their needs:

- 2000 words will give basic understanding where the learner can perhaps read simple newspaper articles
- 5000 words will give the learner about 85% comprehension of general texts
- 14,000 - 17,000 vocabulary words is the number estimated that first year undergraduate English speakers know.

Some other interesting things to know is that a learner needs to hear/read/use a word 7-11 times before it goes into long term memory. We shouldn't teach too many words in a week, and 20 seemed to be the maximum number to focus on.

To help our learners, there are a number of word lists that we can refer to use in our teaching. These lists were compiled from enormous data bases of the most common words used in English

**General Service List - GSL (West, 1953)**

- 2000 most common words used in the English language

- 580 words that most commonly occur in academic readings

- This is an excellent data base where you can access the AWL, the GSL, lists of collocations and other word lists
- Check it out on [www.lextutor.ca](http://www.lextutor.ca)

**Academic Word List – AWL. (Coxhead, 1998)**

**The Compleat Lexical Tutor (Cobb, 2001)**

Much of the discussion focused on strategies we can use to help our learners acquire vocabulary. One strategy was the use of a 'word bank'. The word bank builds deeper vocabulary knowledge about a word. An example of a word bank is below and, of course, can have many rows for adding words.

Word and pronunciation (word stress)	Part of speech	Endings the word takes for plurals or Verb forms	Meaning of the word – does it have more than one meaning?	Word Family	Collocations	Synonyms or Antonyms

Original sentence (not from the dictionary)

The word bank above works well for higher levels, but can certainly be adapted to lower levels. Ways to use the word bank are to add words from readings, from class activities, and students can also add words they discover every day and create a "Personal Word Bank." Practice for word banks or any kind of vocabulary learning should be relevant to the students' life such as having a specific topic to write about to use the words. It is very important to teach the words in a context as this helps the learners remember the word.

Some other excellent suggestions for vocabulary learning include:

- Label everything in the room for low level or literacy learners
- Use realia such as objects or even actual forms (medical, insurance etc) to become familiar with vocabulary
- Use newspapers as a way to build vocabulary or word banks. However, idiomatic language can be difficult and the level must be considered.
- Use words from areas of interest for students such as specific professions (You could build this into personal word banks)
- Have collaborative learning so peers can explain word meaning rather than using a dictionary
- Address different learning styles so use pictures, charts, music etc to teach vocabulary

All sessions agreed that making vocabulary learning fun helps students learn and remember as it involves them in the language. Some suggestions for fun activities are as follows (students like prizes too!):

- Snakes and ladders for vocabulary - Have cards with words, give a task for the word, roll the dice and move if learner gets the task correct.
- Bingo - call out the definitions. As students guess, they mark the word
- Charades - act the word
- Write, Act, Draw - Have cards with words, and cards that say 'write' 'act' and 'draw'. Pull one of each and do what the cards say.
- Pictionary - draw the word
- Crosswords
- Concentration - matching definition to word (You could also do this with collocations)
- 100 questions - pull a card and answer the question
- Wheel of Fortune, Jeopardy, Password, Scavenger hunts: all of these can be creatively adapted into team game

Some final thoughts about vocabulary learning:

Focus on teaching collocations as students want to know how to use the words. Remember to teach words the students need and will use. Teach unusual spelling and tell them to they have to learn and remember. Vocabulary learning means independent learning and practice in order to reinforce the words. Last but not least: do we teach slang and swear words? Well... they may bring words to class - tell them what is appropriate - it is a great opportunity to teach register!

Interesting Sources!

[www.breakingnews.com](http://www.breakingnews.com) for news stories  
Oxford Picture Dictionary and teacher resource

<http://www.collins.co.uk/Corpus/CorpusSearch.aspx> - a great resource to send students to for collocations  
<http://www.vocabulary.co.il/> Website for Learning Vocabulary Can be Fun

References

West, M. (1953). *A General Service List of English Words*. London: Longman, Green & Co.  
Coxhead, A. (2000). A new academic word list. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34(2), 213-239

# Feedback!

*This is a letter that was passed along to the Executive from Kathryn!*

October 21, 2008

Thank you for organizing such great workshops that took place on October 18<sup>th</sup>. I really enjoyed mine and learned so much. I was even able to try some of the things out today that I learned from Jonay at the Music workshop with my LINC 3 / 4 class and it worked great!!!! She was right: the students love music. I used "You Needed Me" - the version that Anne Murray sings with Shania Twain. I chose this song because they sing it very clearly and I knew that the students would understand it and perhaps could even relate to it. They enjoyed listening to the song. I cut the lines of the song into strips, gave it to them and they worked in pairs and had fun putting the strips in order. They listened to it at least 6 or 8 times before they were able to get the order correct. I know that they really enjoyed it because they all even sang the song together at the end. It was quite a sight and nice to listen to. I called our site coordinator (Barb) to listen to it and she was impressed.

When I got to St. Louis this afternoon, I told Jonay (who teaches there) how the music class went this morning and she was happy that it was a success. I tried it there also with the ESL 3 / 4 class, but they seemed not quite as receptive as the Conestoga students. (I think it's because there are more men in the late afternoon class, whereas the Conestoga class has only one man and the rest are all women.)

I hope that you will have more of these sessions. They are very useful to us, especially to us newer teachers who have been teaching for just a few months and can use all the help that we can get. Any wisdom or tips that we can get from teachers with more experience is greatly appreciated (at least by me). Besides, it was also nice to see our former fellow classmates and to hear their news.

# Book Awards



In the past you have been encouraged to send in your book award nominations recognizing stellar students and teachers. We've heard from some of you, but we also know that there are many untold stories of excellence and inspiration. By honouring those who inspire you, you inspire us all. The following are the specific award categories:

- Primary School ESL Student \$25 book certificate
- Secondary School ESL Student \$50 book certificate
- Adult ESL Student \$75 book certificate
- ESL Volunteer \$75 book certificate
- ESL Teacher \$75 book certificate

Book awards will be distributed at the AGM in May 2009! Please forward your nominations along to any of the TESL WW Executive Members! The deadline for nominations is April 1, 2009!

# Up-Coming Events

- Professional Development Event March 7, 2009
- AGM May 2009

## Book Award Nomination Form for ESL Students Waterloo Wellington

1. The nominee must have at least one year of ESL support or ESL classes within the past two years. This can be full or part time study.
1. The nominee must have an excellent attendance record.
2. The nominee must have greatly improved in their use of English.
3. The nominee must have served as a role model for other students (offering peers help, ESL buddy, showing tolerance and community building etc.)
4. The nominee must have displayed a sense of community involvement (supporting school activities, fund-raising, volunteering, helping others etc.)
5. The nominee must be able to clearly articulate how advancing English will help them with their future goals.

Nominee Name:

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Category (circle one):

**A Primary School ESL Student**

**A Secondary School ESL Student    An Adult ESL Student**

Nominating Teacher's Name:

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Teacher's Workplace:

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E-mail address:

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**Why is this student deserving of a book award? (Please write a short explanation.)**

## **Book Award Nomination Form for ESL Teacher/Volunteer Waterloo Wellingtons**

1. The nominee must have at least five years of ESL teaching or ESL volunteering within the past seven years. This can be full or part time work.
2. The nominee must have served as a role model for other teachers (mentoring, offering peers help, showing community building etc.)
3. The nominee must have displayed a sense of community involvement (supporting school activities, fund-raising, volunteering, helping others etc.).

**Nominee Name:**

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**Category (circle one):**

**An ESL Teacher**

**An ESL Volunteer**

Nominating Teacher's Name:

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Teacher's Workplace:

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E-mail address:

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**Why is this teacher/volunteer deserving of a book award? (Please write a short explanation.)**