



Newsletter of the Association of Teachers of English as a Second Language of Ontario

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The role of culture in teaching English as an International Language: Three cases in the Arabic-speaking context

Abstract

The issue of the role of culture in teaching English as an International Language (EIL) is necessarily complex given the diverse contexts in which English is taught around the world. According to EIL theory, in many countries where English is used internationally, it is no longer connected to cultures where it is spoken as a native language. In addition, a primary function of an international language is to enable speakers to share ideas and cultures. Central concerns thus include selection of appropriate cultural content and ensuring that learners have the ability to negotiate meaning and identity in the context of other cultures. There are advantages and limitations inherent in presenting target, source and international cultures in EIL teaching materials. In this paper, three English textbooks in use in Arabic-speaking countries are examined to illustrate potential relationships and learning processes among teacher, students and cultural content within the framework of an intercultural approach to language teaching.

Introduction

A global lingua franca, English is currently studied as a second (L2) or foreign language by more people than is any other language (Crystal, 2003a, 2003b). It is used for purposes of wider communication, both between speakers from various countries as well as between speakers within a single country (e.g., India, Nigeria), and, is, therefore, an international language in both a global and local sense (McKay, 2002). According to the EIL theory, an international language is one that is used by speakers from various nations to communicate with one another (Smith, 1976). It is this global sense of EIL that will be currently discussed.

Given that English is now taught and used in such a variety of contexts world-wide, the question of whose culture to teach becomes complicated and raises a number of important issues. What should be the role of culture in the teaching and learning of an international language? Need culture be included at all? If so, how do we decide whose culture to include and what approach to take in teaching that culture in the English language classroom?

(cont'd p. 3)

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From the Editor

This issue brings you the ‘best of ‘ the papers and workshops presented at the “Language for Life” 2004 conference. It features research findings as well as pages of ideas to liven your classroom with drama, games and other fun activities for learners of all ages and language levels.

Diane Watt examines teaching English as an international language in 3 Arabic-speaking countries, while Kathryn Brillinger explores the importance of teaching Gesture along with language.

Three Carlton grad students establish practical applications of sustained-content language instruction in EAP, and Marijke Wertheim justifies a variety of methods for teaching Advanced Academic Speaking. OISE students outline the linguistic and cultural skills needed by new non-native-English-speaking teachers as well as classroom-based assessment tools for adult learners.

For fun, Joyologist, Pat McLaughlin tells how she incorporates balloon animals into her classroom, and Liset Reiger explains how you can use drama to introduce language learning and story-telling, using a number of improvisational techniques. Stephanie Gordon uses props such as cheese and mouse ears in her workshop about teaching multiple language-level groupings, and Irene Lardizabal offers ideas on teaching about holidays.

Contact wants your favourite videos, games and classroom activities for our July issue. See left column for submissions guidelines. *Brigid Kelso*

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Kachru's Sociolinguistic Model of the Various Roles of English in the World

Kachru's (1985) model provides a useful point of reference for an analysis of the role of culture in EIL. The model consists of three concentric circles, devised by Kachru to illustrate the various roles that English serves in different parts of the world. The *Inner Circle* includes such nations as New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and the U.S., where English is spoken a native language. In the *Outer Circle*, English serves as a second language in such multilingual countries as India and Singapore. The *Expanding Circle* is made up of countries such as China and Egypt, where English is studied as a foreign language.

Defining EFL and ESL

In international settings where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), by definition, the target language (i.e., the language which is being learned) is not widely used in the community in which it is being taught. As local English language norms don't exist, in EFL contexts, educators and textbook developers traditionally look to the Inner Circle for language models. Decisions must be made regarding which variety of English to teach (e.g., American or British) and what cultural content to include. As we shall see, for various reasons, this can be difficult.

It is also important to recognize that definitions of English as a Second Language (ESL) vary depending upon the specific context in which it is being taught. For the purposes of this discussion, we shall distinguish between ESL taught in the Outer Circle and ESL instruction in the Inner Circle. The **latter** represents a majority language setting. Most students learning English in this context (e.g. immigrants studying English in Canada) need to learn the language of the majority to develop the communication skills necessary for effective functioning in the new environment. In these settings, target language and culture are usually presented in English language teaching materials. However, in such multilingual Outer Circle countries as India, where English is a minority language used widely in the community as a common second language, there is no need to look to the Inner Circle for either target language or cultural models, for local norms already exist. The local, Indian variety of English will be of most use and relevance to the majority of learners. In other words, Inner Circle language and cultural norms no longer apply. There will also be instructional contexts, such as when they wish to live or study abroad, in which Indian learners may require knowledge of other varieties of English and target cultures.

Theories of English as an International Language

To understand the role of culture in teaching EIL, one must be aware that the teaching and learning of an international language is based on an entirely different set of assumptions than the teaching and learning of any other second or foreign language (McKay, 2002). In ESL (in the Inner Circle) and EFL contexts, English is often regarded as the sole property of its native speakers and the focus is on communication between a native speaker and a non-native speaker. As explained above, in these contexts a target culture is usually the focus, as students are taught to interact with a specific target language group. However, this does not reflect the reality of many of the different ways English is used in the world today as an international language. ESL and EFL programs generally fail to account for the fact that today there are more non-native regular users of English than there are native users, and international interactions in English increasingly take place between non-native speakers (Crystal, 2003a, 2003b), both face-to-face and more evidently, on the Internet. Sociolinguists predict that English will continue to be the most common language for cross-cultural communication in the foreseeable future (Crystal, 2003b; Mondiano, 1999). It is becoming a language used mainly in multilingual contexts as an L2, and for communication between non-native speakers (Graddol, 1999). Users of English must therefore be prepared to interact with both non-native and native speakers. This has implications for both the choice of cultural content and the role of culture in EIL programs.

Because it is now widely acknowledged that English, "belongs to nobody, or rather to everyone who using it and sharing it, creates it" (Decke-Cornill, 2003), there is no longer an expectation that learners of English need to internalize or accept the cultural norms of an Inner Circle target culture, nor would it

necessarily be useful for them to do so. In fact, some nations avoid the presentation of any culture other than their own in their English language teaching materials. This presents a paradox, as many believe that to learn a language one must learn about a target culture (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Hinkel, 1999; Kramsch, 1993, 1998; Valdes, 1986). While this is the usual approach to culture taken in foreign language programs, some suggest that in the modern context, a broader view of culture and language is required (Corbett, 2003; Guilherme, 2002; McKay, 2002).

As an international language, English is no longer tied to the cultures of native English-speaking nations. This is significant, for questions of cultural appropriation loom large when English is being taught and used in countries which are socially, culturally and geographically distant from Kachru's Inner Circle. Most nations of the Expanding Circle differ vastly in religion, beliefs, cultural patterns and political systems from those of countries where English is the primary language (Kachru, 1985). This lack of cultural congruence between Inner Circle and Expanding Circle nations complicates the business of teaching culture in English language programs. Schumann (1976) hypothesizes that the greater the social distance between two cultures, the greater the difficulty the learner will have in learning the second language. The more dissimilar two cultures are, the greater the potential for cultural misunderstandings. Brown (1992) describes social distance as 'the cognitive and affective proximity of two cultures' (p. 84). Although the Expanding Circle must look to the Inner Circle for language norms, there is more flexibility regarding the inclusion of cultural content from native English-speaking countries.

This is fortunate because, in many Expanding Circle countries, authorities have misgivings about the use of English by their own populations. They are concerned that the use of English by their citizens may undermine local cultural norms and societal values, and weaken cultural identity. In Iran, for example, the influence of Western culture is viewed as a threat to the maintenance of Islamic values, which are in many ways at odds with the values of the Western world. In Iranian public schools, English is taught but it has been removed from any target culture context. However, modern information technologies such as satellite television and the Internet make it next to impossible to 'protect' their populations from the influx of Western culture and ideas, which are often associated with modernity and wealth. In Iran and many other nations, some fear that local culture and its values may be submerged into the dominant culture of the foreign language. In spite of such fears, the trend in Iran is toward more, not less, English language teaching (Talebinezhad & Aliakbari, 2002). To participate in the world community, English is regarded as an 'undeniable necessity' (p.1) in Iran.

The 'invasion' of English and the culture it represents has been viewed by some as cultural imperialism. Phillipson (1992), for example, holds that English linguistic imperialism is often advanced by such cultural activities as film, video and television. To this list we must also add the international media and the Internet. Expanding Circle nations may find such influences alienating, inappropriate, or offensive. Neither culture nor language teaching is value-free. This consideration adds to the dilemma of what constitutes appropriate cultural content in EIL textbooks in the Expanding Circle.

To summarize, there are two important points regarding the issue of culture in EIL programs. First of all, the international status of English should be recognized, meaning that we need to consider an alternate view to the notion that a language cannot be taught separately from its home culture. Educators can no longer assume that the learner must accept the values and norms of the target culture in order to acquire the language, potentially undermining his/her own sense of cultural identity. In addition, the primary function of an international language is to extend the ability of students to communicate their ideas and their cultures.

A Methodology of Culture Learning

If we accept that one of the central reasons for learning an international language is to be able to communicate one's ideas and cultures to people from other cultures, then the concern will be not only with the cultural content of EIL programs, but also with developing learners' understanding of culture 'including their own' in such a way as to ensure that they have the ability to communicate cross-culturally.

When one is learning English for international purposes, he/she cannot know in advance with whom one will communicate in terms of nationality, linguistic or cultural background. For this reason, it is not enough for EIL programs to simply present the details of one or even a number of cultures. Rather, learners must be prepared to operate with English 'in unknown situations, which are characterized by variation in linguistic and cultural behavior' (Baxter, 1983, p.104). When English is taught as an international language, the realities of diversity and adaptation are recognized, and an EIL approach, therefore, reflects the international functions of English with greater accuracy than either EFL or ESL. Instead of providing 'facts' about other cultures, learners must be given 'the means of accessing and analysing any cultural practices and meanings they encounter' (Byram, 1997, p. 19).

In addition, given that cross-cultural encounters are a central feature of using EIL, some contend that linguistic competence equivalent to that of a native English speaker (who may lack intercultural skills) is not enough to ensure successful international communication (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1998; Smith, 1987). It has been proposed that a new notion of communicative competence 'one that recognizes the role of English as a world language' is needed, which 'would encompass both local and international contexts as settings of language use, involve native-nonnative and nonnative-nonnative discourse participants and take as pedagogic models successful bilinguals with intercultural insights and knowledge' (Alptekin, 2002, p. 57). The cultural content of EIL programs should, therefore, be used in such a way as to foster students' intercultural communicative skills¹ (Byram, 1997). The teaching of intercultural competence, in fact, represents a new role for English language teaching (Corbett, 2003; Guilherme, 2002; Roberts et al., 2001). Wesche (2004) contends that in a post-9/11 world, what is most urgently needed from the field of language teaching is to help students, through the study of another language, to see the world through others' eyes.

Regarding culture, foreign language-teaching typically concentrates on cultural differences between one's own country and the foreign country on a cognitive level. This is a view of culture 'as facts to be learned and stored' (Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996, p. 432). Culture in this sense might include one or any combination of the following four dimensions:

1. *The aesthetic sense* is culture with a capital C. Language may be associated with the media, cinema, music and literature of a particular country.
2. *The sociological sense* culture with a small c includes the customs and institutions of the country.
3. *The semantic sense* is the culture's conceptual system embodied in language. For example, many semantic areas such as food, clothing and institutions may be culturally distinctive in that they relate to a particular way of life.
4. *The pragmatic sense* means knowing which language is appropriate in a given context (Adaskou et al,1990).

Presenting culture in this way may foster the students' awareness of cultural differences, but it does not systematically allow the students to learn to *act* in cross-cultural situations (Meyer, 1990). An intercultural approach to language teaching, on the other hand, has as its goal intercultural competence 'the ability of a person to behave adequately and in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures' (p.136). It is fostered by engaging learners in a process of encountering 'otherness', and represents that experience not as a set of facts but as one interpretation mediated through their own cultural understanding (Roberts et al., 2001, p. 4). 'Intercultural competence takes place in situations of negotiating meaning and identity in the context of other cultures. Culture is not only content, but also a series of dynamic processes' (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p.210). It is the recognition that language is more than simply the transfer of information, that it is the assertion, negotiation, construction and maintenance of individual and group identity, (Corbett, 2003, p. 20) that has led to the development of the intercultural approach to language education.

Informed by a view of culture as social construct, Kramersch (1993) recommends that teachers establish in their classrooms a *sphere of interculturality* – an atmosphere in which students and teacher approach culture reflectively. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) view culture learning as dialogue among teacher, students and textbook. Each brings cultural resources to the classroom. The teacher acts as cultural mediator, having students inquire into the beliefs, values, and cultural practices they embody. Students learn to analyze and interpret culture as they consider their own culture in relation to others. The role of course materials is, therefore, to provide *cultural mirrors* (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). At issue is the modification of monocultural awareness (Byram, 1990). The language learner needs to be made aware of him/herself as a cultural being, for we tend to perceive reality strictly within the context of our own culture. Culture teaching, therefore, becomes much more than a simple presentation of cultural ‘facts’.

Kramersch (1993) cautions that culture be taught as difference because national identities are not monolithic. There is the danger of stereotyping, the process by which all members of a group are asserted to have the characteristics attributed to the whole group (Scollon & Scollon, 1995, p. 155). Students need to be aware that within each culture there exists a variety of national characteristics. ‘Stereotypes limit our understanding of human behavior and of intercultural discourse because they limit our view of human activity to just one or two salient dimensions and consider those to be the whole picture’ (p. 156). If our goal is to enable students to function well cross-culturally, it is essential not to limit their ability to do so by dealing with culture in limited ways which could lead to stereotyping, which, in turn, may lead to misunderstanding. Scollon and Scollon suggest that we consider both likenesses and differences when comparing groups and get across the point that no individual member of a group embodies all of the characteristics of his or her group. There is a need to emphasize ‘the individuality of interaction’ (Byram, 1997, p. 40).

Cultural Content

In addition to determining *how* culture is to be taught, decisions must be made regarding content. Three patterns of culture are reflected in English textbooks. A textbook may represent the *source culture*, which is the learners’ own culture, or that a *target culture* -- a country where English is spoken as a native language. Textbooks might also contain *international target cultures*, which are countries where English is used as an international language (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). There are benefits and disadvantages in using cultural content from each of these sources in EIL programs.

In any EIL program, what to include as content depends upon the geo-political context, institutional mandates and the background and goals of the students and teachers. We ‘must take as a starting point an analysis of where and how a foreign language might be used, rather than an analysis of language isolated from use’ (Byram, 1997, p. 79). For example, students wanting to use their English for purposes of higher education in an Inner Circle country will benefit from exposure to the target culture. If English is being studied in a nation that is politically, socially, and/or ideologically at odds with one or more Inner Circle countries, it may make sense for local educational institutions to include only source culture in their English programs. In other cases, the solution for a given nation will be to include a combination of source and target cultures. What is critical for culture learning, no matter which content decisions are made, is that course materials are used in the classroom to create a sphere of interculturality.

Implementing an Intercultural Curriculum

Culture is generally considered an optional extra in English language programs. In most textbooks it provides little more than background and/or context for language learning, with no systematic attention given to the cultural aspects of language learning and communication. There seems to be an unspoken assumption that culture will somehow take care of itself -- that it can’t be taught. Even so, the modern-day realities of globalization have led to a growing need for citizens from all nations to be more interculturally competent. Such competence has therefore been referred to by some language educators as the ‘fifth skill,’ after reading, writing, speaking, and listening. However, Kramersch (1993) objects to the idea of cultural competence being

tacked on as just another skill, arguing that if culture is seen as social practice, it is the very core of language teaching. She concludes that cultural awareness must be seen as enabling language proficiency, and those who favour an intercultural approach to language teaching would agree.

The goal of intercultural competence may, in fact, be more realistically attainable by the majority of learners than ‘slow progress towards a vaguely conceived’ native speaker proficiency” (Corbett, 2003, p. 211). The main values promoted by an intercultural curriculum are open-mindedness, tolerance of difference and respect for self and others. Ideally, the intercultural learner ‘moves among cultures in a process of continual negotiation’ (p.211), gradually learning to cope with the inevitable changes that he/she faces in modern society. Corbett explains that, his/her own culture is never denied or demeaned, but the intercultural learner will find his/her attitudes and beliefs challenged by contact with others, potentially leading to personal growth. With hope, learners who are better able to cope with ‘the stresses of living in the multicultural global village that the world has become’ (p. 212). At the very least, intercultural language education has reached ‘a level of maturity sufficient to inform a coherent set of classroom practices whereby language improvement is allied to more general ways of understanding our world’ (p. 212).

Proponents point out that an intercultural curriculum can be implemented without drastic changes to existing programs and that is compatible with other types of existing curricula (e.g., Nunan, 1989; White, 2000; Willis, 1996). There is no question, for example, of abandoning task-based, communicative language teaching. Teachers continue what they already do, simply adding cultural studies as part of the course content (Corbett, 2003; Roberts et al., 2001). Students might exchange cultural information in an information-gap activity, or complete a language task with a cultural focus. (For practical applications of an ICC approach, see Alfred et al, 2003; Byram & Fleming, 1998; Byram et al, 2001; Corbett, 2003). Byram’s (1997) model of ICC outlines its various components, which involve knowledge, attitudes and skills. He has also developed a framework for the teaching, learning, and assessment of ICC, which will likely be modified and refined as educators gain more experience with this approach. However, while teaching for intercultural competence might be fairly straightforward, assessment is more problematic, both in a moral and practical sense (Byram, 2003). Although assessment of skills and knowledge is easy enough, assessing values and attitudes is less so. Pulverness (2004) suggests that in addition to evaluating discrete items based on the components of intercultural competence, subjective evaluation from both teacher and student, such as portfolio assessment, is a viable option.

Planning a curriculum for intercultural communicative competence involves consideration of the geopolitical context, the learning context, the developmental level of learners, program objectives and consideration of situations in which learners might use their intercultural competence (Byram, 1997). Local curriculum planners must determine the details with regards to appropriate goals and assessment criteria for the intercultural content of language programs. There is general agreement that language teaching must be designed for the environment in which it takes place, and this is no less true regarding the cultural component of EIL programs.

Three Cases in the Expanding Circle Context

In this section, three English textbooks used in the Arabic-speaking countries of Morocco, Jordan and Kuwait are examined to illustrate how the cultural content of each might be used to foster intercultural competence in the EIL classroom. Consideration is also given to whether the content of each textbook can be considered appropriate, given teacher and student needs and backgrounds and the local context. The first textbook, used with adults at the American Language Center (ALC) in Jordan, presents American target cultures. The second, being used in a secondary course in Kuwait, reflects both source and target cultures. The Third, used in a textbook project in Morocco, is analyzed to show some of the advantages and limitations of exclusive source cultural content in teaching materials.

A Case in Jordan (Target Culture)

The ALC in Amman, Jordan is administered by the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in
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Amman. The mandate of the ALC is 'to provide English language training in the context of American education and culture' (ALC-Jordan Website, 2002, p.1). The ALC uses the *NorthStar* (Ferree & Sanabria, 1998) series to teach English to adult learners. In the high-intermediate textbook, American culture is used as the point of reference to present themes such as education, the media, and crime.

Most teachers at the ALC are American, and are therefore in a good position to interpret the cultural content of *NorthStar* for their Jordanian students, who may find that a good portion of the cultural content in the textbook does not reflect their own values. Jordanian and American societal and cultural norms have little in common, so there is potential for misunderstandings and stereotyping on the part of both teacher and students if the teacher is not sensitive to the situation. It is essential, therefore, that the teacher be familiar not only with American culture and society, but also have some knowledge of local norms, so that he/she can serve as a mediator between the two cultures. In cases in which foreign teachers have little knowledge of the local culture, they are advised to learn more about it from their students, thus providing students with another opportunity to become more aware of their own culture. 'Teachers and learners (must) take a more reflective and ethnographic stance when tackling the cultural content and cultural processes involved in learning a foreign language' (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p. 196). Jin & Cortazzi's (1991) *Cultural Synergy Model* involves the key notion of two-way acculturation, meaning that participants in the classroom (i.e., students and teacher) develop a mutual awareness and understanding of each other's culture. Both must be willing to learn, understand and appreciate the other's culture without loss of their own status, role or cultural identity' (p.95). Teachers need to take seriously their role as cultural mediators, especially when a target culture is reflected in the course textbook. There is the very real danger that learners will respond negatively to the content presented in such textbooks if the teacher is unable to bridge the gap between the two cultures. In this particular Expanding Circle context, especially given recent world events' positive student attitudes towards American culture may be less likely if this type of relationship between teacher and students has not been established. This could have a negative impact on students' language learning and could set up barriers in situations of cross-cultural communication.

The adults who attend the ALC study English for a number of reasons. Many plan either to study or work in North America. Since one of their principle goals is to effectively communicate with native speakers in the target culture, knowledge of American culture is invaluable. There is also another group of students who have somewhat different needs. A number of businesses and institutions use the ALC for employee language training, including international foreign companies such as *Visa*, local companies active abroad, such as Jordanian government departments as the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities as well as a number of U. N. agencies. Students from these companies and institutions may or may not need to travel internationally for their employment, and a number will probably use only the English they acquire inside Jordan. Unlike those planning to immigrate or study in the U.S., a specific focus on American culture might be of less direct use for these particular students. In fact, they might be said to have EIL needs in that they can be less certain about whom they will be using their English with in the future. It is just as likely to be with non-native as with native speakers. However, the American cultural component of *NorthStar* (Ferree & Sanabria, 1998) does provide students with cultural alternatives and could be used to create a sphere of interculturality in the classroom. By approaching Jordanian and American culture reflectively, learners may become more aware of their own cultural world view. Gaining intercultural competence will be of great use to these students who need English for international purposes.

A Case in Kuwait (Source and Target Culture)

For its public schools at the grade 8 level, Kuwait developed the *Crescent English Course for Kuwait* (O'Neill et al., 1994a), a textbook that reflects a balanced approach to cultural content. It includes both source and a target culture (British). Many of the people and situations depicted in the textbook reflect Kuwaiti culture, which adolescents using the book can identify with. There are, for example, three reading texts which discuss the teachings of the Koran. Many of the characters in the textbook are clearly representatives of the local population, and have Arabic names. There is a reading on the restoration of a Kuwaiti castle, and another

describes an entertainment park located in Doha. Each lesson includes some aspect of British culture in addition to Kuwaiti culture, such as a dialogue between guests at a British wedding.

Most of the teachers using the *Crescent English Course for Kuwait* (O'Neill et al., 1994a) are Kuwaiti.² Teachers from the source culture are in a position to deal with the Kuwaiti cultural content of the textbook, but would not necessarily have an extensive knowledge of the target British culture. However, the *Teacher's Book* (O'Neill et al., 1994b) provides background information, and the target culture content reflected in the textbook is presented in a manner that should neither offend Kuwaiti cultural norms nor alienate the learners using it. Having a British teacher use this textbook with students from Kuwait would be an ideal context for creating an environment for intercultural learning, as teacher and students learn about one another's cultures.

The *Crescent English Course for Kuwait* (O'Neill et al., 1994a), is well-suited to the context in which it is used and could be used by teachers to create a *sphere of interculturality*. It provides cultural mirrors for students, an important first step towards cross-cultural awareness and understanding. The task of the teacher is to use the cultural content in the textbook to encourage students to step outside their own cultural world. At the same time, students will be acquiring the English needed to explain their own culture to others. They would be unlikely to learn the vocabulary needed to talk about Islam in a textbook developed in the West. In addition, learners may find the introduction of a foreign target culture motivating, as attitudes in Kuwait towards Britain are generally favourable. Girls, in particular, who in Kuwaiti society are often somewhat sheltered from the outside world, are eager to learn about another culture. Many of the students taking the course will require English for international purposes (e.g., for higher education and employment in Kuwait and abroad, access to the Internet and international media, etc.), and this textbook is ideal for teaching intercultural skills in this Expanding Circle context.

A Case in Morocco (Source Culture)

Adaskou, Britten & Fahsi, (1990) discuss the choices made regarding culture in a large-scale English textbook project for Moroccan secondary schools. According to these authors, this will be the only English instruction the majority of these students will ever be exposed to, and if they have a need in the future to use English, it is just as likely that it will be with non-native as native speakers. Therefore, knowledge of written English is likely to be of more use to these students than is spoken English (e.g., for Internet access). The Moroccan government's purpose for instituting this course is for students to learn some minimum level of English 'for purposes of communication.' Adaskou et al. (1990) point out that most of the secondary English teachers are Moroccan and only a minority have visited English-speaking countries. A bottom-up approach was taken in designing this three-year English course. The program developers were committed to consulting local teachers regarding the cultural content, believing they were in the best position to know what would work in their own classrooms. The vast majority of these teachers believed that teaching target culture represented a form of cultural imperialism -- perceiving English language teaching as a threat to their national culture. They felt that drawing comparisons between Moroccan and target language culture might be alienating, by contributing to the students' discontent with their own material situation. As well, teachers did not consider the patterns of behavior in English-speaking social contexts to be appropriate models for their young people. Textbook trials and subsequent feedback from teachers confirmed that the students were more motivated to learn English when it realistically related to their own lives in Morocco. Finally, teachers were not at all comfortable presenting a target culture with which they could not identify and which they, themselves, had never experienced.

As a result, it was decided that the cultural content of the English textbooks should largely reflect the source culture. English is therefore presented in textbook situations only in contexts where it might be used in real life (i.e., never between Moroccans in the absence of a foreigner). Resident English-speaking foreigners are used in situations of communication with Moroccan nationals. Exchanges are presented between local students and native and non-native speakers of English in students' own countries. Excerpts from real life English language service of Moroccan radio are used, as well as reports, ads, interviews, and articles from an imaginary

English language newspaper in Morocco. Nowhere is 'a foreign way of life' presented. Adaskou et al. (1990) maintain that these contexts are culturally and cross-culturally relevant to the lives of the students in Morocco. It is hoped that the situations the textbooks convey is a world with which secondary students can reasonably aspire and identify without alienation.

It is clear from this Moroccan case that there are a number of advantages in using source culture texts. They may allow students to gain a better understanding of their own cultural world view which may permit them to be able to use English to share their ideas with speakers from other cultures -- the main function of EIL. Using source cultural content also greatly reduces the possibility that students will feel alienated by having their own values and lived experiences marginalized. Finally, teachers from the source culture will not be placed in the difficult position of having to try to interpret a culture unfamiliar to them (McKay, 2000).

However, Hyde (1994) is strongly critical of the Moroccan attempt to disassociate English from Inner Circle countries. He believes that stripping English of its cultural baggage also strips students of such invaluable knowledge as how to interpret foreign advertising and the international media. Hyde contends that attempting to deculturize the language is unrealistic and unmanageable. Students are increasingly in contact with Western values and influences. Global information technology, and hence the outside world, cannot be kept out. He contends that the 'solution' as presented here 'is an impossibility, an attempt to have something and not have something at the same time, for the only way to stop students from coming into contact with what are considered harmful concepts would be not to teach them English at all' (p. 297). Rather than avoiding target cultures, students need knowledge of them in order to better understand and interpret the outside world. English should, therefore, be used as a way to learn about things outside Morocco.

Another criticism of this course is that it does not provide cultural alternatives and might therefore be considered somewhat limited in its ability to engage students in the process of cultural learning -- no matter how a Moroccan teacher may approach the materials. By providing only source culture, the teacher may be less able to show learners alternative cultural perspectives. Students will be deprived of the opportunity to 'engage in a dialogue with the text to identify and confirm their own cultural identity, or to ascertain its similarities and differences with that of another cultural group' (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p. 207).

However, the very real fear of cultural imperialism remains a strong force in the world today, leading many countries in the Expanding Circle and elsewhere to continue to adapt a protective stance regarding English. Given Moroccan attitudes toward target cultures different from their own, avoiding target culture content in English textbooks at the secondary school level is understandable, and in this context should be considered appropriate. If presentation of native English-speaking cultures leads to negative attitudes towards English, on the part of both teachers and students, it is doubtful that students would be motivated to learn the language or that teachers would be motivated to teach it. Perhaps a compromise 'a way to expose students to a cultural alternative without alienating them' would be to include international target cultures. An intercultural approach requires that textbook writers compare various cultures, providing learners with alternative perspectives so that their existing framework of culture-specific references is 'reviewed, challenged and extended' (Feng & Byram, 2002, p. 69). Such textbooks have recently been developed in Chile and Japan (e.g., Ito, 2002; McKay 2003a, 2003b). They include source and international target cultures and portray English being used as the global lingua franca.

Conclusions

The issue of cultural content in EIL teaching materials is not an easy matter to resolve in the Expanding Circle context. Educators should approach all cultural content in EIL materials reflectively. In order to decide which content is most appropriate, we need to consider the context in which EIL is being taught, the background of the students and teacher and the purposes for which the students are learning English. There are instances when teaching a target culture is appropriate, and others in which a source culture or international target cultures may be more advantageous. A balanced combination of source, target, and/or international target

cultures represents yet another option. However, cultural content represents just one part of the issue. Of equal importance are the ways in which these materials are used in the EIL classroom.

Curriculum developers and educators may want to consider how they might attempt to create a sphere of interculturality in the classroom so that learners gain some level of intercultural communicative competence that, through the use of an international language, allows real communication between people from different nations. In terms of cultural content, some nations have come to the conclusion that the one-size-fits all, mass-produced textbooks presenting a single target culture no longer meet the needs of students learning an international language. Each country, in which EIL is being taught, should take ownership of the language, choosing content and methodology deemed appropriate for the local context (McKay, 2003b).

Such values promoted by an intercultural curriculum 'as equality, curiosity and acceptance of difference' may be deemed important in a liberal democracy and less so in other contexts. In spite of this, Corbett (2003) points out that intercultural approaches have caught on in countries such as Bulgaria, which lack a long history of liberal democracy. He reminds us that intercultural language education is a curriculum option and argues that while it does attempt to foster certain values, 'those values are expressly designed to respect rather than threaten learners' own systems of belief' (p. 209). The key values promote respect for self and others, and properly implemented, the intercultural curriculum can empower learners and promote their self-confidence. However, we must be cautious in assuming that theory developed in one part of the world will apply in another.

It may also be more likely that state institutions, which are concerned with students' general education, would be more interested in promoting intercultural values than would commercial schools, even though many insist that, 'teaching for linguistic competence cannot be separated from teaching for intercultural competence' (Byram, 1997, p. 22) Every time an individual uses English, (be it a second, foreign or international language), he/she is communicating cross-culturally and therefore requires intercultural skills. In the context of globalization and internationalization there are unprecedented opportunities for contact between cultures. Culture learning is now a fact of life for all of us, whether or not we go abroad, and, therefore, both native and non-native speakers need to be more interculturally competent. Ultimately, local decision-makers at the state and institutional levels must decide whether or not intercultural competence should be made a curriculum priority, and that decision will, to a large extent, depend upon the societal contexts in which they find themselves.

It is now widely recognized that there is much more to language teaching than simply imparting a linguistic code from teacher to student. This is especially true in EIL contexts where sociocultural factors can make teaching English a complicated affair. The relationships among society, culture and language learning are extremely complex in any context, but perhaps particularly so in the case of English teaching and learning in such Expanding Circle countries as those discussed in this paper. At a point in history when there are increasing tensions between East and West, the need for a truly international language becomes even more evident. The approach we take to culture in the teaching of EIL (as well as other foreign language courses) should therefore not be taken lightly.

Notes

1. I am not suggesting that the intercultural approach is *only* appropriate for EIL settings. Intercultural competence is a general educational objective and should be taught in all foreign language courses, as well as in civics and social studies courses.
2. Contextual information relating to the instructional setting in Kuwait was gathered through personal conversations with an experienced, Arabic-speaking ESL teacher who has used the textbook described here with her own classes in Kuwait.

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Heart Health ESL Curriculum Resource

Workshop Presentation Summary

The Heart Health ESL Curriculum Resource workshop featured a resource for ESL instructors with information and classroom activities intended to promote heart health among adult ESL learners. This 3rd edition of the resource was revised and expanded by Toronto Public Health in consultation and partnership with adult ESL instructors from the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board as well as an independent consultant. Sections in the resource include: Introduction to Heart Health, Physical Activity, Healthy Eating, Smoking, Blood Pressure and Stress. Each section is divided into lower level and higher level sub-sections.

Nurses from Toronto Public Health facilitated the workshops at the 2004 TESL Ontario Conference. The workshops focused on practical activities that would help ESL instructors familiarize themselves with the resource and highlight the heart health information and activities in each section. Participants were divided into groups to review specific sections and discuss how they might use and adapt them in their practice with varying levels of ESL learners. Groups were then brought together to share their ideas and discuss issues related to the use of the resource. 'Fitbreaks' from the Physical Activity section were included throughout the workshop as a demonstration. At the end of the workshop, participants received a personal copy (without the binder and dividers).

This resource is available FREE, one per site, to **non-profit Toronto ESL sites only**. An order form is available (see attached) so sites can order the resource for their site(s). It is also available to download (without inserts) from the Toronto Public Health website at http://www.toronto.ca/health/esl_hearthealth.htm

Free, concurrent workshops are periodically held by Toronto Public Health for ESL instructors. Participants can receive their own copy of the resource minus the binder cover and the dividers. For more information about upcoming workshops, check the above website address.

Toronto ESL sites can host on-site workshops, provided that 10 instructors participate. Call the Toronto Health Connection at 416-338-7600 to find out how your site can do this.



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Teaching Advanced Academic Speaking

This presentation focused on the activities I used to teach advanced academic speaking in the English Language Program at the School of Continuing Studies, University of Toronto. The class was part of the Academic Preparation Program, an intensive, non-credit, 14-week program. Students are required to achieve a B grade to pass the course.

Because this presentation was structured as a talk rather than a paper, what follows is a summary of the information I gave orally to supplement the slides. The intended audience included teachers who were new to academic speaking as well as those who were looking for new ideas.

Theory/background

Anne Lazaraton (2001) has identified four key implications of implementing a communicative language teaching approach in our classrooms:

1. we need to balance the focus on accuracy with a focus on fluency. Hedge (1993) has suggested fluency has two meanings – a) “ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain, inappropriate slowness or undue hesitation”, and b) “natural language use” – likely to occur when activities focus on meaning and its negotiation, when speaking strategies are used, and when overt correction is minimized.
2. multiple skills should be taught whenever possible. Connect speaking, listening and pronunciation, though the focus may shift among them.
3. learners must become competent in strategy use; teachers should either provide explicit strategy training or at least advocate strategy-use and model it.
4. students should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning by being allowed and encouraged to initiate communication, determine the content of their own responses and contributions, and evaluate their own production and progress.

Ferris & Tagg (1996)

- what academic ESL students need most is extensive authentic practice in class participation, e.g. taking part in discussions, interacting with peers, and asking & answering questions.
- however, speaking in public is most people’s greatest fear and this extends to ESL students as well. They can find it overwhelming, anxiety-provoking, and disempowering.

Ur (1996). Characteristics of a successful speaking activity:

- learners talk a lot
- participation is even (not dominated by a minority of talkative students)
- motivation is high (eager to speak because they are interested and have something to say or want to achieve the task objective)
- language is of an acceptable level (relevant, easily comprehensible by peers, and acceptably accurate).

Course outline

- **Taped monologues & pronunciation recordings:** recorded at home. Both include a written self-evaluation. Genres covered in *monologue assignments* include narrative, description, summary, opinion, and data-commentary on assigned subjects, which are drawn from the course themes/activities. Students

create a transcript of the first 60-90 seconds of each 3-minute recording and revise it for more effective phrasing/delivery. *Pronunciation recordings* are readings of short (1-2 paragraph) prose and fiction and/or poetry excerpts. Students mark the reading beforehand for stress, linking, etc., then self-evaluate their performance. Instructor collects tapes, transcripts and self-evaluations for feedback.

Materials: for monologues – handouts on structure of and strategies for preparing an oral summary, and summary language (including sample expressions, reporting verbs; structure of an oral narrative and use of descriptive language (including adjective order). For pronunciation – handouts, exercises and classroom practice in linking, emphasis, chunking and rhythm & stress.

Rationale: oral journals: can practise fluency and accuracy at the same time (Lazaraton, 2001), no pressure from audience, time to practice and reinforce use of functions, new vocabulary, and organizational structures. Pronunciation: encourage self-monitoring by having students transcribe a recording of their speech and monitor it for specific features (Goodwin, 2001), to increase awareness of strengths and weaknesses.

- **Seminar presentation:** 15-minute presentation prepared with a partner and presented to a small group. The focus is a topic of interest, chosen by the students, within one of the course themes. Partners present simultaneously to different groups and lead a 30-minute discussion of the issues raised in the presentation. The presentation portion is taped for subsequent student self-evaluation and instructor-feedback (with instructor notes on discussion session). Peer feedback forms are completed at the end of the 45-minute session and given to the presenter, with oral comments.

Materials: handouts on seminar structure, effective topic presentation, the language of presentations (including guiding/controlling discussion, and discourse markers – ordering points, linking, contrast, generalizing, exemplifying), and a list of websites to start research.

Rationale: promotes active listening, use of communicative strategies, specific functions, & research skills; provides authentic negotiation of meaning; students' highly motivated language use must be accessible to peers (Ur); boosts confidence and reinforces "right to speak" (student is "expert"). Why peer evaluation? Presentations can be boring for listeners, so should give them something to do (Lazaraton, 2001). Why tape the activity? Explicit error correction is out of place *during* these activities (Lazaraton, 2001).

- **Paired interviews:** students prepare interview questions on one aspect (chosen by student) of a given theme and pair with three classmates in rotation to ask their questions and answer those of their partners. The focus is conversation management skills, including exchanging opinions, asking and responding to questions, interrupting and holding the floor, and agreeing and disagreeing. The third interview is taped for subsequent self-evaluation on both question and response roles (done in class). The instructor collects tapes, self-evaluations, and interview questions for feedback. The activity may be repeated with students from other classes. In a follow-up class, students present the findings of their interviews in small groups.

Materials: handouts on structure of an interview, language functions (for interviewing & being interviewed, including giving concise opinions, encouraging further response, commenting, clarifying/asking for clarification, stalling, avoiding arguments), and question types for eliciting opinions.

Rationale: provides practice in use of functions (including reinforcing those used in other activities), & use of communicative strategies; promotes authentic negotiation of meaning, active listening, & both types of fluency; fulfills Ur's four criteria; allows students to determine content of and response within interaction.

- **Panel discussion:** small group discussion in which students are assigned a role (pro or con) on a given topic and work with team members to prepare arguments, based on a reading of background materials, before the discussion, then work as a team to present and defend their assigned viewpoint. Discussion is

taped. After the discussion, group members listen to their tape, complete a self-evaluation and exchange oral peer feedback. The instructor collects tapes and self-evaluations for feedback. The class concludes with whole-class discussion of issues raised.

Materials: handouts on structure of a panel discussion and language of discussion (including giving and asking for opinions, commenting, agreeing/disagreeing, advising/suggesting, interrupting/holding the floor, clarifying, asking for repetition/verification and correcting misunderstanding).

Rationale: promotes both aspects of fluency, encourages use of communicative strategies, involves active listening, allows student to determine content of response and extent of contribution.

- **Poster session:** students work with a partner to prepare a poster with information on one aspect (chosen by students) of an assigned theme, then present that information to and answer questions from a rotating audience of students and instructors from other classes, at both the same and a lower level of proficiency.

Materials: students shown previous posters as models. Given guidelines for successful posters and a list of useful websites for beginning research.

Rationale: combines many skills (listening, speaking, pronunciation – including intonation & stress), requires use of communicative strategies (filling gaps, rephrasing and monitoring comprehension), reinforces functions used in other activities (explaining, clarifying, giving examples, organizing information), builds confidence, promotes research skills in “soft” subjects, provides a forum for authentic negotiation of meaning and has all four of Ur’s characteristics of a successful speaking activity.

- **Impromptus** (ungraded): students are given a topic or statement on a slip of paper and required to speak about it, with no preparation time, for 2 minutes. Done twice, once at the start of the course, once at the end. Audience checks expressions/phrases they hear used on the handout (phrases/expressions for stalling and buying time).

Rationale: encourages use of hesitation markers (communicative strategy), forces thinking on their feet (Lazaraton, 2001), builds fluency and confidence and provides end-of-course measure of progress.

Results

1. Student response to assessment methods

- *Peer feedback*

I love it soon after the conversation because opinions are more meaningful; most of the time useful but depends on attitude of the peers; very useful because you know what other people think about your speaking skills and you will try to improve it; it’s important to know if other students understand you because you don’t only talk to teacher but also other non-native speakers.

- *Self-evaluation* (from tapes)

even though I’m not very good at English, I’m good enough to find out many of my faults; we can reflect on our own speaking performance; not easy to evaluate myself; I was able to recognize most of my weaknesses.

- *Instructor feedback* (from tapes)

detailed feedback helped me a lot; you pointed out things I never considered; every time that I receive feedback, I am very surprised to see that she had taken the time to listen my tapes so carefully

2. Student response to activities

- **overall:** I did make a very big progress; I can realize my improvement. But also: speaking skills improved a lot but the activities were not very useful (because) I have my own studying style.
- **impromptu:** I like it because you have to be/it pushed me to be spontaneous; (liked it because) it's a challenge to say something without preparation.
- **oral journal & pronunciation:** most interesting and helpful; it's like a private class; I can know my weak points and it let me notice my improvement; very useful and helpful finding my mistakes faster and try to work on them.
- **panel discussion & interviews:** I enjoy (it) because I am not the only one who speaks; I feel free to share my point of view and listen to others; very involving; lots of new vocabulary; it improves us how to have a logical conversation; you really needed to get involved if you wanted to do a good job, which make us participate more actively; enjoyed (the panel) a lot because you don't have to talk all the time so you feel relaxed, you have time to formulate your ideas, and you speak when you have something to say; helpful to practice organization, elaboration, etc.
- **poster:** it was a lot of fun to create something both visually and orally; it was very successful; very useful for confidence; very productive. (chosen by most students as one of the activities they enjoyed the most)
- **seminar:** I know (now) nothing else can hinder me to finish what I want to do...I (am) stronger and more capable than I had expected...thanks to you who set that goal and pushed me to reach it; very relevant to what I have to do soon (and) now I have confident about it.

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TO PLAY OR NOT TO PLAY: THAT IS THE QUESTION

WHY DRAMA IN THE ESL /EFL CLASS?

People learn languages in different ways, but research shows that most ESL/EFL students need to overcome their fear of failure by creating a relaxed low-anxiety-environment. This helps build motivation, self-confidence and self-esteem, particularly within a mainstream environment.

10 ELEMENTS OF ACTING: 5 WHs AND 5 SENSES

A play is fundamentally a story. It may be simple or complex. Funny, scary or moving, they all require a beginning, middle and end. It is made up of answers to what we call the five WHs:

WHO ARE THE CHARACTERS?

WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

WHERE ARE THEY?

WHEN DOES THE STORY OCCUR?

WHY ARE THEY DOING WHAT THEY ARE?

What a person thinks, knows, says or does is a result in some measure of things that the person has seen, heard, smelled, tasted or touched. All behaviour is a result of these five sensory stimuli, from not only the present but also from a past experience. This is why memory plays such an important role in acting.

IMPROVISATIONS

Paper Chase

Description:

Have audience members write quotations on little pieces of paper (e.g. "I don't love you now and I never have"). Scatter the pieces of paper all over the stage. Actors must stop and recite the quotes exactly as they are written and incorporate them into a scene.

Variations:

Instructions (e.g. "Pretend you are walking a dog") can be substituted for quotes.

Arms Expert

Introduction:

In this scene, Actor A talks and provides the body for a character while player B provides the arms for the same character.

Description:

Actor A stands with her arms at her side while player B pushes her arms through the armpits of actor A. Ideally the players will be chosen for appropriateness of size. It is ideal if the arm-supplying player can hide behind the talking player. The two go about the scene usually in the form of a question-answer session with the audience. The talking player is left to justify the actions of arms and hands, which she has no control over.

Elimination Game

Introduction:

In this game, players must build on a story when the 'director' points at them. They must pick up the story

without stuttering, repeating words, or making grammatical errors. If any of the players makes such an error, they are eliminated off stage.

Description:

The players should not waste time having their characters think before speaking. The director should change from player to player slowly at first, allowing a logical story to build. As the game goes on she can switch more quickly from one player to another.

Variations:

Each player is given a different theme (romance, suspense, etc.) and continues to tell the same story through that theme.

Machines

Introduction:

In this exercise, the players must create the parts of an imaginary machine. Each player enters one at a time and offers a repetitive motion and noise to the machine.

Description:

The exercise works best when the motions fit together into some kind of machine. Don't do anything that you cannot physically maintain (one armed push-ups), or something that causes physical pain (dropping to your knees). The players will find that the machine they create reflects the suggestion that they were given.

Variations:

This machine can be 'frozen' and used to start a scene based on the original suggestion.

Stunt Doubles

Introduction:

In this scene, the regular actors will have stunt doubles that can replace them at any time the scene just gets too dangerous. Of course you can determine when things are getting dangerous simply by yelling for stunt doubles!

Description:

The regular actors carry out their scene. Stunt doubles can be called in when one player is about to open a door, comb her hair or perform any other 'action.' The stunt doubles replace the two players and that mundane activity becomes "extraordinarily dangerous." "Doubles" might want to do the action in slow motion and can pretend they get injured performing the stunt. When the stunt is finished, the regular actors come in and continue the scene where the stunt doubles left off.

Last Sentence Scene

Introduction:

The audience provides the first and last sentences of the scene.

Description:

The scene must start with one of the actors saying the 'first sentence.' The actors provide the rest of the scene until one of them states the 'last sentence,' which is usually a bit harder to manage, but is much better appreciated by the audience.

Variations:

First and last words can be used instead. There can also be a middle sentence, or word, that must appear at any time between the first and last sentence/word.

Freeze

Introduction:

This game consists of a series of different scenes. The first scene has one player and the next has two players, and so on. At some point in the first player's scene, the instructor yells 'freeze,' and the next player jumps in and starts a new scene, while at the same time trying to incorporate the action of the previous player into her scene. This continues until all five players are in the scene. At this point, the players leave in the reverse they entered. As the players leave the stage, the audience sees the previous scenes in reverse.

Description:

The challenge is for the players to remember where in the sequence their scene is. The way to remember this is by memorizing the action of the player who preceded theirs. Players must pretend some logical reason for leaving the stage (e.g. looking at their watch). I have seen this work successfully with 16 people.

Open Scene

Description:

This is what improv is all about -- creating scenes from very little. The scenes can be funny or not. Open scenes work best when players easily incorporate themselves into and make their added actions advance the scene.

An element of structure can help give direction to those who want to embark on open-scene work. Every scene has a **beginning** in which the scene or environment is defined. It is wise to define the environment with just one player on-stage. In the **middling** of the scene, the story should start to unfold. The conflict needs to be established; interpersonal conflicts work well. Any routines that develop should be broken and the scene advanced. It is easiest to advance by adding to the initial scene, and not by adding new things all the time. The **ending** should resolve the conflict. The **characters** should complement each other and remain consistent throughout the whole scene.

Variations:

Scene from nothing. In a scene from nothing a player hurtles onto stage and starts a scene. It is good to explain what is happening to the audience (or they may sense that it is a scripted scene).

One Word at a Time

Introduction:

In this scene two players share the dialogue. Each may only contribute one word at a time. Together they build sentences and act out the story. (It is good to get an idea for the story from the audience.)

Description:

Knowledge of basic grammar is an asset in this scene. The two players must be really capable of sharing the dialogue. It is recommended that players join together to perform actions – e.g. going upstairs or washing a cat.

Chain Murder

Introduction:

In this scene, a series of murders are committed in a particular place, by a particular person with a particular device. Request these from the audience. Now have the first actor relay these three things to the second actor, and the second actor to the third actor and so on. They cannot use real words and must communicate in a kind of gibberish.

Description:

The intro for this game is really important. If the audience does not know what is going on it will not make sense. Remember to leave at least one player on stage to hear the three things -- otherwise the chain of action

cannot begin. The actors must maintain the order of person-place-thing, or they will be lost. It is also good to establish some signal to indicate that one doesn't understand what is going on. Once the device is identified, it is standard is to be killed off by the device – at which point the next actor enters the scene. When the scene is over, the audience loves a recap of what each player had perceived.

Superhero Eulogy

Introduction:

Tell the audience that we are all saddened by the recent demise of our local superhero (someone who doesn't exist) and that some of her friends are gathered here today to pay their last respects.

Description:

Several players get up and tell what they know about the deceased superhero. There is a common pattern of someone knowing her before she developed her powers, a family member, her arch villain and eventually her demise. The audience likes to hear how the superhero met her fate. It makes it easier for the players if this is left to the last speaker. The previous structure is just an example for those who have not seen the eulogy done before. It might be obvious to most, but doing a eulogy about a real person usually just brings the audience down.

Modern Fairy Tale

Description:

In this scene the players will combine a well known fairy tale with a similar or different genre of movie. For example, Cinderella could be combined with 'Titanic' or you could combine a tale of romance with characters from a popular science fiction movie.

MORE THAN A ROLEPLAY

5-4-3-2-1

Introduction:

Get five suggestions from the audience for five scenes.

Description:

Five entirely unconnected scenes take place in succession based on the five suggestions from the audience. These are followed by continuations of just four of those scenes as chosen by audience vote, the instructor/host or randomly. These four scenes are also performed in succession and can start to generate loose connections between the each other. Then, as before, one scene is dropped and just three scenes are performed. Their plotlines should be intricately connected. The process is repeated as just two scenes are played out. The final, sole scene ties everything up.

Variation:

Start with one scene and work backwards up to five scenes.

Meanwhile

Introduction:

This scene involves location directions from the instructor/host as the scenes progress.

Description:

'Meanwhile' simply is a mechanism to change scenes in the form of the classic comedy gag: e.g. "MEANWHILE, back at the fort, grandma is beating off the attackers".

The Meanwhile scene is added when a scene has ended or starts to slow down. The meanwhile is usually a

lighting cue to dim the lights while the players change location. The lighting cue is not a blackout; a blackout would indicate the end of the long form itself. The meanwhile can be used to introduce new characters, "meanwhile Jackie's date waits patiently near the briar pits", introduce a new location, "meanwhile back at the rocking chair factory." The 'meanwhiles' must be properly spaced and eventually must bring the story back to its origin.

Twist: A meanwhile that describes the scene that is currently playing on-stage.

Variations:

Request several 'meanwhiles' written down from the audience and introduce them into your scenes as needed.

Show Me That

Introduction:

Request from the audience the beginning of a scene.

Description:

Sometime during the first scene, one of the players must make a reference to something that has happened or is going to happen. When this happens, the instructor/host calls out 'show me that'. The lights are dimmed and players break out of the scene they are performing and jump into a new one.

For example, if one of the players says, "you know what happened the last time you brought in the milk," the players would immediately reconfigure to present a scene of someone "bringing in the milk."

Famous Phrases

Introduction:

Discuss and select famous phrases from plays with your groups.

Description:

Choose one famous phrase and change some of the words from: TO BE OR NOT TO BE; THAT'S THE QUESTION to TO PLAY OR NOT TO PLAY; THAT'S THE QUESTION. Then incorporate the phrase into a dialogue and enjoy the effect. It works well with either three or six players.

Wedding upset

Introduction:

Students listen to a recording of an unusual wedding.

Description:

Each student takes a card with the name and secret information they have about the bride, the groom and their close family. The problem is that the groom has refused to marry his intended bride. The actors play the guests at the reception and they interact with one another to try to understand why the groom said no. Then the final surprise: the bride and the groom come to the reception and share their problems with the guests and decide their future with their help. Everybody gets involved.

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Taking Care of the Teacher

The purpose of this workshop is to remind teachers how important it is to be aware of their well-being, take care of themselves, and carry over the good feelings into their classroom.

Format:

1. The importance of laughter and smiles
2. Brainstorm ways to add joy to your ESL Classroom
3. Where's my play?
4. Life is but a Dream
5. Balloons and Juggling practice

I am an ESL teacher and a Joliologist — someone who studies all things that are jolly and joyful. My motto, 'Bloom Where You Are Planted,' means 'make your life the very best it can be right now.' It reminds me to Lighten Up, Keep it light, and Take myself lightly.

In my opinion, laughter, smiles and fun are the best things in life. Laughter gives us a ray of hope or spark that encourages us. The exciting part is that we can all decide how much laughter, smiles and fun will be in our lives. We can choose to live a long and happy life or just a long one. 'To smile or not to smile' -- that is the question!

Has anyone ever told you to start your day with a smile? This is actually sound advice because the muscles you use when you smile signal the brain that your emotional state is changing for the better. So even if you don't feel like smiling, if you do smile, feel-good endorphins are released into your system and you start to feel better. The act of smiling contributes to how you feel.

Your posture adds to how you feel, as well. Cartoonist, Charles Schulz, supports this idea in a cartoon in which Charlie Brown's head is hanging down and he is slouching his shoulders. While frowning, he explains to Linus that if you want to be unhappy, it's important to stand in that position. He goes on to explain that if he were to stand up straight, lift his head and shoulders and smile, he wouldn't be able to be unhappy anymore.

My alter ego, PattiCakes the Clown, has the opportunity to share laughs and have fun with everyone she meets. Having a clown around gives everyone permission to laugh and have fun! I try to take some of the fun of PattiCakes into my classroom. Learning a second language is difficult, so adding laughter, smiles and fun to your classroom can make the process more enjoyable.

Why not brainstorm ways to add joy to ESL classrooms? Because everyone's funny bone is in a different place, everyone's list will be different. What works for me in my classroom may not work for you, but it may give you ideas about what you can add to your classroom life.

'Finding' your 'play' is the first step to actually 'doing' your 'play.' It can be the beginning when attempting to make your life the best it can be. A good way for your students to find their 'play' is to draw a mindmap (basically a list with pictures and colours and can be found on the internet) of the things you enjoy doing for leisure and fun. These may be things you used to do before you became a serious adult!

One of my "play" activities is juggling. I tell my students that everyone can be quickly and surprisingly successful when they begin juggling with scarves. This always brings lots of laughter to the group.

The last line in the song “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” is ‘life is but a dream’ – not ‘life is but a nightmare.’ An interesting exercise is to make a list of 10 dreams — exciting things you would like to have or do—then fold the list and put it into an envelope to be opened in two or more years. Check the list after a period of time and see how many of your dreams have become reality.

Sometimes the very act of writing down a dream spurs you on to make it happen. But dreams always take work to turn them into reality.

The final activity is balloon sculpture. Start with a balloon dog. Even if many of your students do not take home a ‘sculpture’ that looks like a dog, all will go home with good feelings!

Pat McLaughlin teaches with the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board of Education. She has 20 years’ experience teaching, training mentoring, and entertaining through story-telling, juggling and clowning. A self-proclaimed ‘Joliologist,’ she has a deep desire to help people get the most out of life.



Conference participants enjoy refreshments.

Key Visuals for the ESL Classroom

Key visuals are visual representations that highlight how information is organized. They are also known as graphic organizers. They allow students to transform text into manageable units. As the students take the text and turn it into a web, chart or matrix, they are engaged in thinking about it and learning the information. Key Visuals can be used to sort, classify, sequence and compare. They allow the student to manipulate text and see the relation of ideas to each other. Using Key Visuals makes the information easier to understand and remember.

Some examples of Key Visuals: Venn Diagrams, K-W-L Charts, Word Maps, Story Maps, Time lines, Prediction s, Family Trees, Vocabulary Quadrants.

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Figures A and B provide additional information on Key Visuals

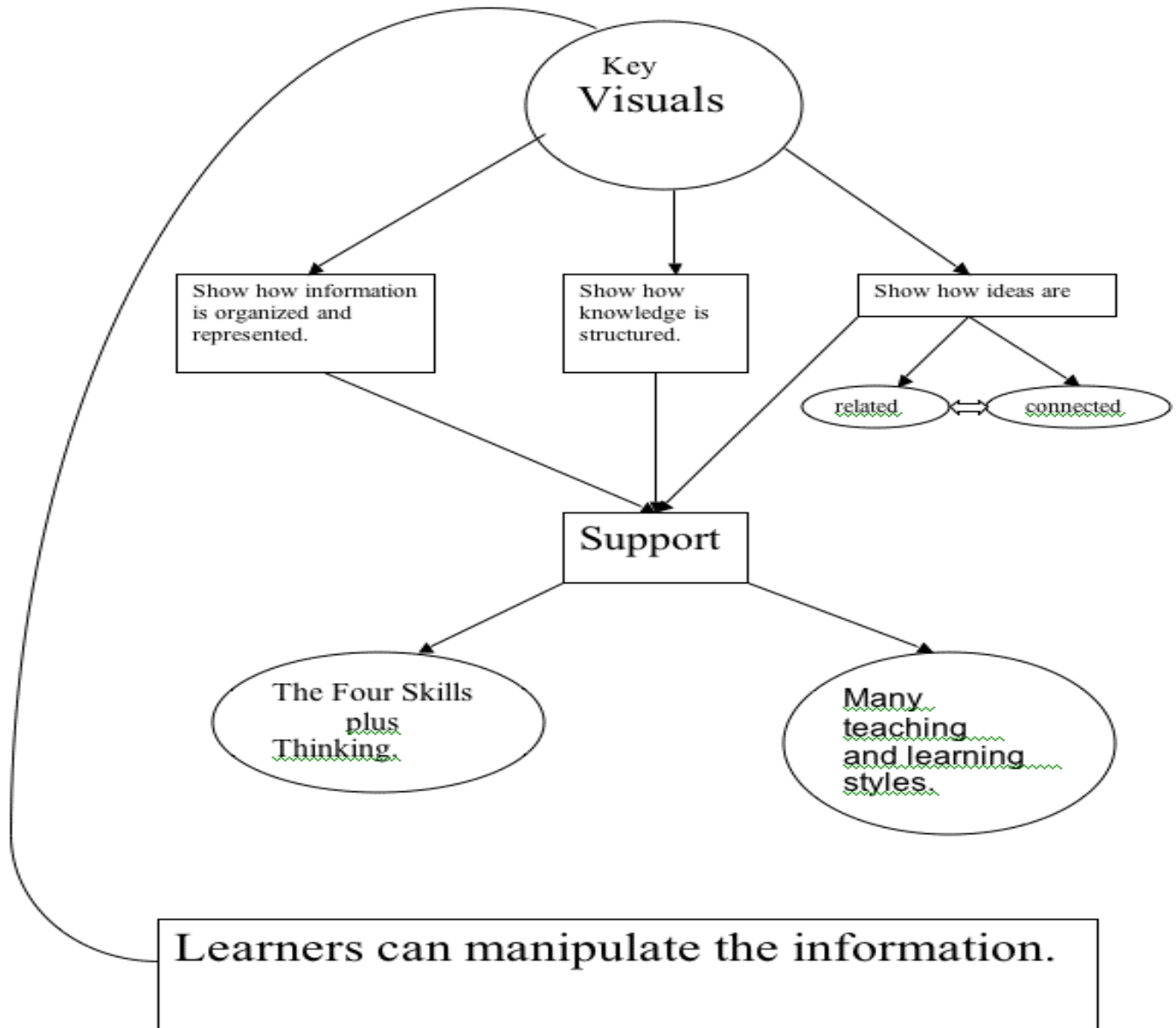


Figure A.

Tips for Key Visuals

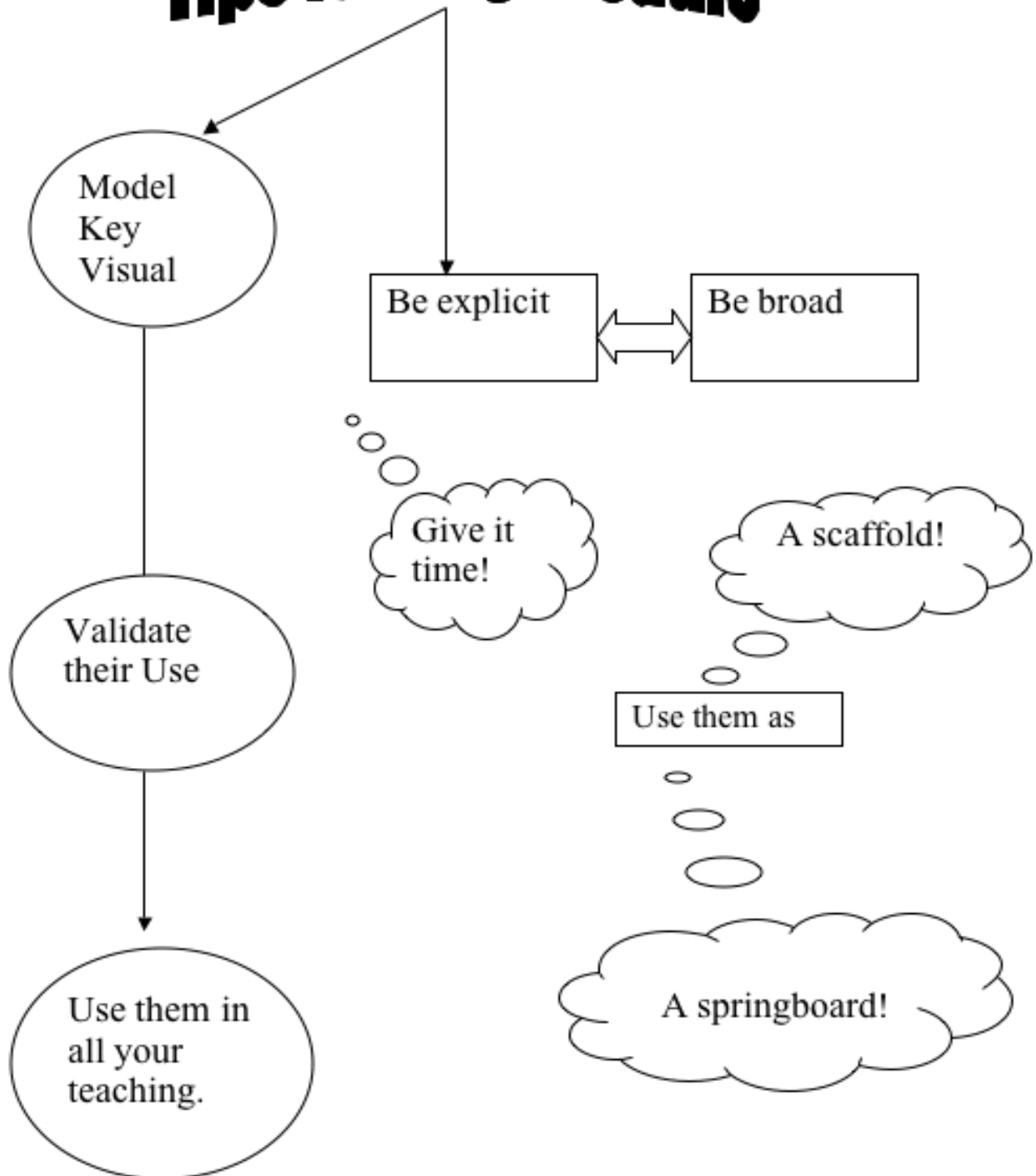


Figure B.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GESTURE TO THE ACQUISITION OF LANGUAGE AND THE USE OF A GESTURAL FOCUS IN L2 LEARNING: AN INTRODUCTION FOR ESL TEACHERS

“Perhaps the most basic conclusion is that language is inseparable from imagery.” (McNeill 2000, p. 57)

“Any theory of human performance will not be complete without an understanding of the role of gesture in cognitive activity.” (Alibali, Kita & Young 2000, p. 610).

The intent of this paper is to encourage ESL teachers to consider how the addition of a gestural focus in the L2 classroom may help ESL students to develop communicative competence more quickly.

The majority of adults struggling to learn an L2 in order to work and live in a new country, profess themselves dissatisfied both with their speed of learning and the final results. Despite widespread evidence in the literature citing the importance of pragmatics, prosody and gesture for first language acquisition, these elements are still not emphasized in our L2 classrooms. The Communicative Method allows for greater use of these three areas but, it is probably fair to say that most of Canada’s second language classrooms still focus primarily on the left hemisphere (LH) of the brain in attempting to facilitate language acquisition. Although some methods with a right hemisphere (RH) focus (Audiolingualism with its focus on repeating and responding to aural stimulus, Suggestopedia with its exaggerated attention to rhythm, intonation and classical music, the Silent Way with its emphasis on chunks of language, physical objects and inductive learning, Total Physical Response with its strong association between language and physical movement, and, more recently, the Lexical Approach with its recognition of the importance of collocations and the supremacy of the phrase) have gained fleeting interest, none has gained wide-spread, on-going use – perhaps because teachers do not understand the theoretical principles on which they are based and lack training and materials related to these alternative methods.

Judy Gilbert, in her 1999 article on Joseph Bogen’s right brain/left brain research encourages us to take a new look at the way that hemispheric specialization may inform our second language teaching, “expand our vision” and “deepen our teaching”. In her pronunciation texts, Gilbert has always emphasized the importance of making pronunciation physical and this paper attempts to support and expand the use of gesture as a key element in activating not only pronunciation learning but L2 acquisition in general.

In a previous paper in which I discussed how prosody affects L2 acquisition, I took suggestions from several studies in fields as varied as Evolutionary Biology, Neuropsychology, and Cognition (Brillinger, 2003, unpublished) and made them into the following list of what were suggested to be the functions of the LH and the RH (understanding all the while that activity occurs in both sides for every function). It became clear that what I had been attempting to do in order to improve the pronunciation of my second language learners was to activate the pragmatic and prosodic functions of the RH. In the past six-eight months, it has become clear that I was still missing a crucial step. If prosody facilitates language learning, what facilitates acquiring the prosody of the ambient language? The answer seems to lie in the highlighted area: recognition/production of gesture expression.

Left Hemisphere Functions

Linguistic

Right Hemisphere Functions

Pragmatic/Social Context

Syntax

Lexis/Semantics (Vocabulary)

Morphology (Word Change/Formation)

Linguistic Prosody

Phonetic Information

Phonological Coding & Decoding

Recognition of Ready-Made Speech Units

Affective/Emotional Prosody

Recognition of Facial Expressions

Affective Awareness

Recognition/Production of Gesture Expressions

Emotional Scene Recognition

Emotional Memory

Expression of Emotional Mood

Metaphors and Idioms

Verbal Self-Monitoring

Moral Content

Negative Emotion Processing

Working Memory Rehearsal/Storage

Maintenance/Integration of Information in Memory Processing

Duration of Sounds

Fundamental Frequency of Sounds

Categorical Pitch Direction

Pitch Height, Range and Rhythmicity

Word Recognition

Accent Recognition

Non-Ambiguous Text

Ambiguous Text

Antonyms/Synonyms

Referents (NOT words)

Sensual Impressions

Abstractions

The Objective World

World of Signs

World of Things

Extra-linguistic Reality

Private Experience

Theoretical Comprehension

Concrete Images

Element by Element Analysis

Whole Sound Gestalt

Separate Elements	Phrases
Word Independent of Denotation	Word and Object Inseparable
Superficial language Structure	Deep Language Structure
For Others	For Myself
Linguistic Processes	Psychological Processes

(Brillinger 2003, From Both Sides Now: Integrating the Left and Right Hemispheres in the Teaching of Pronunciation)

Information from the study of gesture clearly opens up the possibility of enhancing ESL teaching. As McNeill states, “Contrary to a text-based tradition, language contains analogical elements that are as defining of human linguistic capacity as the time-honored analytic elements of syntagmatically/paradigmatically related words, phrases, clauses, sentences and texts” (McNeill 2000, p. 57). These analogical elements are made visible by gesture.

How can we help our students more effectively produce both prosody and gesture? By encouraging students to focus on both, more natural production seems to occur. In a study investigating how intonation and gesture co-occur, it was found that “the stroke of a prepositional gesture tended to co-occur with the peak of fundamental frequency in the intonation group. In addition these syllables tended to function as the sentence nucleus” (McClave 1998, p. 87). This information can help students identify and produce focus. McClave (1998) also found that speaker’s gestures coincided with stress on a word and that when the gesture and pitch movement matched, “the convergence of direction of pitch and gesture may make a particular segment of discourse more salient” (McClave 1998, p. 88).

It is becoming clear that gesture is an important part of oral production. This paper will explore the importance of gesture in the L2 classroom. As no research articles were available that explored possible links between deliberately teaching and drawing attention to gesture, (see “Maxwell Gestures, google:), the paper explores research that suggests possible foci and seeks to encourage L2 teachers to become consciously aware of the place of gesture in communication while suggesting avenues to experiment in the classroom. The paper will define and exemplify types of gestures, briefly discuss cross-cultural issues, and conclude with suggestions for classroom use.

Gesture Definitions: Pre-Speech Gestures

Deictic Gestures (also referred to as “pointing” or “indicator” gestures)

Deictic gestures are seen frequently in the beginner L2 classroom. A deictic gesture indicates (normally by the pointing of one finger or movement of one hand) “a specific instance of an object or event and/or a static location” (Nicoladis 2002, p. 244). Often ESL teachers will ask beginning students to use deictic gestures. A common activity is to ask students to indicate the location of a specific object in an array of items. Some examples include, “Show me the ceiling.” or “Point to the door.” or “Which one is the red pen?” Parents will remember the excitement of asking similar questions to babies of approximately 9 months of age.

Deictic gestures precede word use but demonstrate both comprehension and the promise of speech. Masur, as cited in Nicoladis (2002), describes deictic gestures as “a crucial precursor of later verbal communication” (p. 244).

Roth (2002) hypothesizes that “the emergence of language and discourse is brought about and tied to embodied experience ---- Deictic gestures (pointing) may be an important aspect of embodied communication” (p. 535) and that “gestures allow the speaker to re-experience private schemata through kinesthetic experiences (Roth & Lawless 2002, p. 335).” If an ESL speaker needs to re-activate ideas of “this”

or “that” or “these” or “those” before being able to listen for or use the new words comfortably, then deictic gestures are key. Interestingly, in one of the few L2 studies available, intermediate and advanced L2 learners were found to “use more deictics in their second language than in their first (Nicoladis 2002, p. 246).”

Total Physical Response (TPR) may be so successful with beginner L2 students because it focuses on students responding physically to requests from the teacher and this motoric form of response precedes speech in the L1 and may need to do so in the L2 to some degree as “during transitional periods gestures express complex meanings that individuals do not (can not) yet express in words” (Roth & Lawless 2002, p. 336). In a study comparing children who received a lesson accompanied by deictic gestures and those who did not, Valenzo, Alibali & Klatzky (2003) concluded that deictic gestures “may serve to capture students’ attention precisely because they link speech to the physical environment” (p. 201) and that the redundancy of the gesture and speech “effectively guides students’ attention to key aspects of the environment” (p. 201). Deictic gestures seem not only to use the physical world but to reinforce its presence when students are processing abstract concepts. Valenzo et al. (Ibid) suggest that these deictic gestures “play a potentially important role in facilitating comprehension, and this may be especially true when challenging new concepts and complex language are introduced --- we suggest that teachers would be well advised to utilize such gestures when they teach” (p. 202).

It is important to note that deictic gestures always match the verbal message and that this could be one of the reasons that they are used not only by teachers but are also the first form of communication to occur in infants. In addition, since the gestural sequence precedes the verbal sequence, Kravitz & Hopkins (2004) suggest that listeners “may have been using gesture to interpret lip movements of speech production milliseconds before the speech was ever heard” (p. 259).

Although observations indicate that L2 teachers already use, encourage and observe deictic gestures in the ESL classroom, no empirical studies have examined whether or not language learning improves with the conscious or increased use of such gestures.

Conventional Gestures (also referred to as culture-specific gestures)

Conventional gestures are those most often discussed on ESL teaching websites (for an example see Haynes 2004) and in ESL classrooms. These gestures are “meaningful within a cultural context and can usually be used without language” (Nicoladis 2002, p. 244). These gestures convey a meaning agreed upon within the culture. The reason ESL teachers are aware of the importance of teaching conventional gestures is their cultural specificity. For example, the North American “thumbs up” is equivalent to “up yours” in Iran. In addition to wishing to help their students avoid embarrassment or offense, teachers want to help them avoid confusion. For example, a Chinese student beckoning by pawing at the air, hand-down and fingers moving, may not be understood by the Canadian being beckoned. Different conventional gestures can also cause cognitive dissonance. When a Canadian observes a Japanese speaker saying, “Me?” and pointing to his/her nose, the observer will wonder how the gesturer can possibly feel the head, rather than the chest, is the container of “me-ness”.

Research has shown that children develop the ability to make conventional gestures such as clapping to equal well-done and waving goodbye starting at 16 months and that these gestures are usually pre-word but are accompanied by some type of vocalization (Nicoladis, p. 244).

Symbolic Gestures

Symbolic gestures are those that ESL teachers profess they are consciously aware of as well. They were described to me recently by a colleague as “something I resort to to get my message across when students are lacking vocabulary.” But perhaps symbolic gestures (used to visually represent a concept such as flapping the hands to indicate a bird or waving backwards with one hand to get an ESL student to switch to the past tense) are a perfectly valid precursor/introducer of vocabulary as they represent children’s and ESL students’/teachers’ recognition of the possibility of shared symbols and agreement. Symbolic gestures occur in children just before

iconic gestures develop. An example in the ESL classroom would be a student attempting to say, “We saw a snake.” and representing the snake with an undulating movement of the hand. If the ESL teacher accepts the validity of the gesture and can peg the motoric gesture to the English term “snake” then a harmony between the RH (sensory impressions, the objective world, private experience) and the LH (lexis, phonological coding & decoding, world of signs) has been created.

Deictic, conventional and symbolic gestures seem to be “independent of spoken language -- and can compensate for weak spoken proficiency. (Nikoladis, p. 261). These gestures, when used with spoken words, always match the meaning thus expressed. The teacher may point to the wastebasket while saying, “It’s over there.” (deictic). The teacher may give the time gesture while saying, “Time’s up” (conventional). The teacher may say, “The roads were slippery” while indicating slipping with her hand and arm. (symbolic). ESL teachers seem to recognize the value of these pre-speech gestures and utilize and encourage such gestures in the L2 classroom as a bridge.

Not all gestures can occur separately from language. The two types of gestures that are described below occur only after children can speak and, “adults use iconic and beat gestures when speaking to a far greater extent than 3 year olds do” (Mayberry & Nikoladis 2000, p. 194). It is these gestures which I believe can aid in L2 acquisition at all levels if consciously employed and encouraged.

Gesture Definitions: Gestures Always Accompanying the Ability to Speak

Iconic Gestures

Iconic gestures are gestures that depict the concept being referred to – “some aspect of spatial images, actions, people, or objects” (Mayberry & Nikoladis 2000, p. 194). For example, an ESL teacher saying, “I felt really sick last night.” might gesture first towards her chest on “I felt” and then towards her stomach on “sick”. Even though she did not specify she was sick to her stomach we have additional or supporting information about the concept being shared. Children start to use iconic gestures as they start to produce words. There is a positive relationship between the use of iconic gestures and language proficiency and these gestures appear in “children’s productions as early as two years of age and are usually accompanied by similar-meaning speech” (Nikoladis, p. 245).

As ESL teachers, or speakers in our L1 in general, we can observe ourselves making 2-3 iconic gestures per utterance but do we note our ESL students doing the same? In studies of deaf children, the elderly and aphasics, it was found that “iconic gestures are rarely used when speech is absent or weak.” (Nikoladis, p. 246). Research with Swedish L2 speakers revealed that the learners used more iconic gestures when telling a story in their L1 than in their L2 (Nikoladis, p. 246). In a study of French-English bilingual preschoolers, Nikoladis found that “the children used more iconic gestures with their dominant language than their non-dominant language. The utterances children made with iconic gestures were longer than with no gestures (p. 260).

Iconic gestures generally support or add additional information to the word. For example, the teacher may say, “The mountain was huge” while moving her hands outwards to the sides but she might also move her hands outwards and up giving an additional idea of height. Speakers seem to use matching iconic gestures when they are sure about what they are saying. Research indicates that “gesture includes spatial details that may not be expressed in the concurrent speech” (Kita & Ozyurek 2003, p. 26).

Iconic gestures, however, can also provide mismatches between gesture and speech, and, therefore, if they are being used unconsciously, can possibly hinder comprehension by students. Valenzo et al state that “mismatching gestures appear to hinder comprehension of the speech they accompany --- it is possible such gestures might actually hinder students’ learning (p. 202). In a study examining how learner’s gestures often initially mismatched and later matched spoken words, Roth & Lawless (2002) found that extra information, which they were not yet able to articulate in speech, was contained in the learners’ gestures. Students trying to describe newly learned schema related to physics initially indicate concepts that have been learned only through

gesture. Roth & Lawless point out that gestures can provide us with “insights to the role of the body in knowing and learning abstract concepts” (p. 336). But what if the ESL teacher is trying to explain the use of the present perfect in English but is not really sure herself. Is it possible that students unconsciously pick up on the extra and contradictory information contained in the teacher’s gestures and feel unsure of and dissatisfied with the teacher’s description? What about one ESL student listening intently to another and noting mismatches in words and gestures? Could a close observation of iconic gesture in the ESL classroom provide us with new insights into what we need to emphasize? Can gesture tell the teacher how much an ESL student really feels or knows the concepts behind what he is saying?

Gesture can not only aid the teacher but help us understand L2 learning. For example, we can observe by the lack of iconic gestures in ESL students that sometimes very little imagery underlies the student’s use of a phrase in the L2. I have asked intermediate ESL students to tell me the difference between a mountain and an ant in both English and their L1 and asked L1 English speakers to do the same and noted that even in low-gesturing L1s such as Korean more significant size gestures are used in the L1 than in English (more closely matching the images portrayed by the L1 English speakers). McNeill states that “by looking at the linguistic elements *and* the gesture, jointly, we are able to infer characteristics of underlying idea units that are not present in either speech or gesture alone” (p. 44) and that “the postulate that language and imagery are inseparable explains the power of gestures to open a window onto language and mind and to reveal the cross-linguistic differences of thinking for speaking and language development – phenomena that would be invisible without gesture” (McNeill, p.57).

The significance of iconic gestures and their meaning-bearing use was observed in McClave’s (1998) study of gesture and pitch where she observed the following example. A speaker was describing others as wearing Guess jeans and on saying “jeans” moved his hands across his chest indicating the logo on a Guess shirt (p. 86). This would have alerted the listener to the importance of the name brand even though the intonation peak was on jeans.

Research indicates that “children began to produce iconic and beat gestures while speaking only after their utterances became longer than two words (Mayberry & Nikoladis 2000). If our ESL students are, as so many of them report, translating word by word, it is logical that iconic gestures will be minimal. I have found that following the basic tenets of the Lexical Approach (Lewis 1993, 2000) is necessary for the teaching of gesture. Teaching the entire phrase, “Just a second” accompanied by a slight restraining movement of the hand and the correct linguistic and affective prosodic features, allows students to store and retrieve all the concepts necessary for successful communication of the message in one ready-made speech unit which can be retrieved easily as it is stored with multiple retrieval cues – prosody (RH/LH), lexis (LH), syntax (LH) and gesture (RH).

The RH also seems to be responsible for memory processing and L2 speakers often express frustration with quickly retrieving known words. Gestures can help. “Gestures contain more than illustrative cues, but rather a semantic meaning specific to the producer. In addition, because these gestures serve as cues over long retrieval periods, it seems that they may be an integral part of the memory representation.” (Frick-Horbury 2002, p. 145)

In examining gesture, Kita & Ozyurek found that “a processing unit can be roughly approximated as a clause --- positing a unit larger than a word as the relevant unit” (2003, p. 18). Focusing on the clause or phrase would require a re-working of much of our current ESL materials as many are either word level or sentence level.

Batonic (Beat) Gestures

Batonic gestures are “hand and arm movements that emphasize spoken words or mark the structure of discourse” (Mayberry & Nikoladis, p. 194) and “seem to have the same form regardless of the content” (Beattie & Shovelton 2002, p. 404). These are the type of gestures that pronunciation teachers often use to emphasize stress, rhythm and focus. Over the years, I have moved from using my hand as a baton to mark the peaks to

asking my students to observe and copy my gestures and head movements.

When speaking naturally and enthusiastically, an ESL teacher is likely to have batonic movements on each content words in the following sentence – “There’s **no way** I’m **going**.” My observation is that batonic movements vary greatly from profession to profession and situation to situation. If you compare a Sunday morning evangelical preacher to a newsreader to you talking to a friend versus talking to a boss, the differences become quite striking. In the ESL class, cross-linguistic differences in the volume and extent of batonic gestures can cause problems; the gesturing of a Croatian speaker can cause a Chinese speaker to back off, while a Spanish speaker may find a Korean speaker visually boring.

ESL Students and Gesturing in English

At times when I have tried to have ESL students copy my gestures, I have observed that they have far more difficulty than they do copying my prosody. Why? Cole, Gallagher & McNeill (2002) offer clues uncovered in their research with a patient who has lost his sense of touch from the neck down and cannot button his shirt without watching but still can gesture normally even in the dark. Their theory is that “the meaning and the communicative situation call forth the gesture” and “gestures are not just movements and can never be fully explained in purely kinesic terms. They are not just arms waving in the air, but symbols that exhibit meaning in their own right” (p. 63). If an ESL student is busy translating what he wishes to say word for word then there is no way that the communicative situation or the meaning can indeed call forth the gesture. I have had students try to teach me phrases and matching gestures in a variety of languages and found it very hard to copy the iconic and batonic gestures. Instead I find myself grasping for symbolic gestures for key vocabulary items.

Part of this may relate to the fact that in our L1, our iconic gestures are highly idiosyncratic. Beattie & Shovelton (2002) found that when the concept being discussed was “high imageability/familiar,” the “gestures accompanying such units were, for the most part, not repeated by other speakers; in other words, they were highly idiosyncratic” (p. 414). The speaker may first need to feel the concept behind the word (hard in an L2) and then develop a gesture with which to recall or expand on the concept. McNeill found that “the confluence of language and gesture suggests that the speaker was thinking in terms of a *combination* of imagery and linguistic categorical content” (2000, p. 44).

In a study which found a positive correlation between high iconic gesture and high scores on the SAT vocabulary section, Frick-Horbury (2002) hypothesized that “gesture production may in part contribute to the high verbal skills because the gesture serves as an additional cognitive representation of a verbal event and thus facilitates both production and recall” (p. 145). If abilities to encode, store and retrieve contribute to having higher/lower verbal skills and gesture facilitates these skills, then ESL students who do not develop new gestures for English words may have greater difficulty learning and using vocabulary. Frick-Horbury proposes that “gestures prime memory, and this form of elaboration enhances the memory representation so that at an extended retrieval interval, the gesture has become a more integral part of the memory event (p. 145).

I have tried having ESL students choose a gesture on which to peg a new vocabulary item and found that students can better retrieve the item the next day or week, if I say the word and ask if they can recall the gesture they chose. By recalling the gesture, they can recall the word. In a recent study, by Kelly, Kravitz & Hopkins (2004) the researchers confirmed that not only does gesture impact on the brain’s processing of speech (p. 258) but that the processing of gesture precedes the processing of semantic content by several hundred milliseconds (p. 257). Perhaps this is also true of production. My ESL students can process the gesture and then quickly retrieve the word. As Alibali, Kita & Young found “Gesture facilitates access to items in the mental lexicon” (2000 p. 593). In addition, Frick-Horbury found that “the use of hand gestures as a cue for recall can compensate for lexical deficiencies” (2002, p. 144).

In a study that discovered children first express thoughts in gesture first that they can not yet express in speech, Goldin-Meadow & Singer (2003) conclude that “gesture may be part of the mechanism that brings about cognitive change.” (p. 519)

“The planning of utterances involves the interplay of imaginistic thinking and linguistic thinking. The outcome of imaginistic thinking manifests itself as gesture and the outcome of linguistic thinking manifests itself as co-expressive speech.” (Kita & Ozyurek 2003, p. 17)

Teaching Gesture in the ESL Classroom

Not only have I found that emphasizing on gestures improves student retention of grammar and vocabulary, but it also an ameliorating impact on the classroom atmosphere and seems to stimulate contact between students of differing language backgrounds. The reasons for this may have something to do with experimental evidence from the late 1990s that shows a correlation between mimicking and liking. Lakin, Jefferis, Cheng & Chartrand, (2003, p. 151) state “the results suggest that behavioral mimicry actually increases liking between interaction partners” As I have the students imitate my gesture and prosody, as we compare and try imitating each others gestures and prosodic patterns in various L1s, as I encourage students to try a bit of mirroring during partner exchanges, wonderfully opens up the classroom.

In expanding the discussion of the causal relationship between mimicry and rapport, Lakin, Jefferis, Cheng & Chartrand point out that rapport can also increase mimicry. An experiment in which the partners shared increasingly personal information, illustrated that mimicry increased as the partners shared. The authors conclude that “sharing information may lead to greater rapport, which is expressed through increases in mimicry.” (Lakin, Jefferis, Cheng & Chartrand 2003 p. 151)

There is an evolutionary basis for mimicry. Lakin, Jefferis, Cheng & Chartrand state that “possessing a direct perception-behavior link was critical to our survival (p. 149) first in the natural world and then in our social groups. The authors describe how automatic mimicry serves as a social glue “as it is one way to appear similar to others and therefore create a psychological connection” (Lakin, Jefferis, Cheng & Chartrand 2003, p. 150).

Could the extremely disparate gestural systems of Latin and Asian students be partly responsible for their lack of affiliation in the ESL class? It is possible that the improved retention and use of grammar point may be due to another characteristic of gesture as well. “The iconic gestures that accompany speech, viewed in isolation from that speech, seem to be indicating something about the syntactic structure of that speech --- about the actual syntactic form of the utterance and not just about the possible position of the syntactic boundaries” (Beattie & Shovelton 2002, p. 190).

Cross-Linguistic Differences in Gesturing

An ESL teacher standing at the side of a multi-lingual class during break is immediately aware that gestures vary from language to language. The Serbian students gesture more frequently and with broader strokes than do the Punjabi speakers who move even their fingers when gesturing; the Chinese speakers do not gesture very far from their chest area. What causes the development of such differences? What might they mean to inter-cultural communication?

A number of articles that came out in 2002-2004 confirmed that differences exist. Majid, Bowerman, Kita, Haun & Levinson (2004) found that underlying cognitive frames of reference differ and are represented in gesture. They found English speakers, for example, do not really care where west is when saying, “He went west.” and simply move their hand from right to left to indicate movement. Some languages, however, such as those spoken by natives of Australia and Nepal, locate absolute west before making the gesture (p.111). In a study of cartoon re-telling by Spanish and English speakers, McNeill found that “gestural manner seems to be defined by the figure in English and Spanish – and to be defined, in addition, by the ground in Spanish.” (2000, p.56) and “as inferred from gesture, thinking for speaking in the two languages differs with respect to the visuospatial representation of path structure.” (McNeill 2000, p. 45)

Kita & Ozyurek posit that “the language you speak affects the contents of iconic gestures.” (2003, p. 26) and “the Interface Hypothesis predicts that the gestural expression of events varies across languages in ways similar to the linguistic packaging of information about the events in respective languages.” (Kita & Ozyurek 2003, p. 18). Therefore, it seems we must teach/learn a new system for each language – a bit Waldorfian!

Indeed it appears that “English-language gestures *modulate manner*, reinforcing or downplaying it. In effect, the gesture-speech system achieves a more richly graded representation of manner than would appear with lexical coding alone. Spanish-language gestures *incorporate manner* and do so even when manner is lacking from the spoken channel, producing “manner fogs” – gestural manner without corresponding lexical reference” (McNeill 2000, p. 47).

Future study of gesture is needed to further illustrate these cross-linguistic issues.

Conclusion

Gesture appears to serve many functions in interpersonal communication including a) promoting feelings of affinity when gestures between speakers match, b) helping speakers organize their thoughts and access words, c) helping listeners understand a message and can help we, researchers and educators understand when a concept is not yet well-developed in a speaker’s mind and what cross-linguistic differences exist in underlying representations.

Gestures may well be the best tool discovered to date in terms of understanding language and cognition, and it would be wonderful if researchers in Applied Linguistics became involved in research projects directly related to gesture and L2 learning.

Observing gestures is a non-invasive technique readily available in every L2 classroom, and encouraging students and teachers to observe gestures and attempt to emulate them may well serve as an additional tool, perhaps a key tool, in helping adult L2 learners achieve communicative competence in their L2.

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Multiple Perspectives on the Language and Cultural Skills Required by Non-native English Speaking Teachers (NNETS)

Newcomer teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have numerous contributions to offer the teaching profession. North Americans are becoming increasingly mindful of recruiting multilingual and multicultural staff who reflect the diversity in K-12 school populations. As a result, we have an unprecedented number of newcomer (NC) and nonnative English speaking (NNES) candidates in our pre-service K-12 teacher certification programs, with attempts to increase this diversity even further.

Nevertheless, adequate supports do not always exist to ensure the successful professional induction of NC and NNES teacher candidates. Using case study methodology to determine the language and cross-cultural skills required by teacher candidates to succeed in Ontario classrooms and in initial teacher education programs, we interviewed:

- 5 non-native English speaking (NNES) teacher candidates
- 5 teacher educators from OISE/UT
- 5 host teachers from partner schools in the Toronto District School Board, and
- 2 vice-principals/ principals and 2 superintendents from the TDSB

Findings show that teacher candidates require intensive language support, curriculum on the culture of the educational system, peer support within the program, and more mentorship than currently received from teacher educators, associate teachers and administrators. Implications of this study include:

- 1) Placing more emphasis on the positive cross-cultural contributions NC and NNES teacher candidates can make to the program.
- 2) Increasing native English speaking (NES) candidates' awareness of issues related to their peers in the program, while providing strategies on how to best support and learn from their colleagues.
- 3) Better informing associate teachers about how pre-service teachers' induction into K-12 schools should be facilitated (by principal, by the associate).
- 4) Providing explicit instruction in teacher education programs regarding professional conventions (school language and culture)
- 5) Increasing the number of faculty who reflect diversity of teacher candidate and K-12 populations
- 6) Including longer and more frequent practicum placements or an orientation to the Canadian educational system prior to teacher candidates' entrance to the program in September, and
- 7) Implementing entrance requirements and language proficiency assessments that more accurately evaluate teacher candidates' oral and written skills, emphasizing the ability to function effectively in the classroom.

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Workshop: Holidays Galore

Holidays are an integral part of life in any country. They represent milestones, seasons, births, deaths and victories – the different colours of life itself. A familiar holiday easily elicits linguistic response, verbal or nonverbal, in any classroom or tutorial setting. A new, interesting holiday perks up the inquisitive side of language learners, motivating them to ask questions, to seek information, to make conclusions, and often, to apply it in real-life situations.

Holidays are an appropriate topic for a classroom conversation as they are neither personal nor threatening. It is a safe theme, in which students exchange information about the traditions of their country of origin, the culture of the host country, the memory of family gatherings and individual reflections on a special event. Such symbols as a red heart, golden bell, smiling pumpkin, or evergreen tree evoke nostalgia and raise curiosity in any learning/teaching environment.

For each holiday described, I have provided a lesson plan, ideas, activities and reproducible worksheets for a multilevel class based on my 14 suggested tools of teaching:

1. **Room decoration**. Despite hectic schedules, I see to it that my assigned classroom or corner is updated regularly, holiday or season-wise. I will be suggesting affordable yet creative ideas on how to “adorn” your classroom because I strongly believe that a lively, colourful classroom truly stimulates positive language learning, whether the room is for kids or adults.
2. **Articles, Magazines**. Whenever possible, I create articles for reading and writing, for low, intermediate and advanced levels. There are comprehension check exercises, vocabulary practice and follow-up writing tasks. I encourage teachers to regularly read and search out articles at the reading level of their students. Check out newspapers (community ones have simpler vocabulary), magazines (teen or women’s magazines are the best) and textbooks. Teachers can also write their own, or scan the Internet for teacher-created articles. Written works of former students are also usable for reading activities because new students can relate to them, content-wise.
3. **Greeting Cards**. What better way to express holiday feelings than greeting cards? It’s time to collect used and unused greeting cards for reading, writing and conversation practice. Students can also design their own greeting cards by hand or on the computer.
4. **Music**. I find songs a gold mine of language-learning activities. I suggest song titles, listening tasks, group and pair work, etc. Teachers can buy holiday-themed CDs, borrow them from the library, or download from the Internet. Lyrics from popular songs can easily be on the Internet or in song books found in the library.
5. **Videos/ DVDs**. Films are powerful vehicles for motivating students to practise using a target language because they stimulate visual and auditory senses. The following are on how I have used “sneak peeks” from films in a multilevel classroom:
 - a. *Watch & Comprehend* – Students view the whole film without any interruption from the teacher. Students may use their dictionary or ask each other questions while they watch (subtitles should be on so they can verify difficult words in their dictionary). After watching, the teacher distributes comprehension questions for small groups to discuss.
 - b. *Finish the film* – Students watch half or two-thirds of the film. They guess the ending by either talking or writing about it. The nearest, most accurate ending “wins”.
 - c. *Just excerpts, with scripts* – The teacher selects a good scene in the film and transcribes it on the computer. She uses this dialogue for teaching grammar, phrasal verbs, idioms and/or vocabulary. Students watch the excerpt and do the activity in small groups or as a class.

- d. *Critique the movie* – Students watch the whole movie, and then discuss it in small groups or pairs. Then, they write a critique it, following a suggested outline from the teacher.
 - e. *Summarize the movie* – After watching the entire movie, students strive to summarize the movie in x number of sentences, using connectors, past tense, etc.
 - f. *My favourite part of the movie...*-- The teacher writes incomplete sentences on the board; for example: My favourite part of the movie was when ...Students talk about their opinions in small groups or in pairs.
 - g. *Design a movie poster* – Divide the class into small groups. After watching the film, each group designs a movie poster using coloured pencils, paint, charcoal, etc. They come up with attractive promotional lines, testimonials and artistic layout. The movie poster that best describes the movie, wins.
6. **Food**. Most holiday celebrations involve food. Use recipes from cook books or have students write their own recipes. If possible, teachers and/or students can do a cooking demonstration, with the desired result ready to be tasted.
 7. **It's a Small World After All**. Share what other countries do on a specific holiday. The teacher can show a documentary film about how a holiday is celebrated in other parts of the world. Students may be given ample time to do research about how other countries celebrate Christmas or New Year's, then report back to class.
 8. **Find-a-Word, Puzzles, Crosswords, Games**. Teachers can, again, create their own find-a-word or crossword sheets or puzzles. I've also tried board games, treasure hunts, trivia games and charades with my classes.
 9. **Crafts**. Origami (great for listening practice), collages, sewing and painting are but a few.
 10. **Skits**. These are excellent for speaking practice. Skits are short, usually comic or dramatic, theatrical performances. Assign an existing skit script for the class or small groups to perform, or have students create their own skits.
 11. **Conversation**. I will also insert worksheets of good questions to encourage conversation.
 12. **Poetry**. Suitable even for multi-level classes as all unite in an effort to read aloud -- a perfect opportunity to practise pronunciation, phrasing and intonation.
 13. **Celebrate or commemorate**. There's always a party in my class. It's a time to relax, let our hair down and just be friends. I teach my students holidays about by simulating the celebration in the classroom. I invite guest speakers, hire a musician or plan a potluck so that the holiday is remembered.
 14. **Websites**. At the end of each chapter, I include a list of websites that I regularly use for holiday themes.



January – New Year’s Day – The Never List

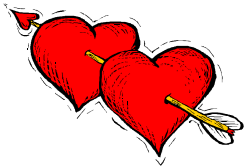
Recommended Benchmark: 2 - 4

Target Language Skills: brainstorming, writing (enumerating), conversation

Materials Needed: Worksheet

Procedure:

1. Distribute the worksheets to pairs or small groups.
2. Go through the instructions and make sure everybody knows what to do with the worksheets.
3. Give the pairs and small groups ample time to write and share what they have written.
4. Ask for volunteers to share with the whole class what they have written or discussed.
5. Display the sheets on the wall.



February – Valentine’s Day – Who’s My Partner?

Recommended Benchmark: 2 - 4

Target Language Skills: analysing, negotiating, agreeing, disagreeing, reporting

Materials Needed: Worksheet

Procedure:

1. Cut the worksheet according to instructions. Put the strips in an envelope and give it to pairs or small groups.
2. Ask the pairs or small groups to match the words.
3. When they finish the matching portion, ask them to identify the names by writing them on a large piece of paper. (“Who are they?”)
4. Ask for volunteers to share with the whole class what they have written or discussed.
5. Display the reports on the wall.

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Name: Who's My Partner?

Cut the strips. For lower levels, separate the male names from the female ones for easier matching. For higher levels, put them all in one envelope. Make more copies according to the number of pairs or small groups.

Adam	Eve
Bill	Hillary
Prince Charming	Cinderella
Andre Agassi	Steffi Graf
Michael Douglas	Catherine Zeta Jones
Ozzy Osbourne	Sharon Arden
John Lennon	Yoko Ono
Romeo	Juliet
Mickey	Minnie
Brad Pitt	Jennifer Aniston
Samson	Delilah
Ken	Barbie
Robin Hood	Maid Marion
Anthony	Cleopatra

Other Famous Couples

Tramp	Lady
Beauty	Beast
Prince Philip	Queen Elizabeth
Prince Ranier	Grace Kelly
Donald	Daisy Duck
King Kong	Faye Wray
Superman	Lois Lane
Napoleon	Josephine
Homer	Marge Simpson
Antonio Banderas	Melanie Griffith
Céline Dion	René Angelil
Elizabeth Taylor	Richard Burton
Elvis Presley	Priscilla
Diego Rivera	Frida Kahlo
John Smith	Pocahontas

March – Plans for March Break – Alphabet Week

Recommended Benchmark: 2-5

Target Language Skills: brainstorming, writing (enumerating), conversation

Materials Needed: markers, large paper for writing



Procedure:

1. Distribute the markers and large paper to pairs or small groups.
2. Ask them to list all the letters of the alphabet.
3. Ask students to think of words beginning with a letter that reminds them of the month of March, March break and spring.
4. Groups report their words.

April – Easter – Charades

Recommended Benchmark: 1-6 (multilevel)



Target Language Skills: vocabulary review, physical communication, making guesses, prediction, team work

Materials Needed: Easter worksheet

Procedure:

1. Cut out the words on the worksheet. Fold or roll each sheet and put them in a container or in an envelope.
2. Ask each student to act out the word while the rest of the group guesses. You can set rules such as setting a maximum of two guesses, not allowing lips to move from the person completing the action, etc.
3. Encourage competition among groups. Keep scores. Reward the winners.

TOMB	PRAY	ANGEL
HOLY	CHURCH	EGGS
BUNNY	LAMB	CHICKEN
BONNET	NEST	BASKET
RESURRECTION	CHOCOLATE	JELLY BEANS
LILY	EGG HUNT	RABBIT
JESUS CHRIST	CROSS	DEATH

May - The Most Beautiful Name in the World



Recommended Benchmark: 1-4

Target Language Skills: vocabulary, writing, adjectives review

Materials Needed: Mother's Day worksheet

Procedure:

1. Copy the worksheet onto coloured paper. Distribute them to our class.
2. Ask your students to write the name of their mother vertically, and think of words that begin with those letters which perfectly describe their mothers.
3. Report Time. Display the results on the wall or bulletin board.



Easter Words

Second Language Classroom-Based Assessment Tools:

Guiding Questions for Teachers Teaching Adults

An important part of classroom teaching is the regular assessment that teachers do to measure the achievements of their students and ensure that their program is being delivered effectively. Stakeholders, such as teachers, students and curriculum advisors, rely on the information gained from these assessments. Today, there is a wide variety of classroom-based assessment procedures available to teachers. They range from the traditional test format consisting of short answer and cloze exercises to alternative assessment procedures such as observations and portfolios. Each assessment type gives teachers and students important feedback to help them measure student progress. In addition, each type allows stakeholders to measure a different aspect of achievement. Therefore, using a variety of assessment types provides a comprehensive understanding of student progress and achievement (Brown & Hudson, 1998; Genesee & Upshur, 1996). This information can then be used to make important decisions concerning curriculum, teaching and learning.

Assessment has an impact on teaching and learning. Assessment practices that reflect the goals of the curriculum positively influence classroom teaching and learning. For example, a role play assessment would encourage students to rehearse the communicative strategies taught in a conversation class; whereas, a paper-and-pencil test would not promote communicative preparation for the test.

Choosing the assessment tool that will give the stakeholders the information they require is a complicated process. With this in mind, we have designed a 10-step list of questions to guide teachers through these issues. The purpose of this list is to increase teachers' awareness of the various issues that have an impact on classroom assessment. By reflecting on each of the issues, teachers are able to make informed choices about the assessment tools they use in their classrooms.

This list of guiding questions is developed for second-language teachers of adults. Its purpose is to provide a means to evaluate the appropriateness of various classroom-based assessment tools, both traditional and alternative, in specific contexts. This list could be used by pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and teacher educators.

For a copy of the list of guiding questions, please email us at:

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Teaching English Using Card Games

Card games can be a powerful tool in the ESL classroom. In this workshop, we practised how to use card games that are familiar to most Canadians to practise pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary as well as conversation and listening skills. We began with a jigsaw activity that involved learning and then playing card games in groups. Each group had the rules to a specific card game (either Go Fish, Speed, Liar, or Crazy Eights) and they had to read, discuss and then play the game. Once the members of a group understood their game, they split up and made new groups to teach their game to others and learn at least one other game. This activity works wonderfully in the ESL classroom. While learning the game, the students practise reading and following instructions as well as working together. Then, in teaching a game, the students practise giving instructions, checking to make sure that someone is following what they say, and asking questions. In learning a game from a partner, students practise asking questions, listening and confirming understanding. If you try this activity in your class, you can begin with Canadian games, as we did, or have the students prepare a description of a game from their country.

After this jigsaw activity, we brainstormed card vocabulary that students should know and idioms related to cards. Some of the words and phrases we came up with were:

- 1 to shuffle
- 2 to deal
- 3 dealer
- 4 to cut the deck
- 5 clockwise/counter clockwise
- 6 face down/up
- 7 it's your turn
- 8 "Who's turn is it?"
- 9 Who's next?/Whose go?"
- 10 pile
- 11 jack, queen, king, ace, joker
- 12 hearts, diamonds, spades, clubs
- 13 a suit
- 14 a pair
- 15 three of a kind
- 16 a deck/pack of cards
- 17 a card shark
- 18 to have an ace up your sleeve
- 19 poker face
- 20 to play your cards close to your chest
- 21 to bluff
- 22 to lay your cards on the table
- 23 not playing with a full deck
- 24 to play your cards right

We then learned the rules of Concentration, Crazy Eights and Go Fish and talked about how to adapt each to the classroom. We tried out the original game as well as a few of the classroom modifications, so that everyone felt comfortable taking these games into the classroom. I will discuss the details of Concentration, but for the others, you will have to sign up for the workshop the next time it's offered!

Concentration: This is a game of memory and matching. You lay pairs of cards -- face down on the table and try to match pairs by turning over two at a time. The game is more difficult if the pairs are mixed together. To make the game easier, separate the pairs into two groups and choose one from the first group and one from the second. If the two you turn over are not a match, you turn them face down again and the next player tries to find a match. If the two you turn over are a pair, you take that pair and then turn over two more until you don't find a match. The player with the most pairs at the end of the game is the winner.

This game is a great way to practise vocabulary. You can have the students match pictures of the word to the word itself, the idiom with its meaning (It's raining cats and dogs + It's raining heavily), the prefix to the correct root (un + complicated OR dis + assemble), or the noun with its quantifier (a can of + tuna OR a dozen + eggs).

You can also use this to practise pronunciation by matching the word to its stress pattern, or to its phonetic spelling. The students could also match sentences with their stress patterns.

This game can also be used to practise grammatical structures and speaking. You can have the students match the tag question to the original sentence (It's hot, + isn't it?) or the sentence to the tag response (It's hot. + Is it?) After teaching transition words to a writing class, you could also make cards with various matching clauses on them and ask the students to think of and use a transition word to join them (It's hot in here. + I'm going to buy an air conditioner. = "It's hot in here; therefore, I am going to buy an air conditioner.") The students could practise relative object pronouns by matching a noun and its function (A blender + machine, makes milkshakes = A blender is a machine which can be used to make milkshakes.")

Finally, the game can be used to practise memorizing information the students might need for the citizenship test -- for example, matching Canadian provinces and their capitals.

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A Hybrid Academic Writing Course for a Hybrid Group of Students

Summary:

Unlike international students who take the TOEFL, Quebec francophone students need not take a language proficiency test to study at an English university in Quebec. Therefore, students from varied backgrounds in an ESL/EAP course, also are at various levels of English language proficiency. The presenter demonstrates a combination in-class and online academic writing course designed to meet the challenges of ESL/EAP undergraduates at McGill University. The course promotes independent learning, largely through strategy-building. Discussion deals with how aspects of the course design can be adapted to different student populations.

This demonstration/workshop began with an introduction of the teaching/learning context, focusing on the course and the students. The course is an undergraduate, high-intermediate level EAP course focused specifically on academic writing. The Michigan English language proficiency test is used for placement with students who score 75-80 eligible. This three-credit elective offered by the Faculty of Arts is available to students from any degree program in all faculties and counts toward their GPA. The course is 39 hours of class time over 13 weeks, and there is a maximum of 25 students per class. Classes are held in a regular classroom except for two or three sessions in a multi-media computer lab. Class time does not replace online time, which students *must* access in order to complete assignments and participate in class activities.

While comprised primarily of undergraduate students, graduate students may take the course, but not for credit. The students are Quebec francophones, international and exchange students, largely from Europe, Asia and South America; international students must pass the TOEFL. Anecdotally, Quebec francophones tend to have stronger listening and speaking skills; students from outside Quebec are often stronger in grammar. All lack vocabulary, are weak in writing and need to learn the conventions of North American English academic writing. Another commonality is that students who take this course are highly motivated. Attendance, class management and homework are never issues.

The online component of the course is considered important for two reasons. First, it helps build students' confidence. Students may be new to using delivery software, and so some may have the opportunity to develop their English and computer skills – valuable as an increasing number of McGill professors are using WebCT for course delivery. Unexpectedly, some students have reported that learning to use WebCT in the EAP course allowed them to show their English first language (L1) peers in other courses how to use the software. So, even though the EAP students have a language disadvantage compared to their L1 peers, they still can demonstrate confidence in an academic learning skill. Second, the online component of the course is designed to promote learner autonomy: students learn how to make judicious use of language learning resources and students with varied skill levels can work at their own pace.

The workshop was designed to allow the presenter to share the course in the hope that participants may be able to adopt some of the ideas in their teaching. At the same time, it was designed for maximum interaction so that participants could offer suggestions for improvement. So, after the introduction, participants received one of two handouts: one had questions related to course design and assessment – the other to technology, interaction and collaboration. All topics were drawn from the WebCT Exemplary Course Project Scoring Rubric (<http://www.webct.com/exemplary>). Participants were asked to focus on answering the questions as they pertained to the different components of the course that were demonstrated. These components included, for example:

- how learning outcomes are linked to assignments
- how the course makes use of technology
- how the course fosters independent learning

- how an asynchronous group ‘discussion’ assignment is used to improve academic writing
- how online grammar, vocabulary and style resources are used for a writing self-correction assignment
- how online authentic readings are used as writing prompts
- how class handouts are posted to the online course
- how e-mail is used for providing audio feedback in mp3 file format
- how and why the online grade tool is used

After the brief demonstration, participants got into small groups to discuss answers to the questions on their respective handouts. Finally, the groups got together to share the many ideas and suggestions for making other and better use of the software for improved teaching/learning, and for adapting the material for students in a variety of learning contexts.

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Conference participants break for refreshment..

Multi-level Language Ability Groupings

This presentation challenged the use of multi-level groupings in language classes in a secondary school where a 'multi-level' class includes the most beginner to the most advanced students. Moreover, this session promoted change from multi-level groupings to more homogeneous language ability groupings in a high school context.

First, there was a discussion on the theory of multi-level language ability groupings. Two key points were highlighted: most research shows that multi-level grouping strategies are likely to negatively impact language learners; researchers who promote multi-level grouping strategies tend to base their research on small classes of adult learners.

Next, Stoller's (1997) model of change was presented. This model outlines key criteria that must be fulfilled in order for change to occur. To demonstrate Stoller's model, the key criteria for change were applied to a secondary school context in which educators sought to change multi-level language ability groupings to more homogeneous groupings. Also, as part of the demonstration of change in the secondary school context, conference participants were asked to perform in the play, "The ESL Whey." This is a play based on the book, Who moved my cheese?, which emphasizes the need to accept change as an inevitable part of life. In conclusion, participants were asked to consider challenging multi-level language ability groupings as well as any other change in their teaching environment.



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Practical Applications of Sustained-Content

Language Instruction in EAP

International students entering Carleton University bring with them a variety of academic experiences, English language proficiency and disciplinary interests. Those who do not meet university regulated English language levels, but do meet other requirements set out by their programs, receive acceptance to the university which requires them to attend EAP (English for Academic Purposes) credit courses, while enrolled in a limited number of courses specific to their program. Consequently, Carleton's EAP program serves students across all disciplines and poses common instructional challenges in terms of helping students develop both general proficiency in academic English and in the various academic literacies they need in order to succeed in their disciplinary specialties.

As EAP instructors at Carleton, we have previously attempted to meet these needs by adopting content-based instruction (CBI) in the form of theme-based units in which we teach academic skills, language development and genre awareness via particular content areas. However, through our individual and collaborative work, we began to sense a number of limitations with the thematic approach, particularly our students' ability to engage with content in meaningful ways in their academic writing assignments. Spurred by the recognition of these limitations, we entered into experimentation with other approaches in our classrooms. What we describe below is our process of curriculum and materials development. This development, which we are still actively engaged in, is based on a recursive process involving the interplay between classroom experimentation and observation, theoretical research in the area of sustained content-based instruction (SCBI) and reflective teaching practices.

While our work is most closely aligned with Action Research in that it is "situational", "participatory" and "self-evaluative" (Cohen & Manion, 1987, p. 208), various ethical and logistical limitations within the research context do not allow us to integrate student data within our discussion. In particular, due to our role as evaluators, ethical issues surface regarding data collection from our current students. As the completion of EAP courses mean achieving 'regular' student status, they represent high-stakes learning environments for our students. Similarly, the ethical questions surrounding collecting data retroactively from former students have yet to be decided upon within our university. In addition, given the experimental nature of our process, it was only while immersed in the new pedagogical approach that we recognized the possible richness of engaging in more detailed research into the learning that we intuitively felt was taking place. While plans are underway to begin more formal research, our discussion here is based on our collaborative observations and impressions as we engage in the process of curriculum development. We will begin by briefly outlining the issues that arose within our previous thematic instructional approach. This is followed by a description of sustained content-based instruction as defined by Pally (2001) and the way in which we developed and applied this theoretical approach within the context of Carleton's EAP program and the courses we teach.

Limitations of the Thematic Approach

Content-based language teaching (CBI) with its focus on learning language through meaningful negotiation with content has played an important role in EAP instruction since the 1970's (Pally, 2000). As a general pedagogy, advocates of CBI assume that it provides opportunities for ESL students to use language in more meaningful ways than traditional grammar-based instruction, and allows students to engage in content-based assignments that are more closely aligned with the types of language use required

of them in their university courses. One application of CBI is the thematic approach in which courses are organized around a variety of themes each taking place over two to four weeks of class instruction. As instructors within Carleton's EAP program we originally adopted the theme-based approach by developing units within our courses which would generally consist of two or three readings on a particular topic, scaffolded by reading strategy instruction. An aural component, such as a video or lecture, was also included to allow us to guide students through listening and note-taking strategies. Each thematic unit culminated in a written assignment in which students were asked to synthesize information from each of the texts they were working with in response to a prompt. Similar to our present teaching and learning goals, our thematic based courses were organized around the goals presented in the example below as they appear to the student on the course outline:

During this term, you will have the opportunity to:

Increase your awareness of the way in which information and ideas are communicated and organized both orally and in writing within academic communities

Develop abilities in listening, reading, writing, speaking and researching within the university setting

Develop a further understanding of the specific expectations for students studying within your particular discipline

Practice and further develop skills in locating, paraphrasing, synthesizing and analyzing information as well as note-taking, orally presenting, and organizing writing, in order to efficiently and comprehensibly display knowledge

Source: Course Outline ESLA1500 Girvan & Ross

As seen in the goals listed above, our focus was to engage students with authentic content and tasks similar to those they would encounter in academic study. In writing assignments in particular, we often focused instruction on the ability to synthesize information from several texts on a topic area in such a way that a student could clearly display his or her new content knowledge and effectively support the message he or she wished to communicate. This involved instruction and practice in paraphrasing, integrating quotations, audience awareness and analysis of thematic texts to identify connections between ideas.

However, in spite of these efforts we at times felt deflated by the kinds of written products our students were able to produce. The precise source of our concern was elusive as the papers were often organized and contained reasonably correct language. This led us to examine students' work in more detail. Although their papers often demonstrated the use of certain academic conventions such as the integration of quotations or an overall essay structure, the papers failed to convey the depth and texture of ideas in academic writing at the university level, and thus lacked an overall 'academic' quality.

Adding to the simplistic feel of the writing, was the use of language that in spite of its general accuracy was limited in range. Often, papers contained very little elaboration on the ideas and concepts presented in the course materials and tended to be limited to two or three generalized arguments which might derive from students' own experience rather than the course content itself. When students did refer to content, we found that it was often only in the form of a particular quotation without further development or integration of the idea within the paper itself. In terms of organization, there seemed to be a disconnected quality between the type of organization selected and the actual content which needed to be conveyed to meet the

purpose of the writing assignment. The general organizational pattern employed by students, regardless of assignment requirements, tended to be something akin to the traditional five-paragraph essay.

This ‘one size fits all’ approach seemed to indicate a ‘test mode’ in which students were applying previously learned organizational patterns they had employed in the past on written language tests, such as the TOEFL. As we reflected more on the work we were receiving from our students, we began to feel that in spite of our content-based approach, students seemed to remain focused on ‘form’, rather than on communicating meaningful information. We also felt that it was the lack of focus on content in their writing that made the work distinctly non-academic.

This absence of content in smaller course assignments was coupled with a demonstrated lack of ability by our students to deal with content effectively in the larger scale independent research projects we assigned. For instance, when students did try to deal more extensively with content in their research projects, they often resorted to ‘chunking’ large sections of text and ‘patching’ them together which put them at risk of plagiarism. This indicated that in spite of our attempt to teach students synthesis skills within each thematic unit, combining information from different texts in the same area seemed beyond their skill level. In addition, when students attempted to engage with the content their research uncovered, their language often broke down in accuracy and at times became incomprehensible. Therefore, within our students’ work, the absence of content seemed to be symptomatic of a larger problem—the inability to use language effectively to communicate complex ideas from content they were presented with.

EAP Student Needs

To contextualize the ‘gaps’ we saw in our students’ written work, we turn briefly to a consideration of what types of assignments are required of students in the broader context of the university and the role of EAP in student preparation. The limited nature of content within students’ papers raises important questions regarding our curricular goals in EAP, such as whether our understanding and evaluation of language use and content can or should be separated. In other words, how much of our focus in EAP should be on content and how much should be directed solely towards the acquisition of language? Are we attempting to prepare students with language proficiency equal to that of L1 high school students uninitiated into academic communities, or should we consider that in many contexts, for example here at Carleton, students are already tackling university level language in their concurrent content courses? These are questions that are of concern in both the broader context of EAP as well as within our own EAP credit department at Carleton.

Some may argue that if students can demonstrate basic academic organizational patterns and reasonably accurate language, perhaps engaging with content in meaningful ways should be a curricular goal of their content courses and not of EAP. However, in a recent study Melzer (2003), examined over seven hundred university assignments across a variety of universities and disciplines. He found that the majority of writing (73%) requires students to perform transactional writing, which is informative in nature. He also concludes that faculty often explicitly request students to demonstrate knowledge including in their assignment questions such remarks as “use phrases and sentences that show me what you know about a topic” (Melzer, 2003, p. 6). Consequently, if our goals are to prepare students to succeed in their disciplines, and demonstrating content knowledge is a measure of that success, then it seems that focusing our instruction on helping students use language to express content knowledge should remain a crucial goal in the curriculum of our courses.

In addition to displaying content knowledge, research suggests that students also need certain abilities in both synthesis and analysis of texts. For instance, Melzer (2003) found that students were more often being requested to complete what he terms *alternative* research writing, which asks students to grapple with “a puzzle or problem” (p. 20), in contrast to more traditional research projects that ask students to “report on existing knowledge in a logical and linear fashion” (p.21). An increase in journal writing assignments, 11% of overall assignments, in which students are asked to connect ideas across readings and with personal experience also indicates a need for students to go beyond simply communicating content knowledge (Melzer, 2003). This is similar to findings from a study conducted at the University of Nevada (Waldo, 2004), in which writing assignments across faculties were examined for key requirements. Analysis, critique and synthesis were ranked as the most common elements required in academic writing across disciplines (89%). While analysis takes on different forms within different disciplinary contexts, it is clear that students need to develop an understanding of content in order to respond to what they learn.

After re-examining what we were presenting students with, it became clear that we were not adequately preparing students with the kinds of cognitive and written skills that they would need to be successful in their course work. This led us to search out new approaches in EAP instruction, particularly sustained content based instruction.

Sustained Content-based Instruction

In relation to the theoretical origins of Sustained content based instruction (SCBI), Pally (2000 and elsewhere) has made significant contributions to the growing body of literature in this area. While Pally’s work extends beyond theory to classroom applications and research, we will focus below on her explication of SCBI’s theoretical framework, particularly those pedagogical assumptions most relevant to the concerns we have highlighted above. Pally (2000) situates SCBI within the larger context of CBI. However, she distinguishes SCBI from the thematic based approach by its focus on one overarching content area within the course. Focusing students on one content area allows them to progress “through various aspects of a larger topic such that later concepts and information rely on earlier ones—just as students do in content classes” (Pally, 2001, p. 281). Central to sustained content pedagogy is the notion that knowledge of a particular content area is accrued gradually, allowing students to relate new concepts to previous concepts and develop deeper, more critical approaches to the content they study. Thus, by extending students’ content knowledge, Pally argues that they are more ably prepared to complete complex academic tasks such as synthesis and analysis with the academic texts they encounter (2001).

In support of SCBI, Pally draws on the large body of research in favour of content-based instructional approaches. Research in SLA supports claims that language acquisition occurs through meaningful interactions with comprehensible input during ‘real-world’ tasks (Krashen, 1981 in Pally 2001). However, like others in the field of EAP, ourselves included, Pally points to a similar gap in the “level of skill” that students develop within the thematic content-based framework (2001, p. 11). She maintains that SCBI provides greater opportunities for students to experience and master the more challenging assignments required of them within the academic context. In particular, Pally (2001) focuses on the skill of argumentation which she breaks down into analytical and critical thinking. While these concepts are widely used and have varied meanings, Pally sees them as broad terms inclusive of more basic abilities such as “grasping claims and perspectives in readings and lectures” (p. 279) as well as synthesizing and presenting this understanding with one’s own ideas using the “appropriate rhetorical conventions” (p. 279). In relation to the cognitive load such tasks pose to students, she draws on Cummins’ (1981 in Pally 2001) claim that CALPS (*cognitive academic learning proficiency*) cannot be developed by engaging in everyday L2 interactions distinct from academic communication and argues that a “cyclical, synergistic relationship exists between content and critical thinking skills” (2000, p. 11). Thus, by adopting one content area that

conceptually builds in complexity as students' content courses do, SCBI increases students' opportunities to experience and practice higher levels of thinking than may be the case with frequently changing, more simplistic thematic units.

In addition to increasing the cognitive challenge of EAP assignments, Pally also suggests that SCBI involve extensive reading. Summarizing the work of Krashen (1981 in Pally, 2001) and others, Pally argues that extensive reading in one content area not only provides students with the depth of knowledge needed to engage in analytical and critical thinking, but allows students to develop language through "its promotion of schema and recycling of vocabulary and forms" (p. 4). As students encounter academic texts on the same topic and typically from the same discipline, they are exposed to recurring terminology, academic phrasing and conventions that become increasingly familiar and may help them to develop their own writing and academic voice. Pally also cites Leki and Carson's call for "text responsible" writing (1997 in Pally 2001, p. 2) as a goal for SCBI pedagogy. As mentioned above, academic assignments often require students to write informatively, demonstrating what they have learned from course materials rather than personal responses. When students read extensively in a particular topic area, they are more likely to develop the depth of understanding to convey these ideas in writing.

Theory to Practice: Applications of SCBI

Our review of the literature on SCBI played an important role both in clarifying the gap we had intuitively felt in our students' work and in developing curricular responses to this gap. While in our individual practices we had been moving toward a more holistic version of the thematic approach in which themes were loosely linked, SCBI provided us with a useful theoretical framework to help guide and begin to refine our approach. In addition to the generalized notion of one overarching content area, we attempted to incorporate what we saw as three defining and interrelated characteristics of SCBI, *extensive reading*, *text responsible writing*, and *sufficiently complex tasks*, into our course designs. These three elements seemed to concretely address the issues we had discovered in our thematic approach and will be discussed in general terms below. We will then turn to a more detailed description of how these elements played out in our curriculum at both the intermediate and advanced levels in Carleton's EAP program.

- **Extensive Reading**

The primary issue in our previous thematic approach seemed to be the lack of depth in the presentation of particular themes due to time constraints. Without extensive reading in a particular content area, our students seemed to lack the knowledge to adequately engage with it beyond a superficial level. They also lacked repeated exposure to concepts and the time to develop deeper understanding through the interplay between old knowledge and new knowledge. Previously, influenced by Gibbs' (1992) concept of deep learning, we had encouraged students to take deeper approaches to learning thematic content as opposed to more surface learning strategies that simply extracted discrete points from readings and patched them together. However, moving across loosely related themes hindered development of deep learning as students had little 'incubation' time within a particular theme to grapple with complex ideas. While the thematic approach allowed for some recycling of ideas and vocabulary, it was difficult for students to develop the kind of deep knowledge and thinking about a topic area required to successfully write about it in a way that displayed understanding. Any attempt to synthesize and analyze the academic voices presented in readings and lectures was a further challenge beyond their reach. Therefore, essential to our application of SCBI was a focus on one larger content area in which students read extensively. After our initial implementation of SCBI, however, we did modify our definition of extensive reading somewhat. Rather than overloading students with complex academic literature that could overwhelm both ourselves and our students, we decided to focus more on three or four core academic readings and supplement this material

with lectures and case studies. Restricting the amount of reading allowed us greater opportunities to model strategies for deeper, analytical reading and provided class time to tease out connections across readings, case studies and students' personal experience. These discussions were critical in allowing students to engage in the kind of 'deep learning' needed to develop 'text responsible' writing.

- **Text Responsible Writing and Sufficiently Complex Tasks**

By extending students' content knowledge through 'deep learning', we were able to create assignments that required students to incorporate content more extensively and in more complex ways. In our thematic approach we often had students respond to a more global essay prompt, however in our application of SCBI we provided students with more structured assignments in which they were required to complete specific written tasks that demonstrated understanding and application of content to new situations. In constructing assignments, we attempted to focus on transferable skills our students could use regardless of discipline. To do this, we translated Pally's breakdown of critical thinking skills to a more general model which involved the application of a theory, concept or formula to a new situation or context. We will discuss this model further in relation to the intermediate EAP course we describe below.

- **Sustained Process**

In addition to SCBI, we drew on the field of genre studies, both from the EAP genre stream (Swales, 1990; Currie, 1993), in which text analysis is a primary goal to understanding how writers work to fulfill purposes within particular contexts, and the New Rhetoric stream with its focus on "genre as a social action" (Miller, 1984 in Freedman & Medway, 1994, p. 9). Of particular interest from the area of New Rhetoric genre studies is the way in which genres are negotiated between initiated members of an academic community and entering members. This interest has helped to shape a sustained process approach to our teaching. By sustained process we extend the notion of SCBI to include recurring assignment types which allow students to receive on-going feedback as they negotiate academic language. As more initiated members of the larger academic community, we are able to guide students through the process of meaning making and general academic language. In addition, by conferencing with students during the writing process, we emphasize "the phenomenon of collaboration" (Freedman & Medway, 1994, p. 5) between experts and novices that is seen as a crucial component of genre acquisition.

However, as Freedman & Medway (1994) have cautioned, as outsiders to some of our students' disciplines of choice, there are limits to how far we can go in initiating them into the genres unique to their disciplines. Based on genre research conducted in the EAP stream, most notably Swales (1990), we engage students in explicit text analysis strategies. We work through texts to alert students to differences in genres within academic communities and help them to apply these analysis skills to texts within their academic fields.

New Rhetoric theories of genre also emphasize the implicit nature of genre acquisition. For instance, a study by Freedman (1987) examines the gradual change in the written work of law students as they encountered extensive exposure to law discourses through lectures and texts. Freedman concludes that it is active participation within an academic community that leads to acquisition of knowledge. While conferencing with students as they write and supplying students with repeated feedback works towards this aim, we also find that SCBI allows us greater opportunities to expose students to academic texts than in our previous theme-based approach. Given the short time span within which a theme was to be covered, we were often compelled to choose simpler, less academic texts and topics that students could manage with their current language proficiency. This was especially problematic in that by presenting students with a

text from a magazine genre, for example, we were modeling a more superficial, generalized treatment of an otherwise academic topic.

In summary, after reflecting on our individual and collaborative practice and researching relevant theory, we have developed the following set of assumptions:

- Content characteristics shape language range: in order to produce academic language students need to engage with content that models and elicits the level of language use we want them to develop
- Content models and shapes thinking patterns: in order to become familiar with the ways in which ideas are thought through in the academic community, students need to engage with content that presents and requires such thinking
- Thinking patterns shape language patterns: there is an inescapable relationship between how we think and the word choices and structures that we use to draw out and communicate meaning
- Academic performance unites content, thinking, and language: even at the basic stages of academic performance, students are expected to understand what they read and hear in lectures, discriminate between the layers and levels of generality and detail, and pitch their language to an academic audience
- Recursive processes reinforce academic patterns of thinking & language
- Cumulative tasks reinforce patterns and develop mastery (These last two assumptions will be discussed in more detail within the description of the advanced level EAP course)

These assumptions have guided us throughout the development of the two EAP courses we describe below.

Sustained Content: An intermediate-level EAP course

In order to move from theory to practice with this approach, we realized that four aspects of instruction needed to be addressed: Rationale; Content; Strategies; and Assignments. These aspects move from macro-processes – considerations of a pedagogical nature - to micro-processes – those considerations of a curricular and methodological nature. All aspects have to be considered within the basic framework for our sustained-content approach which suggests that we must provide opportunities in which *theories/ models/ formula can be applied in new situations*.

RATIONALE

As we have mentioned in the theoretical explanation of SCBI, we have sufficient research and experience with this approach to justify its use to ourselves in our classrooms; however, it is relatively new and by no means unanimously used intra-institutionally, let alone inter-institutionally. In fact it is used by only a handful of instructors within our institution. For students who have been encultured within a different instructional paradigm, the potential for cultural/ pedagogical shock is present. Students generally have experience with content-based instruction within our school, however they are accustomed to encountering 3-4 different units within a twelve-week period. As a result, many incredulously ask “Are we really going to study only one topic the whole term?”

In order to create the best “buy-in” on the part of students, we always very explicitly elaborate the rationale of this pedagogical approach. At the outset of the course, during the first or second session, we give a short lecture on “deep” and “surface” learning, and the critical thinking, analysis and synthesis skills needed in all disciplines within the university. We directly make the connection between the sustained content approach and the sustained learning opportunities that will allow students to develop and expand upon the skills needed in all other content courses. Following the lecture, we present a short practice lecture quiz, allow for peer discussion on the topic, and ask for a written response to the content of the lecture. The

purpose of these unevaluated activities is threefold: firstly they are meant to scaffold comprehension of the approach; secondly, they give students the opportunity in a risk-free environment (un-evaluated) to experience the kinds of activities and evaluation that will take place within this particular course; thirdly they closely approximate the kinds of lecture and note-taking tasks that students are expected to master within many of their other courses.

CONTENT

In the second of three levels of EAP at our institution, two of us formed a curriculum planning partnership to develop a unit on the theme of *Ethics*. The criteria for choosing this topic, and indeed all other topics that we have developed and continue to develop is based on the following five considerations:

The topic must:

Have some relevance/ interest through the lived experience of learners (such that they may be able to engage with the topic in a more practical and experiential way before they encounter more conceptually heavy academic language and theories as the course progresses)

Have academic relevance (such that academic texts can be used to support the learning of academic language genres)

Have interdisciplinary implications (such that potential connections can be made to students' disciplines)

Be accessible to learners from a variety of cultural backgrounds

Be appropriate for a research project linking the topic to their major area of study

In the specific case of the Ethics theme, the content was developed as follows:

Introducing the topic

We first situated the topic within students' experience – case studies involving typical university student ethical dilemma were introduced and discussion followed. Rudimentary concepts/terms in ethical discussions were used (“stakeholders”, “harms” and “benefits”). By starting out with the students' prior knowledge, we have been able to mobilize valuable schema that exist among students and thus move from a more simple “surface” approach to a “deep” approach that eventually becomes more conceptually rich and “academic” and less personal.

Selecting texts

The choice of texts in this approach is a time-consuming, but critical first step. We generally accumulate dozens of academic texts and choose 2-3 that may serve as anchor readings for the theoretical content. These texts are chosen based on their level of difficulty (academic, but not too conceptually challenging); and their generic likeness to academic texts students may encounter in other courses (length, style and organization, etc). These texts provide both input in the way of content, and frameworks upon which to build the textual analysis tasks that are key recurring activities aimed at providing critical awareness of academic genres (audience, author, content, purpose, style, organisation, etc.). We believe such awareness leads to more efficient and comprehensive understanding of texts.

In our unit on Ethics, we chose 2 substantial texts on 2 ethical theories - *Utilitarianism & Relativism*. These two texts were chapters in academic textbooks; as such, they were conceptually rich. These texts were not, however, advanced philosophy texts that were beyond the students' potential comprehension. For example, we did not choose to present Utilitarianism in the original texts of John Stuart Mill, but rather in a text by a business ethics writer who summarized the concepts of Mill and others in a basic way supported by case studies at the beginning and end of the chapter.

In addition to these two “anchor” texts, we provided three case studies throughout the term to provide new situations in which to apply the theoretical tools of analysis. This kind of combination works very well. We have experimented with a greater number of academic texts, but have found that if the two academic texts are substantial enough in their conceptual depth and in length (approximately 10-20 pages), the appropriate balance between academic content and essential learning strategies is struck.

Lectures and Discussion

Lectures were developed to scaffold comprehension of the readings and small group discussion as well as whole-class discussion was built into the curriculum. Students were able to work through confusing concepts with peers and the instructor. These sessions, as well as lecture comprehension quizzes also allowed the instructors to clearly see which aspects of the theory needed further explicit instruction.

Case Studies

For each theory a case study was introduced in order to allow the students the opportunity to use concepts and terms in new situations of analysis. This was a powerful method to adopt not only because it replicates similar activities in other courses (the application of formula, models, and theories to new situations), but it effectively frees both students and instructors from the constraints of potential plagiarism. While it may be easy to download an essay on “Business ethics” from an internet essay provider, it is not easy to find a theoretical analysis of a particular case using a particular theory (both chosen by the instructor).

Students also had the opportunity to choose their own ethical case study from their own discipline in a discipline- specific research project.

ASSIGNMENTS/ EVALUATION

In this particular course, the combination of assignments that worked most effectively is listed below. The strategies taught and developed in each assignment are briefly described. The strategies work in tandem with the sustained content framework of using theory/ strategies in new situations of analysis.

- **Lecture Quizzes** (listening & note-taking). These assignments began as unevaluated practice exercises to initiate the development of listening, lecture analysis, and note-taking strategies. At approximately one third of the way through the course, these quizzes were given some evaluated credit.
- **Reading Quizzes** (& note-taking). These also began as unevaluated practice in strategy development. Textual analysis of genre, content and map-making techniques of the author in guiding the reader, as well as awareness of the rhetorical structures that organized the content were critical strategies developed in reading academic texts throughout the term.

In-class writing Assignments: These recursive tasks allowed for the greatest development of academic writing. As they were introduced, the following strategies were expected to be used in these assignments: Rhetorical Structures, Paraphrasing & summarizing, Citation conventions, Original analysis using theory, Writing with maps/signposts for the reader

Under the rubric of the Ethics theme, the students had several opportunities to perform a two-stage piece of writing; the first was a summary of the particular theory under observation, and the second was an analysis of a particular case using a theory. The kind of prompt used for the analysis task was generally a variation of the following pattern:

Analyze the actions/ values of Stakeholder A in the ABC case. Using Utilitarianism or Relativism as a tool of analysis, determine whether the stakeholder was justified.

Students were encouraged to use the concepts and terms affiliated with each theory in their analysis. Before and after each assignment, student models were shown to demonstrate a wide range of acceptable responses (i.e. there was never simply one “right” answer).

- **Research Project:** This assignment involved a synthesis of the ethical theories introduced in the course with individual student disciplines and was cumulative in nature. The cases for ethical analysis were chosen by students from their discipline and thus this activity became an opportunity for students to individually apply the theory in a particular case with less intervention from the instructor and classmates.
- **Academic Skills’ Portfolio:** This assignment consisted of a compilation of worksheets aimed at developing and reflecting on the strategies identified in the assignments above. These worksheets are designed to extend the development of academic skills through the application to individual student disciplines. For example, as a class, we perform a number of textual analyses on our shared texts, then for the Academic Skills’ Portfolio students must find an academic text within their own discipline and perform a textual analysis. Reflections of a comparative nature are integral to these worksheets. Students are encouraged to judge the value of the particular strategy as it may be applied within the genres of their disciplines.
- **Final in-class Assignment** (including lecture quiz, reading quiz, oral interview, written summary and written case analysis). This final assignment was worth approximately one third of the total value of the term, took place over four class periods, and was designed to provide students the opportunity to demonstrate an appropriate level of competence in the academic language and strategies developed throughout the term through the sustained content theme of Ethics.

REFLECTIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION AT THE INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

The process outlined above represents our third effort at covering the theme of “ethics” in a sustained way. When we first tried this theme, the pedagogy was very new to us and we did not thoroughly commit to the academic depth of content necessary for optimal effectiveness. Consequently, students produced work similar to what we had seen with our individual thematic units.

As we experimented with foundational texts and decided on two theories in Ethics, we began to note the difference in the quality and quantity of student output. The final assignment was one of the areas of student output that most impressed us because students tend to be quite competent in using academic concepts and terms by this stage in the incubation process. Initially, there was student resistance to the level of difficulty of the texts, however, by the end of the course, students were surprised to see the length and the caliber of their writing. For instance, the theory of Utilitarianism that was introduced as the first academic tool for analysis was perceived as too difficult by students at the outset, but by the end of the term, all students had managed to understand the theoretical premises and were able to use the terms and concepts successfully in analyzing cases. The second theory – Relativism – was introduced at the mid-term mark and although students did not have as much time to digest the concepts of this theory, having had exposure to the process of using theory to analyze cases with Utilitarianism, they now felt more comfortable with this recurring task.

With each iteration of the process, not only did students’ conceptual understanding develop, but their level of language and academic tone in their writing also soared to new heights. The level of sophistication evident in the final assignments was unparalleled in our experiences with other pedagogical approaches. In fact some students who at the beginning of the term seemed “at risk” of having to repeat the course because of a low range and fluency with the language, actually managed to produce some incredibly lucid academic writing by Week 10 of the 12-week course. This phenomenon has proven true in all of our courses regardless of the topic, so we strongly believe that the length of sustained time with one topic, and the recursive practice of applying theory in new situations are the determining factors for such a high degree of success among students.

Sustained Process: The advanced level course

In this part of the discussion, we focus on the advanced level course that successful 1500 level students attend. Since criteria for selecting the umbrella content topics and the types of assignments and activities are similar to the 1500 level, our explication of the 1900 level will concentrate on the other arm of sustained content—sustained process. The advanced 1900 level EAP course is the last formal ESL support that students receive before becoming “regular” students. The main goal of the course is to reinforce and refine the academic strategies and language register students have been exposed to at each of the previous levels. In designing the advanced course, our assumption has been that, just as students are able to engage more deeply with content when it is interconnected and runs through the entire course, so they are more likely to master assignments that reappear throughout the course. We imagine a recursive cycle that repeats assignment patterns but also draws more complex dimensions to it as the course unfolds. Our intention is that students have the chance to learn from experience and use feedback more effectively.

One way in which many students entering a new academic community acquire a sense of genre and expectations is through a form of trial and error. The first assignment in a new course is a “trial balloon”; the grade is the barometer of success. We want to help students negotiate this process in a relatively risk-free context. Therefore, we have a combination of “trial” assignments that receive feedback but no official grade, recurring assignment patterns that give room to learn through experience, and feeder tasks that flow into a larger project. Thus, our choice of assignments is based on the principle of recursive, cumulative, and interrelated tasks.

In most university courses, there is a time gap between receiving information and using it for an assignment. Students need to develop effective note-taking and reading strategies that go beyond the skim/scan level, allowing them to grasp deeper meaning and integrate new information over a period of time. They also need to retain information for longer periods, accumulating a base of knowledge that can be used to complete tasks requiring summary, analysis and synthesis. By basing our class assignments on a pattern that follows a common academic structure and time line, we hope to develop transferable academic skills through both sustained content and process.

To illustrate how this works in practice, we look at three assignments that exemplify how a pattern of repetition and incremental complexity may help students to develop & internalise strategies and processes that we believe contribute to their ability to read critically, and to compose more thoughtful writing. These three assignment types also reflect the patterning of the mid-term and final set of tasks students have to complete. The mid-term is also a model for the more heavily weighted final—sustaining the recursive, interrelated nature of the course. The umbrella content for this particular course was “information literacy”. We provided a set of core readings that introduced concepts revolving around the different sources and forms of information, how we judge the quality of information, and how we use that information for a variety of purposes. The general subject is easily applicable to a range of academic fields and lends itself to the kind of discipline-specific research we wanted students to do.

The three assignment types are a Summary/ quotation/ interpretation (SQI), discussion paper, and the research paper that was part of an ongoing semester-long project. Each assignment employs the patterns of concept analysis, application and synthesis that we hope to foster in students, and also uses the academic conventions of evidence and citation that characterise academic practice. The SQI tasks develop into the discussion papers, and the discussion papers become integral parts of the final research paper. The smaller scale tasks rehearse features of the more substantial assignments. Students can immediately apply the feedback on one assignment to the next and become more expert at interpreting and carrying out the finer

details of assignment specifications.

The SQI

The summary/ quotation/ interpretation (SQI) asks students to summarise a concept or theory from the current class reading and lecture material, select a quotation from the material that captures a key notion related to the concept, and interpret both the meaning of the quotation and its relationship to the concept. The SQI is an ungraded assignment, but it receives extensive feedback in order to prepare for the graded discussion papers. The SQI also feeds into the mid-term and final writing assignments which are graded and heavily weighted.

As they undertake this task, students are exploring the meaning of the course material, and engaging in patterns of thinking that exercise their critical reading skills and take them through the steps of analysis and synthesis. The task is both a path to understanding the concept (writing to learn), and a measure of how complete that understanding is (writing to demonstrate mastery). In the summary part of the SQI, students are dealing with the concept on a general level and discovering how to represent and communicate the ideas of other thinkers in their own work. The purpose behind the quotation part of the SQI is to have students identify specific key notions within the context of overall meaning, moving between the general and the specific meaning of the text. Although we had students work on selecting appropriate quotation, it proved to be more difficult than we had anticipated. Therefore, we finally provided students with a selection of quotations that included some they had identified and others that we chose.

To explain the quotation, students have to break the idea down into specific points that rehearse the process of analysis that they will need for our later course assignments. The interpretation part of the assignment asks students to apply their understanding of the concept and their analysis of the ideas in the quotation to the wider context of other course material and their own experience/ knowledge. Again, this task sets up a pattern that will be repeated in the discussion papers and the research paper—another chance to rehearse for the larger, more valuable assignments.

The amount of time spent on the first SQI is substantially reduced in later SQIs and the total number of SQIs depends on how much practice students seem to need in preparation for the discussion papers that are graded pieces, completed out of class.

The Discussion paper

The main purpose of the discussion paper is to help students analyse and synthesise, ideas from the course material and their developing research project. The discussion paper is a bridge between the two parts of the course—the content concepts we provide, and the discipline-specific focus the students bring to the course. The first discussion paper deals with concepts from readings on the uses of information, media literacy, ownership, and the research process itself. Students are able to use, and refer to, previous writing assignments and other in-class activities. They use the SQI assignments and feedback, reading and lecture notes, quizzes, and records of group/ class discussions as both content and models of what we want.

The pattern of the discussion paper relies on features of the SQI but goes further in expecting a higher level of analysis and synthesis. The extensive preparation and feedback that students receive on the first discussion paper are designed to lay the foundation for a more independent approach to the next discussion paper. That paper follows a similar pattern but students are expected to work with less support, requiring them to use the previous assignment as a guide rather than relying on our scaffolding of the task.

The first discussion paper transforms into the research background and conceptual framework of the research paper, providing a draft of the salient features of the introduction to the long paper. The second discussion paper addresses the development of the research question, the selection, evaluation, and use of sources, and the distinction between description, analysis, and synthesis. By the time students have completed

the discussion papers they have a viable draft of a substantial portion of the major research paper. We hope they are now poised to complete the research paper independently.

Research paper

The research paper is the major outcome of the research project that runs through the semester. The project begins in the second week and culminates in a substantial paper delivered in the last week of the course. In addition to input from the SQI and discussion papers, students also compile a research portfolio that helps them select sources and do preliminary paraphrasing and evaluation of the material they will use in the paper.

The research project gives students the opportunity to contribute to the content of the course. Students select a discipline-specific / interesting topic that they wish to research. The one proviso is that the topic be academic and lend itself to an analytical approach. We do not expect that all topics will produce the thesis argument genre—the format and style is left open to encourage students to experiment with genre most suited to their fields of study. We do supply a framework for the research in so far as we link the project to the central, umbrella content of the course, and structure the process through the SQI, discussion papers and research portfolio.

As they work towards completion of this paper, students go through the usual academic research process—selecting and focusing the research subject and purpose; developing a thesis or basis for analysis; collecting, describing, analysing, and synthesising information; and presenting to an academic audience in accordance with the conventions of that community. But they also use the concepts from the umbrella subject of information literacy to relate their research to wider issues of accuracy, value, and acceptability of information coming from a range of sources. They approach the research with a heightened awareness of how to deal with the volume of information available to us, and how to apply critical reading/ thinking strategies to processing that information in the ways expected at university.

The research paper demonstrates the fusion of content, process, and strategies that is at the heart of our application of sustained content-based instruction. Writing a research paper can be especially daunting for EAP students who have to coordinate content, form, language, and academic conventions to reach a successful outcome. By providing a framework of content and process, we hope to help students negotiate the layers of such an assignment, without removing all choice and leaving enough room for the development of independent responsibility.

Observation, challenges and issues

We are beginning now to find the most appropriate ways to substantiate the speculations, intuitions, and impressions that have led us this far. However, based on what we see and hear as we monitor and reflect on what is happening in our classes, we can make some comments.

Our general observations

□ Initial confusion around concepts

When students first encounter the concepts, there is an initial period of confusion and frustration. They cannot see the “big” picture or imagine how the different elements will come together. Everything is new and unfamiliar—the idea of sustained content is itself an alien concept for many. At the beginning, the level of scaffolding for reading material, lectures and assignments needs to be high, and we come at the material from several angles trying to connect with what students already know. Our first experience of this phase was disconcerting, but experience has taught us that the best approach is to make our intentions and methodology as transparent to students as possible, and to be prepared to counsel students through this critical period both in class and in office hours.

○ **Deep conceptual discussion during lectures, group activities**

As students gain confidence and familiarity with our expectations and the content of the course, we notice a change in the type of questions they ask. The queries are more precisely focussed on content, and the conversation extends well beyond an interchange between one student and the instructor. We see and hear more cross-referencing between current and previous materials, and between the course content and the students' own knowledge from other sources. The habit of critical inquiry and thoughtful response begins to appear in class discussion, group activities, and individual conferences. We also begin to see more detail in written assignments, and a gradual—but not yet sustained-- development from describing to analysing.

○ **Students have an academic tool with which they may more easily engage in using language for critical thinking tasks**

The recursive assignment pattern that we have described helps students to establish a set of tools for identifying, analysing, applying and synthesising key concepts within a subject area. Interestingly, as we help them use these tools to complete the course assignments, the level and range of language also develops. There seems to be a direct relationship between content, strategic process, and language. If we ask for a higher level of engagement with content, and apply more sophisticated skills to that content, the language richness and register seem to rise to the challenge.

○ **Analysis tasks generally create situations where students cannot plagiarize**

Generally speaking this is true. Since we ask for analysis and synthesis rather than just direct description or reporting, the opportunity to plagiarise is reduced. Students have to attempt to understand the course material and engage in thinking for themselves to be able to apply concepts to new situations and material. However, we still have to deal with issues of heavy “borrowing” in the more traditional segments of the research paper.

○ **Students seem to understand that content / genre drive form (not vice versa)**

One of the major reasons we adopted our variation of sustained content is to remedy the imbalance between form and content we saw in the writing we were getting from our students. By emphasising the paramount role of content and the variety of academic genres, and by reiterating the triad of content, form, and language in everything we ask students to do, the message seems to get through by the end of the course.

The recognition may take many weeks and be somewhat tenuous for some students. Other students move faster and further; but for all students this is the beginning of a process that has to continue, be reinforced and reiterated many times, and refined as they move through the increasing complexity of their subject fields.

The challenges & issues

The continuing challenges we face as we go through each iteration of the courses revolve around the selection of appropriate umbrella topics, overcoming resistance to the sustained content approach, and assessing just how transferable the processes and skill sets are not merely within our EAP program, but across the disciplines.

○ **Topic fatigue**

Since a primary principle is that content initiates the whole process of academic language acquisition, the selection of appropriate and meaningful umbrella topics is crucial. There is a danger that when a single subject area, that students have not directly chosen to study, persists throughout the course, students may switch

off or lose interest. This is a serious threat to the course since so much hangs on a fairly deep engagement with the concepts and a developing understanding of both content and process. The onus is on instructors to choose subject areas that have broad application and that have natural affiliations with the disciplines our students are currently studying.

However, not all our students are registered in the courses they really want to study. Some take Economics because parents want them to prepare to enter the family business. Others are unable to get into the programs they desire. Therefore, we cannot guarantee that our choice will coincide with their interests. This is not peculiar to sustained content. Any content-based instructions be it short, diverse themes, linked themes or full scale sustained content must face these problems and constraints.

A possible solution is to negotiate the subject area with each class of students. The logistics are challenging since we need a repertoire of subject areas and some prepared materials from which to draw. It might be possible to have sets of core readings that facilitate a measure of mix and match flexibility. A more serious concern is that many students have no experience of a negotiated curriculum; we then add another dimension of confusion and resistance to the implementation of sustained content instruction. We may spend more time and energy learning how to negotiate what to do instead of actually doing it. In the context of a two-semester course this may be feasible and even desirable. However, a twelve-week course is another story.

○ *“But we’re supposed to be learning English not...”*

Students enter EAP courses with preconceived ideas about how to learn a language based on previous experience and their pedagogical paradigm. They expect an ESL course to teach them language—many students have not moved far from the grammar-translation paradigm, making learning through content a suspect approach. Even students who have come through content-based instruction at the non-credit or early credit stages of our programs remain sceptical. The move from short-term thematic units to sustained content revives all their reservations and objections.

Although any approach is vulnerable to clashing cultural or pedagogic styles and students’ previous experiences, we want to find ways to connect content and language that will make sense for the majority of our students. Questions we posed earlier are relevant here. Can we evaluate language without evaluating content and thinking? What should an EAP course evaluate?

○ *Transferability—between levels & beyond EAP*

This is the issue that most exercises our thinking and reflections on what we have done so far. By espousing sustained content/ process, we hope to give students authentic academic experiences and strategies that they can carry with them to the next level of EAP and on into their university careers.

We are assuming that although content may change, the approach will hold good for other situations—much as we expect our students to apply the course concepts to new cases and circumstances. To date, we cannot substantiate this claim. We are at the beginning of research that will track student progress. We also hope to collaborate with colleagues and graduate students in the MA program in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies to compare student outcomes in thematic content-based instruction and a sustained content approach.

What we have observed so far suggests that there is not an immediate, seamless transfer of processes and skill sets from one level to another. Students from the 1500 level who also take the 1900 level course with us say things like, “this course is so different from the 1500 one.” In fact the courses not only develop from the same set of assumptions, but repeat similar patterns of assignments. The content and higher expectations for performance are the main changes. More surprisingly, students who are repeating the 1900 level with the same instructors but different content, also report that the “course is not the same”. So the question we pose ourselves is “does content change everything?”

If it does, we need to help students see the similarities so that they can draw on what they have learned at the previous level. We do see a shorter adjustment period in those who have already gone through one cycle of sustained content—but again this is an impression yet to be supported with concrete data.

We will continue the evolution of our thinking and practice, supported as much as possible with systematic data collection and analysis. An ever present challenge is the ethical dilemma of using data from our students and balancing the needs of research with the more immediate needs of our students and the pressures to be useful and fair in the work we ask them to do, and the grades we assign for that work.

Once we have a better fix on transferability within EAP levels, we need to determine how what we do fits the larger university context. We have begun to gather current data on assignment types and expectations in the first year courses taken by many of our students. This will be a base from which to continue the investigations works well for a conclusion.

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