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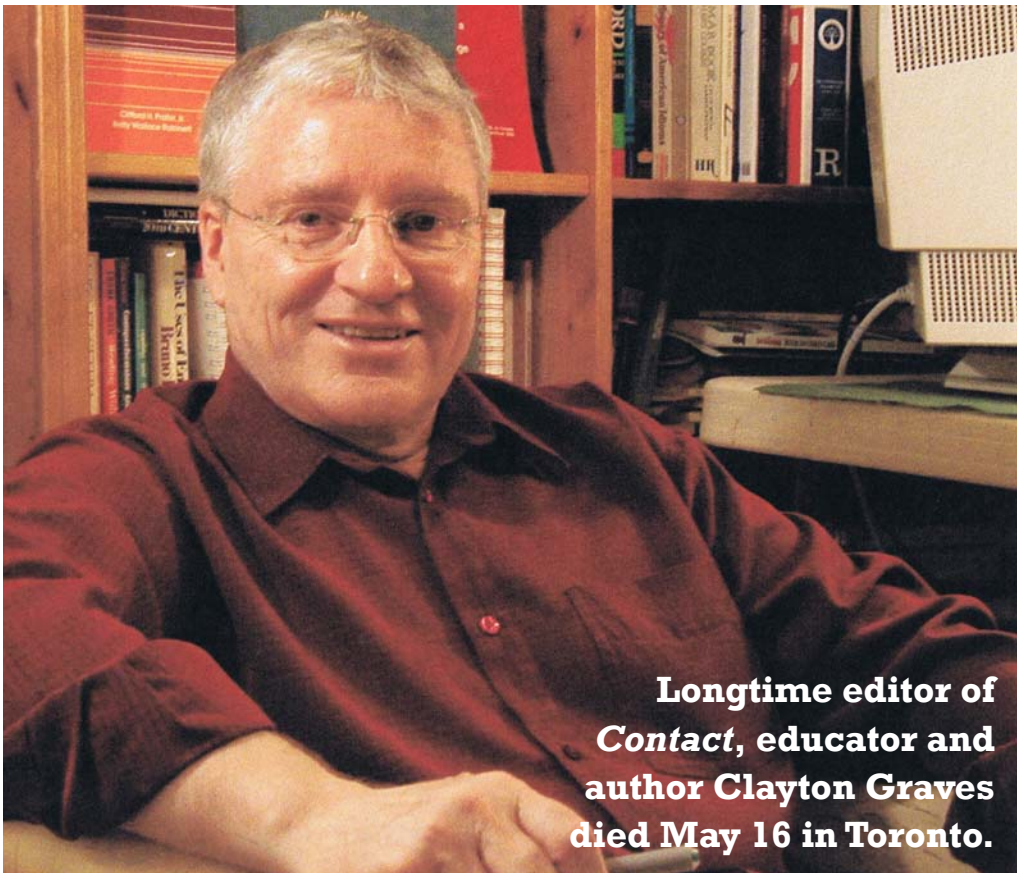
In Memoriam: Editor Clayton Graves



Longtime editor of *Contact*, educator and author Clayton Graves died May 16 in Toronto.

By Meryl Olmstead

This edition of *Contact* is the last one that contains articles edited by Clayton Graves, who died suddenly on May 16, 2010, just four days after celebrating his 65th birthday.

Mr. Graves was the editor of *Contact* for seven years, seeing it through two masthead facelifts, editing hundreds of articles and working with dozens of writers who had not previously published in wide-circulation newsletters.

His tireless effort, his turn of phrase and his meticulous proofreading ensured that few typographical errors, fewer grammatical errors and no errors of

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

logic sprang from articles in these pages.

Calling on his many years of experience editing and writing English language skills textbooks (you may have studied with his reading series called *Contexts* if you went to junior high school in Canada in the 1980s or 90s), he introduced modern design concepts to meld journalism and academics into the graphical and editorial presentation.

For example, a recent article on immigrants and name-changes featured an entertaining photo collage of famous performers who started out in life with names other than the ones we instantly recognize.

He also introduced photographic essays of the annual TESL Ontario conferences, a pictorial record of the event for those who attended and a window into the conference for those who couldn't be there.

Clayton's editorial motivation was Good Learning: how could an article convey in the most effective, efficient and interesting manner the information its author intended to present?

Of course, as with any editor-writer relationship, there were discussions and debates over the meaning and placement of this word or that. But the goal was always to make *Contact* a better magazine for the TESL Ontario membership.

Under Clayton's editorial leadership, *Contact* moved into the electronic age, ceasing publication as a paper newsletter and becoming available instead as an interactive PDF file, readable and clickable online, but graphically designed as a magazine from which readers can print selected articles in an attractive and useful format, or from which they can print the magazine in its entirety.

Due to Clayton's death, there may be a disruption in the publishing schedule, there may be a change in the editorial style, there may be a change to the way TESL Ontario publishes *Contact*.

But the contributions Clayton Graves made to this publication will be remembered by everyone at TESL Ontario and by the readers of *Contact*. ❖

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

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Editor, TESL Association of Ontario,
27 Carlton Street, Suite 405,
Toronto, Ontario, M5B 1L2

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IN THE CLASSROOM

Working Positively with Diversity in Your Classroom

By Jelena Kikas

As instructors and students both know, teaching and learning are of one piece. The process calls for a total alignment of minds, hearts, and spirits. One way of describing that might be through the famous line from *Among School Children*, by the poet W.B. Yeats: "How can we know the dancer from the dance?"

One reality of classroom life that can short-circuit or even prevent such a connection is diversity. Teachers, students and groups within schools might perceive each other as being "different" or "the other." Human beings tend to be tribal, seeking out "their own kind" yet diversity is mainstream in Canadian ESL education.

The sense of otherness might emerge from one or more factors: race, ethnicity, economic/social background, idiosyncratic ways of learning, even gender.

The result could be mutual resistance by both student and teacher. This is complicated exponentially by the mission of education to equip students to reach their potential in society. That entails, of course, coming to understand and conform to "the rules." Public education is a form of socialization.

Essentially, the issue here might boil down to respecting and even championing differences while still making it possible and

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

probable for students to succeed in the world they will enter. No question, this has been an age-old challenge in many disciplines, ranging from education to all kinds of cultural assimilation. The following are four ways to inform one's ESL professional practice.

First of all, obstacles tend to melt away when one admits they exist. That entails dispensing with myths such as "everyone is the same" and "my values do not intrude." Everyone is different, only in different ways. Values are not only embedded in human beings but in the process of education. Operating among these realities requires considerable energy and patience. That is why it is difficult to be a teacher – or a student.

> "...it is useful to have in place — formally or informally — a network of mentors to observe both teachers and students."

Often it is useful to have in place, formally or informally, a network of mentors to observe both teachers and students. What in the process is hidden that should be brought into the light and discussed? What is effective and how can that be replicated in other classrooms? What technology could address differences in learning style and background? A human being's deepest desire is to be understood. When teachers and students indicate they are at least attempting to understand, doors can swing open.

Secondly, it could be helpful to identify and exploit commonalities. In politics, including community organizing, that is a familiar and effective strategy: to pull people together on the basis of what they share. By showing people they had enemies in common and it was in their mutual self-interest to unite, Saul Alinsky was able to help launch the labor movement.

Thirdly, it helps to nurture the ability to change, as a key value. In the global village, which is mutating rapidly because of digital technology, the mantra has become 'change or die.' Both institutions and individuals are grabbing onto guides such as Anneli Rufus's *Stuck: Why We Can't (or Won't) Move On.*

Yet, research and experience demonstrate, as Rufus highlights, "Human beings do not change readily." Groups and individuals encouraged to experiment or "figure it out" can be strengthened by both their progress and setbacks. Incidentally, that makes learning penalty-free. Usually, a prerequisite is feeling one has the "permission" to change. Give it.

Fourth and last, why not replace the mindset of "the other" to just "another person." Everyone, thanks to genes, background and the moment-to-moment experiences in the world, is unique. For exactly that reason so much can be absorbed by encountering that person just as they are.

Diversity is a plus in learning environments. Soon, enough educators and students will recognize that. They may eventually demand it be part of the classroom experience. ❖

Jelena Kirkis teaches at the Francophone College Boreal, where the LINC program celebrated its first anniversary in January, 2010.

A Review of the Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment

By Lorraine Hudson & Justyna Rucinska

A decade after Hyland and Lee (2000) published a critical review of the Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment (CLBA), we have decided to take another look at this instrument, in light of the changing landscape of settlement language training for adult newcomers to Canada. In ten years, settlement language training has expanded, and the CLBA is no longer the only assessment used in this context. However, we have decided to focus on the CLBA due to having firsthand knowledge of it: one of us (Hudson) works as a full-time CLBA assessor.

It would appear that Hyland and Lee did not have experience implementing the test due to several inaccuracies regarding its content, which were duly noted by Stewart and Cohen (2001) in a response to the Hyland and Lee review. It is beyond the scope of the present review to explore all of the issues raised by Hyland and Lee; however, we will revisit the question of the CLBA's potential to create washback. Overall, we do not find a great deal to criticize about the CLBA, provided that it is used as intended by its developers (Norton Peirce & Stewart, 1997): as a *low-stakes* placement tool.

The primary concern that we bring forward relates to the changing landscape of adult settlement language training in Canada, including expanding recognition and use of CLBA

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

assessment results. Additionally, we highlight an inconsistency identified by Fulcher (2008) regarding the task-based nature of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), from which the CLBA was developed.

Included in our review will be an overview of the history, content and educational purposes of the CLBA, as well as brief information about the CLB which provides essential context for understanding the development and use of the CLBA.

History

The development of the Canadian Language Benchmarks, on which the CLBA is based, began in 1992 after Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) decided to establish common Canadian language performance standards. Rigorous consultations within the various ESL communities in Canada aimed to ensure a new and common method of describing second language proficiency, including reliable tools for assessing language skills of learners. It was especially important to set up a system-wide standard so that learners could go from one program to another and have their prior learning recognized and understood. In 1996, a CLB working document was published by CIC. This version included a dozen benchmarks for oral communication, reading, and writing skills, based on what newcomers likely need to be able to do (functions and activities) in English in a Canadian context.

In January 1997, the CLBA was introduced. It was the second phase of the CLB project and was developed to reflect the levels of skills outlined in the *Canadian Language Benchmarks Working Document* (CIC, 1996). Since the creation of the CLBA, a revised CLB document has come out: *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000* (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2005), which formed the basis for a newer, alternate placement instrument.[1] The CLB and the CLBA are labelled as task-based; however, as we will discuss below, it has been pointed out by Fulcher (2008) that the foundation of this designation is not entirely sound.

Test Content/Format

Three key points to highlight regarding the content and format of the CLBA are:

1. It is described as a task-based assessment.
2. Its content is intended to be culturally accessible as opposed to culturally neutral.
3. It separates skills into three areas: listening/speaking, reading and writing.

Regarding the first point, Fulcher (2008) observed that the framing of the CLB as task-based appears to be somewhat problematic. In addition to noting the CLB's lack of empirical underpinning (p. 163), he highlighted an inconsistency in the conception of the CLB as task-based:

(Continued on page 7)

1. The Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLBPT) was released in 2002 based on the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000*. The CLBPT is considered a streamlined, time- and cost-saving alternative to the CLBA but, like the CLBA, it is aligned to Benchmarks 1-8 and is used for the same placement purposes.

(Continued from page 6)

> The CLB represents an interesting case where the descriptors are still essentially trait oriented, but task difficulty and performance conditions define learner progression. The issue is one of generalisability. It appears that the CLB wishes score meaning to be generalisable beyond the test task to social and work conditions in Canada by not linking descriptors to specific tasks or conditions, while acknowledging that it is the specific context of the task that impacts on performance and test score (p. 172).

The above contradiction in the CLB is unavoidably replicated in the CLBA: while the assessment is comprised of a succession of tasks deemed to be increasingly difficult, the benchmarks that one receives upon completion of the assessment describe more general abilities. For example, if one progresses in the listening/speaking interview as far as successfully accomplishing a task involving a description of procuring a specific good or service,[2] the descriptor on the Client Profile for the listening/speaking benchmark (CLB 4) assigned includes "Can describe the process of obtaining goods and services."

The difficulty here is that a person may well be able to describe the procurement of one particular good or service but not another. Thus, it seems questionable to generalize the ability to accomplish a specific task to an ability to complete other, even similar, tasks.

Regarding the CLBA's cultural content, test developers Norton and Stewart (1999) stated that "tensions between authenticity and cultural fairness proved to be the most challenging in this particular project" (p. 239). However, they explained the ultimate decision to aim for cultural accessibility versus neutrality as follows:

> We wanted to ensure that most learners would be able to access the various tasks; however, it was neither possible nor desirable to strip the assessment content of its cultural context. To do so would have been contrary to the spirit of the draft CLB document and would have resulted in bland inauthentic content that would have little meaning or relevance to learners of ESL in Canada (Norton Peirce & Stewart, 1997, pp. 20-21).

Thus, among the tasks included in the assessment is the filling out of forms, a culturally bound but common task in a Canadian context. As for the separation of the assessment into skill areas, Norton Peirce and Stewart (1997) cited this as another difficult but nevertheless necessary element in the test development. The difficulty stemmed from "the more holistic approach to language competence implicit in task-based assessment" (p. 21) while the necessity arose from stakeholder input calling for testing instruments that would "be flexible enough to apply in a range of program place-

(Continued on page 8)

2. We are unable to give a concrete example of the good(s) or service(s) being procured since the test is secure.

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ment circumstances, from integrated classrooms to separate skill applications" (p. 20).

An overview of the three main components of the CLBA (Listening/Speaking,[3] Reading and Writing), adapted from a description available to the public on the website of the Centre for Education and Training (CET), is included as Table 1.

Educational Purposes

The CLBA is a low-stakes test that measures the lower eight of the twelve levels described by the CLB (Benchmarks 1-8). Its primary use[4] is to place language learners across the country in instructional programs appropriate to their level of competence in English (Norton Peirce & Stewart, 1997). Adult immigrants who are eligible for Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) take the test. The assessment is mostly administered at LINC assessment and referral centers in approximately 2-4 hours by certified CLBA assessors. Once the assessment has been completed, the scores from the three sections (Listening/Speaking, Reading, and Writing) are recorded on the CLBA Client Profile as placement benchmark indicators and, in Ontario, an appropriate LINC class level is determined. The results are then made available to the test-taker and to the language program organization(s) where the student wishes to register.

Upon arrival in a LINC class, should a student or teacher feel that the class level assigned is unsuitable, there is limited flexibility to move the student to another class after a two-week trial period.

Washback

In light of some developments over the past decade, we thought it would be interesting and useful to revisit the issue of the CLBA's potential to create washback. Hyland and Lee (2000) viewed the CLBA as likely to generate negative washback, advancing that "omissions and oversights in the CLBA need to be addressed or language classroom teaching will suffer" (p. 15). The authors of the present review have experience teaching adult ESL and administering the CLBA, yet we do not see a high probability of washback (positive or negative) from the CLBA, partly due to developments in the area of adult settlement language training since the publication of the Hyland and Lee review.

The first reason for which we doubt washback is that the CLBA is a low-stakes placement test administered free of charge and there are no preparatory classes for it (nor, to our knowledge, demand for such classes). Related to this, there are no old versions of the test available for test-takers to look over or prepare with (since the same secure versions of the test continue to be used). Second, although the test

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3. Listening and speaking are combined in the 1996 CLB working document and thus in the CLBA. From experience, Hudson finds the combined CLBA listening/speaking score problematic since some clients display markedly different listening and speaking abilities but their assessment results do not directly reflect this. In contrast, the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000* separates listening and speaking and so does the CLBPT which was developed from it, allowing assessors to assign separate benchmarks for listening and speaking.

4. Another intended purpose is to "assess learner progress in [adult settlement language] programs" (Norton & Stewart, 1999, p. 225). However, Norton Peirce and Stewart (1997) specify that, as an outcomes instrument, the CLBA "will be valid only to the extent that ESL curricula are consistent with the objectives of the CLB—an issue that was beyond the scope of [their] project" (pp. 19-20).

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was conceived initially for use also as an outcomes instrument (see footnote 4), it has not been used as such (due to a lack of funding to field test it for this purpose) and it seems to be almost exclusively referred to in the literature as a "placement test."

Additionally, CIC recently announced plans to develop optional "milestone" and exit assessments for adult language learners (Ontario Region LINC Assessors' Conference, 2010), making the use of the CLBA as an outcomes tool seem even less likely in the future. Thus, there would seem to be no reason to teach to the test or use the CLBA to guide curriculum once learners are in class. Moreover, except for ESL teachers who are CLBA assessors, most ESL teachers would not have more than general knowledge about the content of the CLBA, such as the overview provided in Table 1. A third reason why washback appears unlikely is that the CLBA is no longer the only instrument used to assess learners for placement into adult settlement language training.

"…the CLBA is a low-stakes placement test administered free of charge and there are no preparatory classes for it."

The CLBA was joined in 2002 by the streamlined Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLBPT) which was deemed valid "for the same low-stakes decisions for which the CLBA was designed" (Nagy, 2001, as cited in Bruni & Irwin, 2007, p. 223). LINC participants may be placed using either tool. Finally, it seems important to note that the potential for the CLBA to influence classroom teaching at present is perhaps reduced by the existence and use of the LINC Curriculum Guidelines (Hajer, Robinson & Witol, 2002), published after Hyland and Lee's (2000) review. This curriculum document is intended to form the basis of LINC classroom teaching and was developed from the CLB, not the CLBA.

Emerging Issues

As mentioned in the introduction, we do not find a great deal to criticize about the CLBA as long as it is used as intended: as a low-stakes placement test.

The greatest area for concern is that, despite being called a "low-stakes work in progress" by its developers at the time of publication (Norton Peirce & Stewart, 1997, p. 28), there seems to be potential at present for the CLBA to slip towards higher-stakes usage. Our concern about the CLBA echoes concern expressed by Bruni and Irwin (2007) in relation to the use of the Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test also as a low-stakes assessment tool.

In a review of the CLBPT, Bruni and Irwin (2007) noted that the CLBPT "is increasingly being considered for other higher-stakes purposes such as admission to bridging programs in colleges or universities" (p. 220). Indeed, language training programs for newcomers to Canada are expanding and changing, notably to provide classes at higher CLB levels.

The Canadian Language Benchmarks also have increasing recognition as a frame of

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(Continued from page 9)

reference for English language proficiency in Canada, and assessment results based on the CLB (including CLBA results) are more widely accepted. This has created an influx of a different type of test-takers: in addition to learners who wish to study in LINC, assessment and referral centres are now seeing individuals (generally with higher language proficiency) who want to study, for example, in programs for internationally trained doctors or nurses.

We find it problematic that a 'low-stakes' assessment be used in such situations because for many newcomers to Canada, there is a sense of urgency related to finding employment, preferably related to one's prior training and experience. For such newcomers, there are high stakes attached to receiving the minimum benchmarks required for acceptance into a program which purports to help them secure employment in their field.

Interestingly, a new CLB-referenced assessment, the Enhanced Language Training Placement Assessment (ELTPA)[5], specifically developed to assess higher CLB levels for higher-level language programs, is also considered "a low-stakes assessment tool" (Centre for Education and Training, 2010).

Perhaps it is time to modify existing assessment tools, or create new ones, which can be confidently used for higher-stakes placement. Furthermore, in considering the modification or creation or such instruments, it seems crucial to take into account Fulcher's (2008) critique of the CLB regarding its generalization of language proficiency based on accomplishment of specific, situated tasks. ❖

5. Individuals must already have a level of at least CLB 6 in order to take the ELTPA (either by earning this score with the CLBA or the CLBPT or by receiving it as proficiency benchmarks through classroom study).

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Table 1

CLBA Assessment Overview

(adapted from http://www.tcet.com/clba/about.aspx#clba)

Listening / Speaking	Reading	Writing
A progressive interview where each client is engaged in a series of tasks administered one-on-one with a certified CLBA assessor Prompts include: • assessor questions • photographs • video task • audio tasks Task types include: • follow and respond to simple questions and instructions • take part in a short conversation • tell a story • relate video-mediated information • discuss concrete information on a familiar topic • synthesize abstract ideas on a familiar topic Approximate duration: • 15 – 35 minutes	A series of tasks in two test packages: Stage I (Benchmarks 1-4) Stage II (Benchmarks 5-8) Can be administered individually or in a group Task types include: • instructions • formatted text • unformatted text • information Response format: • multiple choice • short answers Approximate duration: • 45 minutes – 1 hour 45 minutes	A series of tasks in two test stages: Stage I (Benchmarks 1-4) Stage II (Benchmarks 5-8) Can be administered individually or in a group Task types include: • copy / reproduce information • fill out simple/ complex forms • describe personal situations • convey formal messages • write a simple letter • compose a memo Approximate duration: • 45 minutes – 1 hour 45 minutes

PROFILE

Brian Morgan, author of *The ESL Classroom, Teaching, Critical Practice, and Community Development*

By Kathleen Jackson

Call York University's Brian Morgan the Accidental ESL Teacher. As many teachers do, he fell into ESL quite by chance. He also fell in love with it. In fact, he made it a life mission to share his passion with teachers and students alike.

"In a sense it was an accidental profession for me," Morgan says. "In fact, a lot of teachers fall into it because it provides a supplementary income. It is also a good way to travel."

Morgan went to China to teach and came back and realized it was something he actually enjoyed. "I became totally immersed in travelling. I loved the whole experience."

Morgan had a Bachelor's degree in ethno-musicology and social anthropology from York University at the time. But after his experience in China, he did not know what to do. Morgan and his wife had spent a year travelling around the Middle East, Greece and Turkey and when he came back, he decided to shoot for a Master's degree. "Then the Master's program wanted me to teach in China," Morgan recalls, "So I taught in Szechuan Province. One of my conditions was that they would put me through a course in teaching ESL at George Brown College doing my TESL certificate."

When Morgan returned to Canada and entered the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), it was a very exciting time. He had no idea that there was such a deep theoretical basis on how language functions. Much to his surprise and delight this was also the time when "critical theory" was appearing on the scholarly map.

Critical theory goes beyond a fixed body of methods and ideas. The theory, according to Morgan, is an academic notion that works in the classroom by joining socio-economic ideas and the real world and bringing them into practice. Morgan recognized the potential of incorporating critical theory into everyday classroom interactions and he ran with it. "This theory is valuable because it challenges teachers to go beyond the obvious and question their own values and assumptions."

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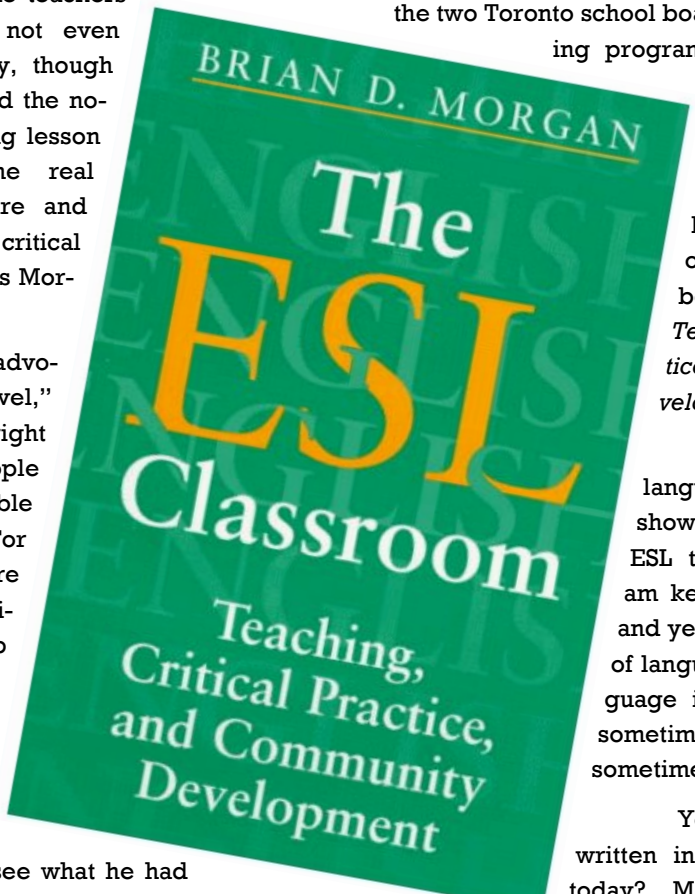
Morgan saw the process in action when he landed his first job in Toronto at St. Stephen's Community Center. The teachers at St. Stephen's had not even heard of critical theory, though their teaching embodied the notion. "They were making lesson plans relevant to the real (political) world, culture and society and that is what critical theory is all about," says Morgan.



"There was advocacy on the social level," says Morgan. "I just right away picked up on people who were doing sensible and useful things. For example, there were ethno-linguistic organizations sponsoring job searches and advising on senior issues, landlord-tenant concerns and health care issues."

Morgan could see what he had learned at OISE happening right there before his eyes. The theoretical notions he confronted in the university and the 'out-in-the-field' experiences seemed to link up and produce breakthroughs in language acquisition and understanding. All this he saw and then began to practice while at St. Stephen's.

"I watched one man do amazing handouts for elections that took your typical grammar lessons and put them into a social context," Morgan says. "It may have been more work than ESL teachers normally do," but to Morgan the rewards were worth it.

Morgan saw this linkage of theory and practice as a new development in ESL teaching. These were very exciting times for this motivated teacher who went on to hold positions at the two Toronto school boards and taught a writing program at Ryerson University. Morgan soon came to see critical theory as an idea that should be shared. He eventually developed his ideas into the book, *ESL Classroom, Teaching, Critical Practice, and Community Development*.

Morgan's use of language in his book shows his love of it. "As an ESL teacher," he says, "I am keenly away of the full and yet unrealised potentials of language. Sometimes language is a thing of beauty, sometimes of clarity and sometimes a weapon."

Yes, but can a book written in 1998 be applicable today? Morgan uses examples of the Gulf War in lesson plans. It certainly can be applicable given the political unrest and upheaval still present in today's world. Teachers today can work around his ideas and plans and apply them to today's unrest and chaos and world happenings. The earthquake in Haiti and the student's reaction to it is one idea that can be applied.

His ideas are as applicable today as the day he wrote them.

Morgan believes that teachers should be aware of current events and the world around them before they teach the ideas in their

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lessons plans. Morgan's writing is seamless as he incorporates the aspects of ESL teaching into lessons in the book, grammar, vocabulary, reading and pronunciation.

What exactly is critical theory?

As Morgan stresses time and again in his book, "it goes beyond a fixed body of methods and techniques." It challenges teachers to go beyond their syllabus and go where no teacher has gone before. Quite a challenge considering where you may work and what you as a teacher are required to do.

Critical theory "deals with rearranging a syllabus so that social values and real world ideas such as employment come into play."

"What really drives pedagogy? Are we really serving the students interests?" Morgan asks.

Morgan says, "given both the social and administrative constraints that each teacher experiences, there is still a place for critical theory. It should reflect the particular interests of students and the local community."

"We don't have time for that," is the rallying cry that Morgan heard at a conference that he attended when he presented some lesson plans. "Too academic." "Interesting but it's not ESL."

Morgan understands. Yes, but we can make the time.

The ripple effect was seen here at this early stage. But it did not deter Morgan, always the pioneer to make progress and produce a book that is very readable and interesting as well as instructional.

He is still inspired: inspired by the people he worked with at St. Stephen's Community Center, his students and the teachers who have read his book. He is inspired by the people who work tirelessly at the university level and he wants to link teachers with their work.

The idea of critical theory is a good one for any teacher regardless of where he/she might work. According to Morgan, it gives them a framework in which to teach. Morgan wants teachers to value and engage in the kind of experiences and learning that they have had. All of its foundations are underscored in the book.

But another one of its most important ideas is that it looks at the foundations of how our language gets constructed:

> ...critically at the social organs of knowledge. It doesn't take them as the objective, scientific or the only choices out there. It looks at power and politics around construction and knowledge.

How does critical practice make better students?

According to Morgan, "it might make better students and it might open dimensions in Canadian life. It might open up perspectives that they might not otherwise have.

"That may give them a context," says Morgan, "A kind of intellectual rigour. What critical practice might really do is improve the teachers as well. It might allow the teacher to talk about the new society in ways that other methods may not provide."

Critical theory is all about how students should read. It is about getting behind the social interests behind the texts. Language can be analysed. And that language is in the media. One way of doing it is using the newspaper. Taking the real Toronto into the ESL classroom

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is after all what critical theory is about and it can be applied wherever and in whatever country you as the ESL teacher may go to teach.

Morgan peppers his book with ideas, humorous anecdotes and lesson plans and the hard lessons he learned in the field himself. It is all designed to help teachers prepare students for a "social world in which language can deny as well as provide opportunity."

And if language can sometimes deny opportunity, critical practice can give them a bridge over that denial. The students and the needs of the students are addressed here.

"The teacher should address the needs at the beginning of the class," Morgan says. "And then let them set the tone for the entire lesson."

But can critical theory cause waves in your workplace? "It may be because what in general we can do in the classroom and how we do it are limited."

Financial resources and time constraints are an issue for most teachers. According to Morgan teachers may be afraid of losing their job if they stray from their employer's curriculum.

What is the future of ESL?

Morgan puts down his coffee, giving the question some thought before he answers. "You can see the whole development of LINC programming," says Morgan. "You can see the government had it on an agenda in many ways of deprofessionalizing the field by various means."

"One of the problems is that you really haven't seen substantial pay raises. You can see a lack of job security," Morgan says. "And a funding formula that encourages multi-level mixed stream classes."

Morgan understands the difficulties because he is not only an academic but a teacher who's been there. "It's hard to expect someone to invest time and energy to learn when they don't even know where they are going to be in six months."

But Morgan still has hopes for the future of ESL. He has had positive reactions in book reviews and conferences and at his place of work. But pressure, political or workplace stipulations are causing more and more teachers to stick with the status quo.

But these negative reactions and a dangerous future only stoke Morgan's fire. It's the love of the language and it's there in the tone of his voice. It's there in his choice of words. The very words that dance on the pages of his book that is at once entertaining and informative. It's there when he once again stresses his key point, "which is that teachers have to take responsibility for their own practices.

And although the book is out of print, you can get it out of the library on order or from Brian Morgan's website.

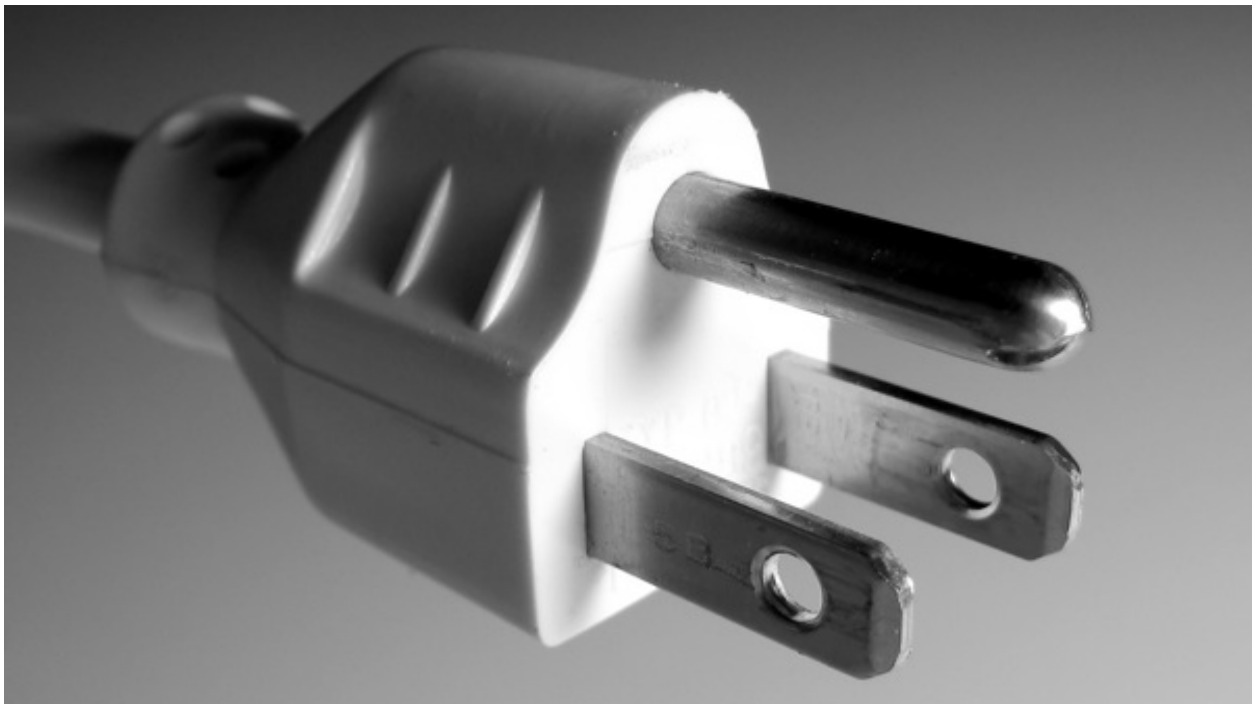
"I hope teachers who read this book will always look critically and creatively at what is or what is not ESL," says Morgan. "When top down decisions are being made regarding the priorities of the syllabus, I hope they will be able to speak forcefully on behalf of the students and institutions.

The future of ESL teaching can be a challenge we can all rise to. Morgan throws down the gauntlet. It is up to us to take up the challenge and rise to the occasion. The book is a blueprint for a new revolution in ESL teaching. We all want to change the world of ESL and the revolution starts one classroom at a time. ❖

IN THE CLASSROOM

Dogme: The 'Unplugged' Approach to Teaching English

By Tania Pattison



Do you create carefully crafted lesson plans with time allowances for each activity? Do you have well-thought-out objectives for each of your lessons? Do you keep searching for the perfect textbook? Do you stay on top of new trends in technology and bring these into your classroom where possible? Are you disappointed when things don't go as planned in your classes? If so, you may be surprised to learn that one of the most interesting—and controversial—approaches to English Language Teaching to emerge in the last ten years not only does not support these things, but actively discourages them. The approach I am referring to is Dogme.

Dogme first appeared in 2000, when Scott Thornbury published an article in *IATEFL Issues*, calling for a return to a back-to-basics form of language teaching. All that was really necessary, according to Thornbury, was a room with some chairs, a blackboard, a teacher, and a group of students. What was *not* necessary was the vast quantity of textbooks, videos, CD-ROMs, self-study guides, websites, photocopies, MTV clips, Cuisenaire rods, and everything else that ESL teachers and students had come to take for granted.

Thornbury called upon teachers to join him in a "vow of chastity" from all this, and

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Dogme was born. Ten years later, speaking at the IATEFL 2010 Conference in Harrogate, England, Thornbury made the comment that Dogme is now so well known on the conference circuit that presenters don't always need to explain what it is. Dogme looks likely to continue to attract interest, thanks to the recent publication of Thornbury's *Teaching Unplugged: Dogme in English Language Teaching*, co-authored with Luke Meddings (Delta, 2009).

What Is Dogme?

First, the name. I have heard it pronounced *dog-mee*, *dog-may*, and from Thornbury himself, *dogma*. I will go with the last one, though it is a bit unfortunate. There is nothing dogmatic about Dogme. The word comes from a movement in Danish avant-garde cinema (yes, really — search for "Lars von Trier" in Google), known as Dogme 95. As Meddings and Thornbury explain in *Teaching Unplugged*, Dogme 95 is:

> A filmmaking movement set up by a group of Danish filmmakers who challenged what they saw as cinema's dependency on special effects, technical wizardry and fantasy. The emphasis on the here-and-now requires the filmmaker to focus on the actual story and its relevance to the audience.

By analogy, Dogme ELT is:

> A teaching movement set up by a group of English teachers who challenge what they consider to be an over-reliance on materials and technical wizardry in current language teaching. The emphasis on the here-and-now requires the teacher to focus on the actual learners and the content that is relevant to them.

How Does It Work?

Essentially, there are three principles to Dogme. Dogme-inspired teaching is:

- Conversation-driven.
- Materials-light.
- Focused on emergent language.

Dogme-inspired teaching is conversation-driven.

Meddings and Thornbury point out that conversation is "the fundamental, universal and default form of language." However, all too often, conversation is seen as something that happens as a *product* of learning, not as something that *assists* in learning. Typically, language learners study grammar and vocabulary and then attempt to do something conversational with it; Dogme sees it the other way around. The starting point in a Dogme-inspired classroom *is* the conversation; conversation is seen as a *means* of language learning, not as its product—and the precise language skills to be taught depend on what happens in the conversation. Meddings and Thornbury also stress that the conversations in the class should be about the learners themselves; conversations should be *real*, not of the "You are George—ask Mary what she does at Radio Rhubarb" variety. As Meddings and Thornbury remind us, teachers need to see their students as people first, language learners second.

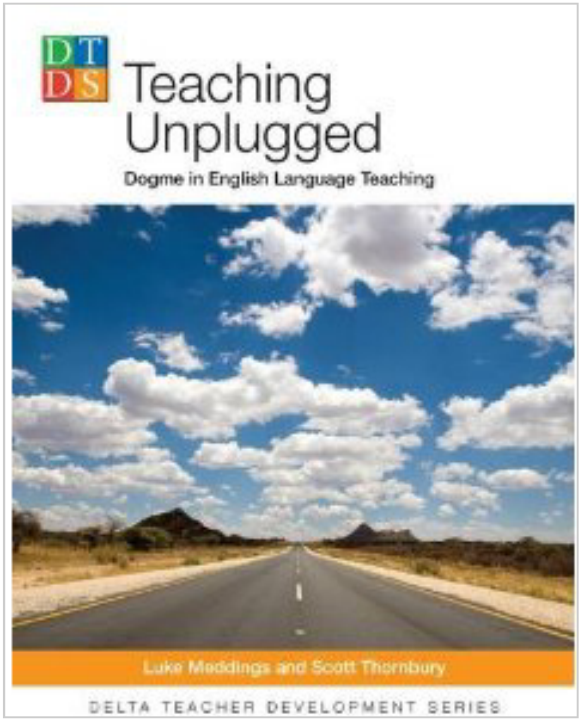
To illustrate this, *Teaching Unplugged* contains many conversational activities that are based on the actual experiences, preferences,

(Continued on page 18)

(Continued from page 17)

moods and emotions, and hopes and wishes of the students in the class. For example, an activity called *Slices of Life* asks students to fill in a pie chart on the board with activities they like, dislike, or don't mind doing; these are then discussed in class. *Three Wishes* asks students to share their own dreams for their family, friends, neighbourhood, and country. *Re-view* asks students to describe a view that holds meaningful memories for them. The responsibility of the teacher is to provide a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to conversation flow (this could mean arranging the chairs in a circle or playing background music); to encourage students to speak freely; and to allow conversation to occur spontaneously, taking advantage of the topics students bring up in class.

This conversation-driven approach has several advantages: it scaffolds learning; it helps to socialize students into a specific discourse community; and it allows the voices of the students to be heard, thereby increasing their confidence and self-esteem.



Teaching Unplugged: Dogme in English Language Teaching, by Luke Meddings and Scott Thornbury (Delta Publishing, 2009)

Dogme-inspired teaching is materials-light.

This is perhaps what Dogme is best known for, and is an attempt to get away from what Meddings and Thornbury call the "grammar McNugget" approach to language teaching—or, "Today is Tuesday, so we're doing the present perfect continuous." Too often, Meddings and Thornbury claim, textbooks get in the way of real language learning rather than facilitating it. Many ESL textbooks have set agenda items in terms of what grammar needs to be taught—and how can language develop naturally when the focus is on learning some discrete grammar point? Textbooks also seek to impose certain cultural and educational values (those of the white, middle-class native speaker) on the learner.

The Dogme answer to this is to use locally produced materials where possible, or even to dispense with the textbook entirely. The best resources are the students themselves and the stories they bring to class; other resources could be news stories, pictures, found objects, or the sounds outside the classroom. Anything goes, as long as it provides a stimulus for conversation.

Many of the activities presented in *Teaching Unplugged* require no preparation at

(Continued on page 19)

(Continued from page 18)

all; others require hardly any ("Bring dice to class" or "Open the windows"). These activities come with no prescribed grammar exponents, timings, suitable levels, or photocopiable worksheets. The cynical reader will say, "Great—perfect for lazy Friday afternoons" but this is not really the point. By freeing the teacher and the students from a prescriptive approach, Dogme gives learners some control over the content and objectives of their learning experience, and consequently allows for the development of language skills that are relevant and useful for the learners themselves.

Dogme-inspired teaching focuses on emergent language.

Meddings and Thornbury recognize that when the students take the lead in class discussion, and when few materials are used, the question teachers ask is, "How can I ensure that they *learn* anything?" Their response is that students are inherently capable of learning language; all that is needed is optimal input and favourable conditions for learning. Rather than *covering* items on a syllabus, the goal should be to *uncover* the language within.

The teacher needs to encourage the development of the language that emerges in the classroom through what Meddings and Thornbury call "responsive" teaching rather than "pre-emptive" teaching. Responsive teaching includes *rewarding* emergent language, *repeating* it (even drilling it), *recycling* it in new contexts, ensuring that students *record* it, and *reviewing* it. Teachers take notes on what they hear in the conversation, and refer back to them later; it is a good idea to aim for a balance between rewarding successful language use and pointing out areas of difficulty. Board work is essential; in the absence of a textbook, what the teacher writes on the board becomes especially important.

Is Dogme a Good Choice for My Classes?

What kinds of classes would benefit from a Dogme approach to English teaching? One obvious home for Dogme would be in ESL classes for newcomers—classes in which the key objective is the fast (and enjoyable) learning of effective communication skills, not checking off items on a long list of grammar points. Dogme-inspired classes encourage students to speak up about whatever is on their mind and to integrate into the local discourse community as quickly as possible, without worrying about whether they have put the right ending on a verb form. EFL classes in which students want to learn English for general purposes (travel, work, social activities) rather than to pass exams will also benefit from a Dogme approach.

In some contexts, however, selling students on Dogme might be quite difficult. I teach EAP to university-bound students, and in my experience, my students like textbooks, they like structure; they *want* to know that next Tuesday they will be studying the present perfect continuous. The teachers of specialized classes might be an equally hard sell. I know that whenever I allow my classes to deviate from my carefully designed lesson plan, I feel a bit guilty afterwards. That impromptu conversation about music, football results, or which iPod I should buy my kids . . . well, it was fun and engaging, but surely I owe my students more than this? I am left with a nagging feeling that I really ought to have been teaching something "serious," like . . . well, the present perfect continuous.

Meddings and Thornbury accept that a Dogme approach may not be sufficient in all

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situations; teachers of EAP, ESP, and Exam Preparation might want to integrate Dogme-type activities into a more structured syllabus. Referring, for example, to an ESP course in English for Aviation, Meddings and Thornbury admit that even they "would not feel comfortable waiting for language to emerge at 20,000 feet!"

On the other hand, Dogme-style activities can certainly be brought into these classes in conjunction with a more syllabus-driven approach, and the Dogme tenet about taking one's lead from the students is well taken. IATEFL 2010 presenter Candy van Olst, who gave a marvellous talk on Dogme in the Business English class, related an anecdote that illustrates the flexibility of the approach beautifully. As a novice Business English teacher, she was tutoring a businessman who wanted to improve his use of numbers. She went to the local supermarket and collected a pile of advertising flyers; she would plan a perfect lesson on shopping lists, percentages, discounts, and the like.

"...whenever I allow my classes to deviate from my carefully-designed lesson plan, I feel a bit guilty afterwards."

This activity came from a professional journal, so she expected it to be relevant and helpful. Well, her businessman started to look a little bored, and eventually told her that in his household, his wife does all the grocery shopping while he goes for a cup of coffee . . . but he had some statistics on his laptop, and could they look at those instead? As van Olst now appreciates, her students know best what they want and need.

Another question is, what kinds of students would benefit from a Dogme approach? In many cases, certainly, students of general ESL or EFL will respond readily to a highlighting of spoken English, a focus on personal experiences and opinions, and a distinct lack of photocopied handouts on some esoteric grammar point that they see little immediate use for.

There is one important caveat to this: teachers who decide to introduce Dogme-style activities to their classes need to be aware of the personal backgrounds of their students. Many students in classes for newcomers have experienced horrific situations in their home countries; maybe they just don't want to talk about their memories, hopes, wishes, fears, dreams, and so on. I also question whether my EAP students, many of whom have been socialised in cultures where the teacher imparts wisdom and the learner absorbs it, would respond favourably to a Dogme approach. Chatting about what they did at the weekend may be seen at best, as a waste of time, or at worst, as a sign of a lazy or incompetent teacher.

Finally, we need to consider how Dogme fits in with the current trend towards the use of technology in ESL teaching. At that same IATEFL 2010 conference, there were countless presentations on the classroom applications of mobile phones, Twitter, podcasts, Google Streetview, blogs, and just about everything else that is high-tech and trendy. Dogme, on the other hand, advocates not much more than a marker and a whiteboard—and *not* an interac-

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tive whiteboard. Meddings and Thornbury admit that Dogme adherents have been labelled "luddites, iconoclasts, and ELT 'Amish Folk' "—a reputation that they agree is "not entirely unfounded."

Meddings and Thornbury stress that Dogme is not anti-technology *per se*; there are one or two activities in *Teaching Unplugged* that rely on the use of mobile phones and the Internet. It's just that much of the time, technology simply isn't necessary for language learning. Where it is used, technology should be used as a support for sound educational principles, not as an end in itself. My own sense is that to some extent, the appeal of Dogme lies in the fact that it presents an "enough, already!" response to the technical wizardry (to use Meddings and Thornbury's words) constantly being thrust upon us, and the accompanying implications that if we are not using blogs, podcasts, wikis, and all the rest of it, then our teaching must be deficient. The tension between these two approaches is fascinating, to say the least.

All of this leads to one final comment from Thornbury's IATEFL 2010 talk. He gave this quotation from an ESL textbook: "We teach grammar through conversation and not, as some school teachers attempt, conversation through grammar." This is pure Dogme—and this was published in 1953. Similarly, a teacher-training manual cited by Thornbury contains this advice: "Find your point of contact in the daily experience of the foreigner, and lead him as speedily as possible into touch with the language of daily life. . ." These words of wisdom ("foreigner" and "him" notwithstanding) date from 1918! So, the final question is this: Is Dogme a step backwards, a negation of all the years of work that have gone into creating materials and developing techniques that bring about successful language learning? Or is Dogme a return to a simpler and better way of life, and a liberation of our classrooms from a lot of things we don't really need after all? As with every approach to teaching, context is everything; what will work in one situation will be unsuccessful in another. However, perhaps in this age of technical wizardry, a back-to-basics approach is certainly worth a try. ❖

Tania Pattison is an EAP Instructor and Curriculum Coordinator at Trent University; she is also a writer, an editor, and a self-confessed conference addict.

For More Information

- *Teaching Unplugged: Dogme in English Language Teaching*, by Luke Meddings and Scott Thornbury (Delta Publishing, 2009) contains a comprehensive outline of the Dogme approach and many suggested teaching activities.
- Scott Thornbury's website, **www.thornburyscott.com** has a lot of good information as well as links to Dogme-related articles (including the 2000 article that started it all).
- There is an active online Dogme discussion group at **http://groups.yahoo.com/group/dogme**

TOEFL REVIEW

Review of the Speaking Section for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

By Thomas Fenton

The speaking section of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) along with reading, listening, and writing is a core component of this measure of English language proficiency. In addition to providing a general background and overview of the speaking section, this review will focus on the construct and design complexities as they are represented in the integrated tasks of the test.

Background

Although speaking is a new feature of the TOEFL, research into the direct testing of speaking began as early as 1969 (Spolsky, 1995). In the early 1990s, ETS (Educational Testing Service) began research for a new version of the TOEFL. Prototyping, usability and pilot studies were conducted from 1999 to 2001 and after two large scale field studies (2002, and 2003-2004), the latest version of the TOEFL which included the speaking section was operationalized (ETS, 2008). While other paper and computer based versions of the TOEFL are still being institutionally implemented, the iBT (internet based test) is the only version of the TOEFL that includes a speaking component.

Structure

The speaking section involves three major types of tasks: an independent or standalone task and two integrated tasks that require a spoken response to a combination of audio and/or written stimuli (Lee, 2006). The section itself is approximately twenty minutes long and is broken down into six tasks (two independent and four integrated tasks). The first two independent tasks involve familiar topics for which the test taker can draw on personal experience in their response to questions that ask for descriptions of personal experiences or statements of preference. The latter four tasks involve a combination of reading, listening and speaking skills and require test takers to either summarize and synthesize two passages (reading and listening) or to demonstrate an understanding of a problem/solution or a topic/illustration pattern as presented in a single listening passage. The speaking section is implemented using computers with responses being digitally recorded via a headset for scoring (TOEFL® iBT Tips, 2008).

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Purpose and Function

The main purpose of the TOEFL is to assess a test taker's readiness to study at an English-medium educational institution and to aid in admissions and placement decisions (ETS, 2008). Generally, the speaking section serves to assess the test taker's use of oral language to interact directly with others in an academic setting (Butler, 2000) by measuring effective communication in contexts both inside and out of the classroom. Accordingly, a significant test design challenge is the inclusion of a speaking task for non-native speakers of English that reflects the academic demands on beginning undergraduate and graduate students who are native speakers of English (Ginther, 1996). The following sections will examine how this challenge is being addressed by looking at several specific areas: the speech construct which the test seeks to measure, the function of integrated speaking tasks, and the rater's role in assessing test taker responses.

Speech Construct

In considering a speech production model for direct assessment, Douglas (1997) notes that it is impossible to assess speaking apart from other skills; elements of input or stimuli will invariably affect test taker responses. As a result, speech production and speech comprehension are to be conceived of as "two sides of the same coin" (p. 25). Speech production must be tested alongside speech comprehension tasks such as reading and listening. One important issue that this raises is that a speech construct cannot conceptualize speech in terms of a number of discrete skills, it is tasked with integrating the variety of processes involved into a single model. Butler et al. (2000) comment on how communicative competence in oral academic language requires control over a wide range of phonological, syntactic, lexical features and varying knowledge genres. Success in a speaking task is based on two factors: the nature and conditions under which the task is to be performed, and the resources the individual brings to the interaction. Test takers must simultaneously draw on both cognitive and affective knowledge during a speaking test (He & Young, 1998). Thus, the speaking section of the TOEFL includes integrated tasks that require test takers to engage with and mediate contextual features involved in authentic academic communicative scenarios.

Integrated Speech Tasks

As the expressed purpose of the TOEFL is to assess a test taker's readiness to study in a post-secondary English medium institution, the inclusion of the academic context is of central importance in task design for the speaking section of the test. Douglas and Selinker (1992) employ the concept of a "discourse domain" in order to identify contexts where a language user assesses and plans a specific linguistic response (Douglas & Selinker, 1992, p. 318). Test takers interpret context and use their interpretations to create communicative goals (Douglas, 1997), so an integrated speaking task must include an appropriate context where enough information is provided to produce an assessable response. In addition, the integration of skills ensures that extended contextualization can be achieved and the text taker does not have to continually switch discourse domains (Weir, 1990 as cited in Douglas, 1997, p. 26).

The integrated tasks require test takers to process complex aural and written input and to synthesize a response from this input. Brown et al. (2005) argue that the integrated task design is more representative of authentic speech as opposed to an independent task where the

(Continued on page 24)

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test taker has only his or her own experience and ideas to draw from. Gold (1990) points out how this type of test method, the use of a microphone to record answers, can actually constrain spoken discourse as test takers need to overcome the irony of having to respond "when there is no interlocutor present to give them feedback and negotiate meaning and yet they are encouraged to speak as if there were" (as cited in Douglas, 1997, p. 21).

McNamara (1997) also speaks of the importance of an interlocutor in Vygotskian terms as co-constructor of meaning, yet the variability present in every human communicative encounter introduces a threat to reliability (Fulcher, 2003). In her comparative study of direct and semi-direct speaking tests, Koike (1998) notes that respondents tended to produce more formal and awkward discourse yet their responses also tended to be more organized and task focused. While the integrated task design might seem advantageous for these and other reasons, it does pose some challenges in terms of reliability and rating.

Raters and Reliability

The scoring rubrics for the speaking section of the TOEFL describe a single score ranging from 0 to 4 and based on three factors: delivery (e.g. phonology, intonation, pace) language use (e.g. vocabulary and grammar), and topic development (e.g. relevant information/ details, logical progression). Douglas and Selinker (1992) argue that raters, despite working from these same rubrics, may well arrive at similar ratings for different reasons (as cited in Ishikawa et al., 2008, p.27). Rater bias might relate to the rater's own subjective competence as a native English speaker and their use of comprehension skills to assess test taker responses (Douglas, 1997). Yet, one wonders how else a rater could decode a test taker response.

As mentioned, test taker responses to integrated speaking tasks involve a myriad of skills, both linguistic and cognitive (Lee, 2006), and it also involves a similar set of comprehension skills in order for raters to decode and assess test taker responses. Recalling Douglas' (1997) coin analogy, raters represent the other side of the speech production coin; they are the speech comprehenders and their role is to act as normal listeners in making sense of the speaker's message (p. 22). However, this analogy might be an oversimplification of the rater's role. Considering that a test taker's performance on an integrated speaking task involves an integration of conventional language skills along with cognitive processes, to what extent should raters attend to each of these dimensions of speech performance (Brown et al., 2005)?

A related concern about the validity of integrated speaking tasks is whether the cognitive demands of the task might obscure the test taker's real level of proficiency (Brown et al., 2005). In Brown et al.'s 2005 study, they observed among the same group of test takers lower scores on the integrated listening and speaking task than other integrated tasks. However, Brown et al. interpret this finding not necessarily as an issue of validity, but rather as indicative of the need for clearer guidance and training for raters to minimize conflicting scores (p. 104).

Conclusion

Despite the challenges inherent in an integrated speech test, ETS has affirmed that while the validation process began with the test design, their program of validation research is ongoing (ETS, 2008). It remains that, despite the context-specific nature of the speaking section

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of the TOEFL, a valid construct of speech performance should not only include both cognitive and linguistic test taker skills, it must also address the subjective elements of speech comprehension and the raters who are tasked with reconciling complex speech events with a globalized rubric. ❖

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TOEFL REVIEW

TOEFL iBT Review: The Reading Section

By Kimberley Hindy & Derek Martin

Since its inception, the TOEFL has evolved from a paper-based test (PBT) to an Internet-based test, TOEFL iBT (Wall & Horák, 2008, p. ii). Early publications of the TOEFL Monograph series set out a preliminary working framework for the development of the iBT, stating that the goals of the test development program were to design a test that "was more reflective of communicative competence models, included tasks that integrated the language modalities tested, [and] provided more information than current TOEFL scores did about international students' ability to use English in an academic environment" (Jamieson et al., 2000, p. 3). Chapelle et al. provide a detailed history of the iBT's distribution worldwide (2008, p. 359–361). The TOEFL website (**www.toefl.org/**) contains pertinent information for test takers, academic institutions, and English language teachers, as well as the TOEFL iBT Research series, TOEFL Research Reports, and Monograph series reports.

This review of the TOEFL iBT Reading Section has the intentions of describing its educational purposes and highlighting critical areas of validity research and implication limitations. It is our hope that this review will be a useful reference for teachers of English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

Educational Purposes

The purpose of the TOEFL iBT is to assess English proficiency for academic purposes: "the TOEFL® test measures [the test taker's] ability to communicate in English in colleges and universities" (**www.toefl.org/**). TOEFL scores are accepted by more than 6000

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colleges, universities, licensing agencies, and immigration authorities in 136 countries (Alderson, 2009, p. 621).

ETS asserts that the "test is scored using methods that ensure unbiased results and a quality control process that meets the highest standards of fairness and objectivity" (ETS, 2009a). ETS aims to simulate tasks that are typical of university settings which "ensures applicants are equipped with the skills students need in a higher education classroom" (ETS, 2009b).

The Reading section in particular assesses the test taker's ability to understand and perform university-level academic reading tasks. The specific purposes for academic reading that the TOEFL iBT aims to address are as follows: reading to find information (i.e. effectively scanning text for key facts and important information), basic comprehension (i.e. understanding the general topic or main idea, major points, important facts and details, and vocabulary in context), and reading to learn (i.e. recognizing the organization and purpose of a passage and inferring how ideas throughout the passage connect) (Wall & Horák, 2008, p.1). There are fewer but longer passages than previous versions of the TOEFL (500-700 vs. 300-400 words; 3-5 reading passages with 12-14 questions per passage) on a variety of topics, a change that was made in order to more authentically reproduce the reading tasks test takers can expect to experience in university. The 60 to 100 minutes allotted for this section includes time for reading the passages (categorized as Exposition, Argumentation and Historical) and answering the questions (ETS, 2006, p. 19). From these alterations, EAP instructors may infer that students could benefit from strategy use through exposure to longer reading passages in order to more effectively prepare them for reading tasks at the tertiary level.

"EAP instructors may infer that students could benefit from strategy use through exposure to longer reading passages in order to more effectively prepare them for reading tasks at the tertiary level."

TOEFL iBT Reading Question Formats

The TOEFL iBT Reading section is scored out of 30; ETS has published score conversion tables for the PBT and Computer-Based Test (CBT) which offer useful interpretation guidelines for the new iBT scores (ETS, 2005a). There are three question formats in the Reading section: those with four choices and a single answer in traditional multiple-choice format, those with four choices and a single answer that requires test takers to "insert a sentence" where it best fits, and "reading to learn" questions with more than four choices and more than one possible correct answer (ETS, 2008b, p.9-10). The innovative "reading to learn" questions test the taker's ability to recognize paragraph organization and relationships among facts and ideas in different parts of the passage. The glossary feature of the iBT allows test takers to select "special purpose words and phrases" to view a definition or explanation of the term (ibid, p. 10). By including this glossary feature, the interactive nature of

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the iBT allows for more vocabulary support than the PBT and may strengthen the validity of "reading to learn."

Issues of Content and Construct Validity

Validity is "the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of test scores entailed by proposed uses of tests" (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999, p. 9). The validity claims of the Reading section of the TOEFL iBT have been the subject of much research; in fact, there is an annual call for research proposals by researchers outside of ETS. As aforementioned, the change to longer reading passages in the iBT means that there are also fewer passages. A concern arising from this change is whether the decrease in topic variety increases the likelihood that an examinee's familiarity with the particular content of the passages will influence the examinee's reading performance. Having identified this concern, Liu et al. used differential item functioning (DIF) and differential bundle functioning (DBF) to investigate the impact of outside knowledge on TOEFL iBT reading performance. The rationale for this research was that the TOEFL iBT is "a test of communicative language skills rather than of specific content knowledge, and therefore the test results should not be affected by test takers' major field of study or cultural background" (Liu et al., 2009, p. vi). The researchers found very little effect of this kind, which supports the claim by ETS that "test takers should not be concerned if they are unfamiliar with a topic. The passage contains all the information needed to answer the questions" (ETS, 2008b, p. 8). In a high-stakes testing situation such as the TOEFL iBT, it is crucial to eliminate unwarranted item advantages for certain test takers, in order to ensure the validity of the test scores (Liu et al., 2009, p.4). Of course, as the iBT continues to evolve, more studies will be required to maintain content validity. For their part, EAP instructors must be aware that the iBT does not test specific knowledge of particular subjects and should expose their students to a variety of reading topics, perhaps taking into consideration factors such as the interests and intended academic specialties of their students, but not the anticipated topics of TOEFL reading passages.

> "If preparation materials or programs focus on test taking 'tricks,' 'tips,' 'strategies,' or 'cracking the TOEFL' …they should be viewed as suspect."

A construct validity concern of the Reading section is the possibility that test takers may use strategies other than the reading strategies that the test is intended to assess. They have been referred to as "test wiseness" strategies and may include various ways of selecting answers without properly reading and comprehending a text passage (Cohen & Upton, 2006, p. 4). More generally, test takers may "find themselves using strategies that they would not use under pretest conditions. It is for this reason that during the pilot phase, it is crucial for test constructors to find out what their tests are actually measur-

(Continued on page 29)

(Continued from page 28)

ing" (ibid, p.5). Cohen and Upton analyzed students' verbal reports to determine their reading and test-taking strategies to answer reading comprehension questions. Data were collected from a sample group of 32 students, from four language groups (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and other languages), as they responded to prototype TOEFL reading comprehension tasks mimicking those of the TOEFL iBT test. It was noted that test takers did not rely on "test wiseness" strategies, but that their strategies:

> reflect the fact that respondents were in actuality engaged with the reading test tasks in the manner desired by the test designers... respondents were actively working to understand the text, to understand the expectations of the questions, to understand the meaning and implications of the different options in light of the text, and to select and discard options based on what they understood about the text (p. 105).

These findings suggest that test takers might achieve high scores on iBT reading comprehension tasks by using reading strategies or appropriate test management strategies. This indicates that EAP instructors should be cognizant of helping learners improve their reading strategies. If preparation materials or programs focus on test taking 'tricks,' 'tips,' 'strategies,' or 'cracking the TOEFL' (which a quick Internet search will reveal), they should be viewed as suspect. Of course, as students become more familiar with the TOEFL iBT through such practice materials and preparatory courses, construct validity may be weakened since what they will learn may not only be relevant reading skills, but also more sophisticated "test wiseness" skills. Worthy of note is that in the case of the Cohen and Upton study, the sample was taken from an East Asian context. More research to verify their findings against other cultural and linguistic contexts is needed.

"By including integrated tasks and skill-specific feedback, teachers, learners and test-takers may experience further positive washback."

In addition to the isolated Reading section, the iBT aims to measure how well a test taker is able to use integrated language skills in the university classroom. Thus, it contains integrated sections which model academic requirements of "combining information they have heard in class lectures with what they have read in textbooks or other materials" (ETS, 2008b, p. 22) by incorporating information from a reading passage into their spoken or written responses. As preliminary versions of integrated tasks were contemplated, Cumming et al. (2006) supported the inclusion of integrated reading-writing and/or listening-writing tasks as measures of English writing proficiency in the TOEFL [iBT]. These prototype tasks allowed written discourse that differed significantly in a variety of ways from which were produced in the independent essay on the TOEFL, providing an additional measure of writing ability that can be scored reliably and

(Continued on page 30)

(Continued from page 29)

that interconnects English language comprehension purposefully with text production (Cumming et al., 2006, p.46). Additionally, the new scores of the TOEFL iBT come with "helpful performance feedback on their score reports" (ETS, 2006, p. 5; see Table 1). ETS provides comprehensive scoring information that includes scores for the four skills and a total score. An understanding of the quality of feedback given by ETS may be beneficial for EAP instructors to consider as they provide their own feedback; since this feedback portion is a new development, it likely is evidence of influence from extensive external research. By including integrated tasks and skill-specific feedback, teachers, learners, and test-takers may experience further positive washback. More research would surely offer interesting insights.

Another concern relates to how test reliability contributes to test validity. "The more reliable the scores are, the more confidence score users have in using the scores for making important decisions about test takers" (ETS, 2008a). In Zhang's analyses on repeater performance (2008) the "high to moderate correlations between the two test scores indicated a high degree of consistency in repeaters' rank orders of their scores" (Zhang, 2008, p. 10). This suggests there is a high degree of reliability for the TOEFL iBT, even for people who take the test more than once.

"The TOEFL iBT does not measure non-linguistic factors; stakeholders should…refrain from inferring the predictive validity of iBT scores."

Limitations

A cautionary note relates to how the TOEFL is used. Some institutions set section or skill score requirements either by themselves or in combination with a total score, while others plan to set a total score standard in order to make use of the score information in ways they deem best suited to their purposes (ETS, 2005b). This application of TOEFL iBT scores could affect its reliability for academic application since it may influence test takers' focus on the actual exam in accordance with preferences of preferred universities. Teachers and students should be aware of this form of washback, which derives from the use of the test, rather than from the test itself.

Of course, there are multifaceted variables at play in tertiary studies – linguistic, as well as non-linguistic factors. The TOEFL iBT does not measure non-linguistic factors; stakeholders should be sure to recognize this limitation and refrain from inferring the predictive validity of iBT scores. In fact, a study was undertaken at the University of Western Ontario and Brescia University College to support their practice of using TOEFL scores as part of the overall academic profile of applicants, "but with no explicit cutoff score" (Simner & Mitchell, 2007), meaning an iBT score is used to inform, but not to dictate, acceptance. This approach utilizes the strength of the TOEFL to measure the lan-

(Continued on page 31)

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guage skills that are important to academic success, but it avoids overdependence on a TOEFL score as a predictor of overall academic success.

Still, a reason given for taking the TOEFL iBT is that a successful test taker "will be able to ...read textbooks, perform online research, speak with professors and other students, write academic papers, reports, e-mails and more" (ETS, 2009c). Additionally, many ETS publications are equipped with slogans such as, "TOEFL scores open more doors" (ETS, 2007). However, there appears to be inadequate research to support this claim. A study done in the late 1990s at the University of Bahrain suggests that success on the TOEFL is a poor predictor of academic success (Al-Musawi & Al-Ansari, 1999). As this research was done on a pre-iBT version, interpretations must not be overgeneralized. More longitudinal studies that track the academic success of iBT TOEFL test takers would be useful.

Conclusion

The TOEFL iBT is recognized for its reliability and validity as a large-scale standardized proficiency test of English for Academic Purposes. Within this context, the Reading section of the test has evolved to better simulate the reading task conditions faced by students in university settings. The incorporation of integrated reading, listening, and writing tasks highlights the importance of simulating authentic reading tasks for tertiary studies and indicates that recent non-ETS research on validity has been carefully considered. In recent years, ESL professionals have done extensive research projects on the TOEFL iBT which has both been compensated by ETS and by outside parties. Such research from those who would be more likely to critically analyze the test and ultimately improve its validity is welcome by ETS and is most useful for EAP instructors who may not understand the constructs measured by this preparatory tertiary exam. Although there are a number of issues discussed in this review of which EAP instructors need to be critically aware, the iBT Reading test remains at the cutting edge of language testing in terms of validity and reliability. ❖

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Table 1: TOEFL iBT Score Report Descriptors, source: Gomez et al. (2007)

Reading Skills	Level	Your Performance
Reading	**High (22–30)**	Test takers who receive a score at the **HIGH** level, as you did, typically understand academic texts in English that require a wide range of reading abilities regardless of the difficulty of the texts. Test takers who score at the **HIGH** level typically: • have a very good command of academic vocabulary and grammatical structure; • can understand and connect information, make appropriate inferences, and synthesize ideas, even when the text is conceptually dense and the language is complex; • can recognize the expository organization of a text and the role that specific information serves within the larger text, even when the text is conceptually dense; and • can abstract major ideas from a text, even when the text is conceptually dense and contains complex language.
Reading	**Intermediate (15-21)**	Test takers who receive a score at the **INTERMEDIATE** level, as you did, typically understand academic texts in English that require a wide range of reading abilities, although their understanding of certain parts of the texts is limited. Test takers who receive a score at the **INTERMEDIATE** level typically: • have a good command of common academic vocabulary but still have some difficulty with high-level vocabulary; • have a very good understanding of grammatical structure; • can understand and connect information, make appropriate inferences, and synthesize information in a range of texts but have more difficulty when the vocabulary is high level and the text is conceptually dense; • can recognize the expository organization of a text and the role that specific information serves within a larger text but have some difficulty when these are not explicit or easy to infer from the text; and • can abstract major ideas from a text but have more difficulty doing so when the text is conceptually dense.
Reading	**Low (0–14)**	Test takers who receive a score at the **LOW** level, as you did, typically understand some of the information presented in academic texts in English that require a wide range of reading abilities, but their understanding is limited. Test takers who receive a score at the **LOW** level typically: • have a command of basic academic vocabulary, but their understanding of less common vocabulary is inconsistent; • have limited ability to understand and connect information, have difficulty recognizing paraphrases of text information, and often rely on particular words and phrases rather than a complete understanding of the text; • have difficulty identifying the author's purpose, except when that purpose is explicitly stated in the text or easy to infer from the text; and • can sometimes recognize major ideas from a text when the information is clearly presented, memorable, or illustrated by examples but have difficulty doing so when the text is more demanding.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Variety in Adult ESL Classrooms

By Judy Pollard Smith

Variety is the spice of life and nowhere is it more necessary than when teaching adult learners. I'm sure that every instructor faces the same dilemma that I do by April. I find myself asking, "What can I do to challenge, to teach differently, to spice things up?"

I came up with a couple of ideas for activities I'll share. They may need re-jigging or buffing up for different levels. This works well for levels 3 and 4 but with imagination can work well in any level.

Kim's Game

Vocabulary development, speaking, reading

Some teachers may remember "Kim's Game" played in Brownies or other organizations? (It's a memory and vocabulary game. You place objects on a tray and ask the students to remember what you took away.) I updated it for teaching new vocabulary in ESL purposes.

This would work very well if you were talking about a particular subject and use only items relating to new vocabulary (Theme: *Household tools*: thread, needles, scissors, cloth, zipper, etc.)

I stress conversational skills and vocabulary acquisition, so this is how I used it. I bring in a tray of random objects, and each of the objects is somehow related to a short story in my own life. I type out a short paragraph relating to each of the objects and tell them the story first. (For example, I showed them a poetry book that my mother had bought for me in high-school after my first 'affaire de coeur' went up in smoke. She thought it would help me, but it only served to increase my Drama Queen tendency. The students loved that story. I also brought along a special spoon, a pair of binoculars, etc.)

(Continued on page 35)

(Continued from page 34)

I tell each of my ten stories slowly as I hold up the object. Their job at that point is *listening*. I put new or difficult words on the board.

After I tell each story I hand each student a typed paragraph. Their job is to choose the object relating to the story on the paper they have, take it off the tray, show it to the class and read the accompanying story.

After that activity is completed, they choose any object they want to re-tell the story in their own words. In some cases I say "Re-tell a story that you thought was humorous," or "Tell a story that made you feel sad." It would be ideal to ask different students in from other classes for the re-telling. Good practice for listening, speaking, reading.

This activity can be used several times in one teaching year for various purposes.

Newspaper Scavenger Hunt

This takes time to prepare but is a hit

You need to carefully remove single pages of the newspaper; you need a big pile for this game. Make notes as you go.

You will take the papers to school, put them on a table in no particular order and write on the board in large clear print:

Find a photograph of:

- A man with his hands on his hips.
- A woman who looks indecisive.
- A child who is rambunctious.
- The words "Open from noon until midnight."

Find the following information:

- Where can you buy opera tickets? What is the phone number? How much are they? When is it coming to our city?

Find the people you can call:

- if you need your drains fixed.

This can go on and on, is a reusable learning activity and is a great exercise to manipulate in terms of what level of vocabulary you can teach to your students. The students all dig into the pile of newspapers and get seriously competitive over who saw the drain man first! It follows that looking studiously through piles of English print would reinforce reading and general English knowledge. As in real life, you always discover unexpected and useful things in the process of looking for something related to your first task.

(Continued on page 36)

(Continued from page 35)

Music Ideas

Listening, new vocabulary acquisition, Canadian culture content

Sarah Harmer

Performer Sarah Harmer would be surprised to find herself in this publication I'm sure but she came in handy with her new recording "I Am A Mountain." It happened that the school I was teaching in at that time was directly across from the construction site of the Red Hill Valley Expressway. We had followed the controversy in the newspaper. Sarah made an escarpment tour that summer and produced related music. I introduced the new vocabulary for *Escarpment Blues* and then played it twice as they listened. On the third listen, I said "Put up your hand when you hear the word "lake", and on and on in that vein. Then I gave them a printout of the words and they read along as I played it again. It would be a good activity for higher level classes who are studying environmental issues.

I also used Sarah Harmer's song, "Salamandre," a short, sweet song in French, for fun. They could guess which language it was and what it was talking about. A good thing to use when you have 15 minutes left in which to keep people engaged.

Schubert's Trout Quintet

Several of my students this past year were classical music fans. I happened to have a wordless cartoon about a fishing story so thought of using this piece of music to accompany it. We listened first and they all had to guess what they thought the music was 'talking' about. Most of them guessed words related to the outdoors. I made a list on the board of their 'guesses'. I told them the story of how Schubert set music to the poem while on holiday. They worked on their own "fish stories" using the wordless cartoon and reading them back to the group. If you have personal photos of fishing trips you could use them to the same effect.

(Continued on page 37)

(Continued from page 36)

Archie Comic Books

I chose Archie comics as every culture understands the love triangle situation (in this case, Betty, Archie, Veronica, pre-Archie's recent marriage to Veronica.) I place coloured blow-ups of the characters in the comics on the board and introduce them so the students can keep them straight.

I photocopy several comics (not the whole book, just stories that I think would relate to them on some level.) I explain new vocabulary and read it once first. Then we read them together.

The success rate for reading is fairly high but this activity only works with a group who are level 4 and up. It is a good activity for teaching recognition of speech reductions. I have purchased a variety of Archie comic books and leave them on the table for students to borrow. Adult students love to have fun with these comic books and I was pleased to find out that most of my students were familiar with them in translation (another jumping off point).

Business Cards

Collect as many business cards as you can find. (I found a photocopy store/business card shop that was throwing out a huge pile of extra runs so you might ask around.) This is a motivator for Japanese and Korean students who use them widely in their culture. I have a collection for funeral directors, house painters, antique dealers, real estate people, insurance workers, home health care workers. You can use them when you do the LINC theme of jobs, community, etc.

I use them for vocabulary acquisition which is increasingly important as the levels go up. (For example, I have a card for a painter. We talk about interior decoration, exterior decoration, consultation, etc.) I usually lay them on the table and ask them to choose 3 each, but if I have 10 minutes left I give out one card and ask the student to talk about the job on it. Alternatively, they could be asked to choose a 'job' (i.e., a business card), and tell the class about what they 'do.'

Robert Munsch Books

Reading, Canadian culture

Only for kids? No. I use them to introduce concepts like peer pressure, etc., as many of my students have preteens. For some cultures, this concept is not understood and it needs to be understood in Canada for reasons of family peace. I borrow as many copies as I can from the public library of *Stephanie's Ponytail* (peer pressure and self-confidence), *The Paper Bag Princess* (self-confidence, talking about what is true love), *Thomas' Snowsuit* (stubbornness). You'll want to create your own ideas on how to use them but the important thing is that the adults don't feel you're treating them as children when using kids' books. I tell them I want them to read them to understand what their kids are reading in Canada. The success level of reading children's books in the adult classroom is high and it's fun.

Let them take home your borrowed copies to read to their children at night. It increases English literacy at home base.

Dr. Seuss

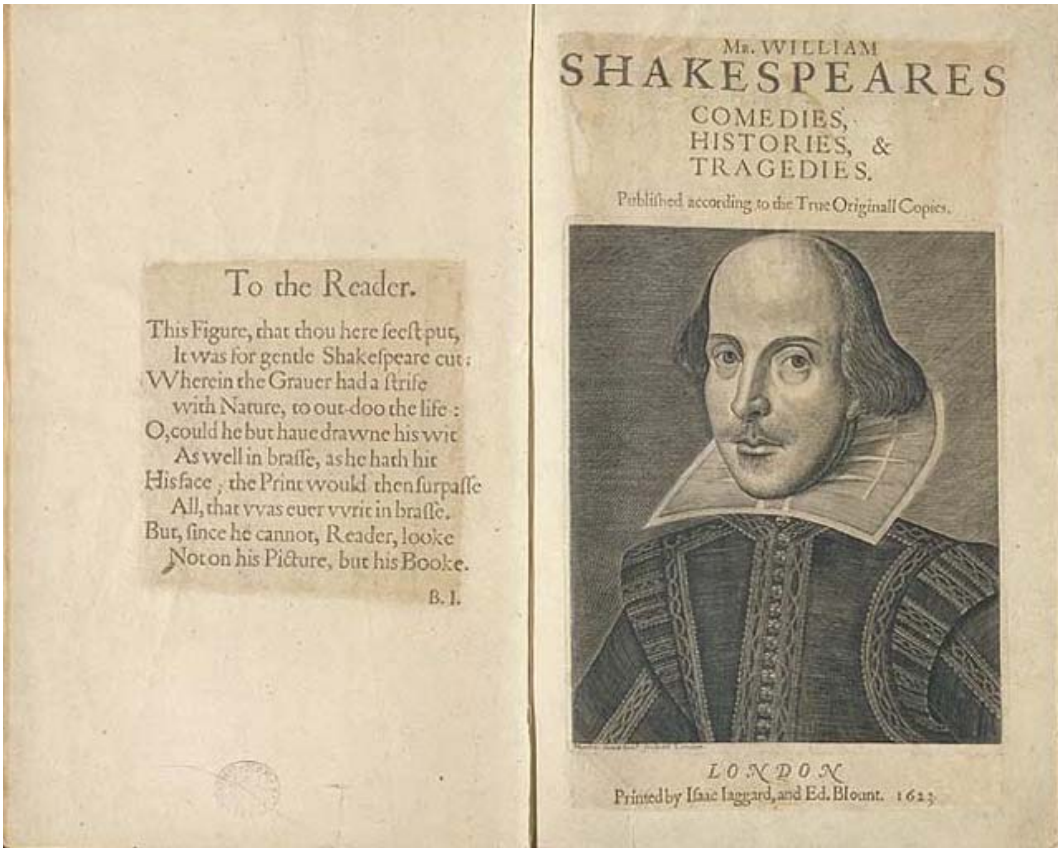
These popular classics can be used for tapping out on desktops the rhythm of the spoken language.

It sets up a relaxed, fun atmosphere and keeps English running through their ears in a different way. ❖

Judy Pollard Smith is a regular contributor to *Contact*. She teaches ESL at Mohawk College in Hamilton.

Modern English Is Passé

By Judy M. Thompson



Even in just 400 years the language has changed gr8ly

Change is part of nature, it is part of life and it is part of language. So it is with English.

Email, text, blog and Twitter are modern day forms of English, totally foreign to adults half a generation away. The English language is no stranger to change. Every 500 years, English transforms as radically as the caterpillar becomes a butterfly. The time is up for Modern English and change is upon us. Native English speakers struggling daily with confusing and rapidly evolving lingo we can't stop or control. Our generation is in the middle of a seismic language shift toward *Global English.*

A brief glimpse at the evolution of English so far paints a clear picture of the language, how it got to be this way and where it is going.

1,500 years ago English began to emerge from Germanic origins when the Angles, Saxons and Jutes crossed the North Sea and conquered Britain.

(Continued on page 39)

(Continued from page 38)

In 800 AD, Norse was added and the first form of English — *Old English* — came to be. Few scholars today can decipher this sample of the first incarnation of the English language.

Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum

si þin nama

gehalgod tobecume þin rice

gewurþe þin willa

In 1066 William the Conqueror defeated the Anglo-Saxons and it was lights out for phase one of the English language. French was added to Old English and the result was a new form of the language and the beginning of the next 500-year era called *Middle English.* The same passage as above is a little more recognizable by 1384 AD in the Middle English period.

Ovre fadir þat art in hevenes halwid be þi name

þi revme or kyngdom come to be

Until the mid-15th century, few people other than the clergy or aristocracy were literate. After a thousand years of evolution as an oral language, one man changed everything. William Caxton introduced the printing press, made English widely available to commoners in a written form, and single-handedly ushered in *Modern English.*

Although Caxton struggled valiantly to reconcile the 40+ sounds regularly used in English with the 26 symbols in the Latin alphabet, he was not particularly successful. The resulting disastrous English spelling is something the world still grapples with today. Printed in 1611, the previous passage is easily recognizable.

Ovr father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name

Thy kingdom come

Except for distinguishing "u" and "v" as separate letters, Modern English has changed little since 1478 when William Caxton carved it in stone.

Modern English has enjoyed some exciting times during its 500-year reign. The British naval dynasty gave Briton access to the world where "the sun never set on British soil." Everywhere the sailors went, they brought back words:

- Zero, chocolate, sugar and alcohol from Arabia.
- Shampoo and pajamas from India.
- Ketchup and tycoon from China.
- Gum and paper from Egypt…and on and on.

English's penchant for adopting words from other languages that started in 800 AD with the German and Norse had expanded to include every major language on Earth.

The elastic quality of English allowed for individuals to make significant contributions to the language as well. William Shakespeare coined the phrase, "coined the phrase," as well as 2,000 other words and phrases. Sir Isaac Newton published *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* or *Principia* in 1687 and gave us "gravity," "mass," "velocity,"… in *one fell swoop* (oops, Shakespeare again) establishing English as the language of science for centuries to come. Britain dominated as a world power for hundreds of years, and then in 1945 at the close of WWII passed the torch to the United States of

(Continued on page 40)

(Continued from page 39)

America. These back-to-back English-speaking superpowers were *the makings of* (Shakespeare) English as the international language of commerce.

Today there are more than a million words in the English language. It is the largest language in the world by far, and it grows larger every day. "Double, double," "Gonna" and "24/7" are relatively new additions to the dictionary. The average high school graduate has a reading vocabulary of about 300,000 words (much fewer for speaking) and a Ph.D. about 600,000. These are daunting numbers for anyone who wishes to learn or teach English as a Second Language (ESL).

But it is almost midnight for the era that began with William Caxton in 1478. After exactly 500 years, Modern English sovereignty is all but over. In 1981 Bill Gates launched Microsoft and the language will never be the same. Here is the Lord's Prayer in "text":

dad@hvn, ur spshl we want wot u want & urth2

b like hvn

In terms of transition, we are the sandwich generation, and our children use a completely different language than our parents did. With history as our guide, we know new incarnations of English take almost 100 years to complete. Some believe the most recent mutation began with Microsoft and we are thirty years into it. I disagree. In 1930, David Ogden published *Simplified English*, which included a basic word list of 850 words and ten grammar rules, and sent it to Asia. Voice of America (VOA) has been broadcasting to the Third World using a basic list of 1,500 allowable words since 1959. That list with few additions is still being taught to 1.5 billion people around the world and the transfer to Global English is almost complete.

Since English is the language of science, commerce and technology worldwide, non-native speakers of English outnumber native speakers by a ratio of 4:1, which means most conversations in English today occur between two non-native speakers. They don't use a million words to communicate: they have made the language their own.

Thanks to David Ogden, non-native speakers successfully use fewer than 2,000 words and a simplified set of grammar rules where there is no "s" on the third person singular, pronouns and word order is fairly liquid and subject and verb don't have to agree.

Global English includes inventions like:

- Where is my keys?
- Him and me go to the store.
- cu l8r
- And in the song unblinkingly embraced during the 2010 Olympics, "I believe in the power of you and I."

The biggest shift from Modern English to Global English is in intention. It is no longer as critical to be perfect as it is to be understood. Communication is successful if it is understood and no one's feelings are hurt.

As newcomers infuse the country, language, culture, workplace and family unit, the impact on the English language is unavoidable. The next time you hear a frustrated native speaker mutter, "Why don't they just speak English?", you might consider that the newcomer is speaking English and we are not. ❖

Bee alert: New Spellings for Almost-New English Words

On June 2, the Associated Press (AP) in the United States updated its official spellings of several "new" words. This may have an impact on your writing, if AP spelling comes into conflict with the preferred spelling reference for APA academic style.

Many of the new spellings are for words involving new technologies. Recent examples of new, approved spellings include:

- Online (one word, no hyphen).
- Website (one word, no space).

The new spellings are reflected in the internet edition of the Merriam-Webster dictionary. Of course, the non-updated hardcover edition referenced by APA is now not as current as the… "online website." ❖

The APA *Publication Manual* recommends *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (2005) as the standard spelling reference for APA journals and books for nonpsychological terms; spelling of psychological terms should conform to the *APA Dictionary of Psychology* (VandenBos, 2007).

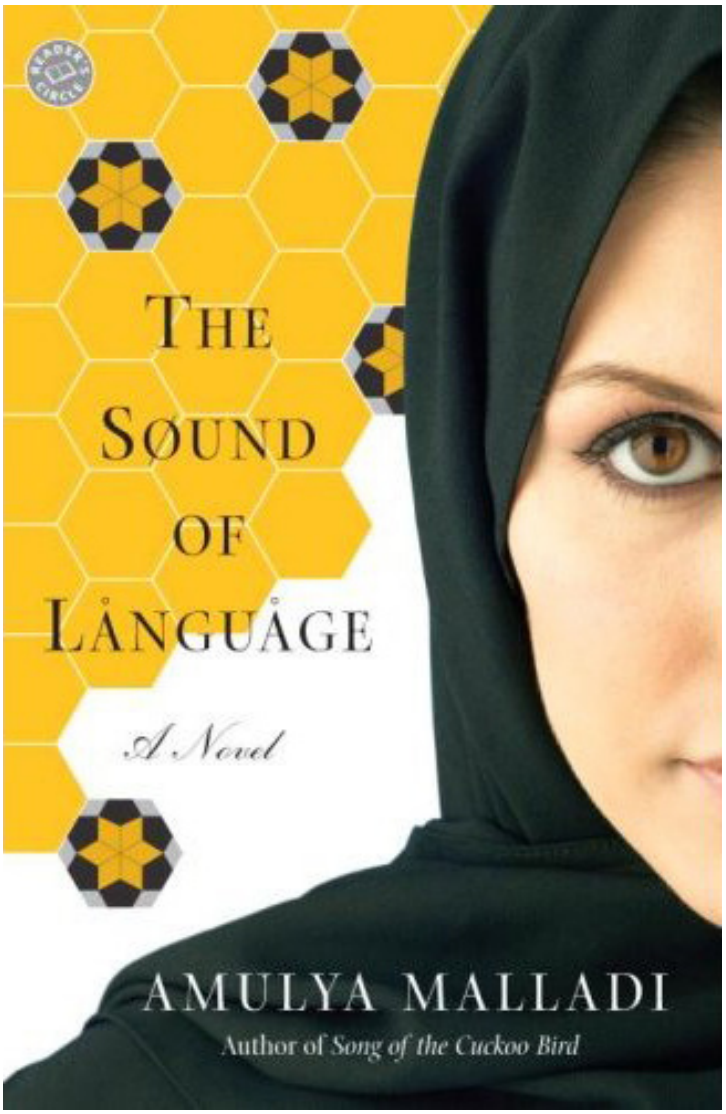
If a word is not in *Webster's Collegiate*, try consulting the more comprehensive *Webster's Third New International Dictionary (2002)*.

If the dictionary gives a choice, use the first spelling listed; for example, use *aging* and *canceled* rather than *ageing* and *cancelled*.

BOOK REVIEW

The Sound of Language by Amulya Malladi

Review by Robert Courchêne



The Sound of Language by Amulya Malladi.
Random House Publishing (2007), 256 pages.
ISBN: 0345483162
(Includes interview with the author)

In this beautifully crafted story in which the two main characters confront the loss of their partners, Malladi describes how Gunnar, a recent widower, and Raihana, a refugee from Afghanistan who has lost her husband to the conflict, form a unique friendship that enables them to surmount prejudice, loneliness and heartbreak. Raihana, who has been taken in by her relatives in Denmark, is required—like all immigrants—to take language courses, with one part of the program being a *praktik*. As she struggles with the Danish language, she draws a parallel with the sound of the Danish language: the buzz-buzz of bees—hence the title of the book. Her language teacher, Christine, suggests that she do her *praktik* with Gunnar, who has just lost his wife.

Since her death, Gunnar who is in his 60s, has basically become an isolating slob—glued to his TV, constantly drinking, never

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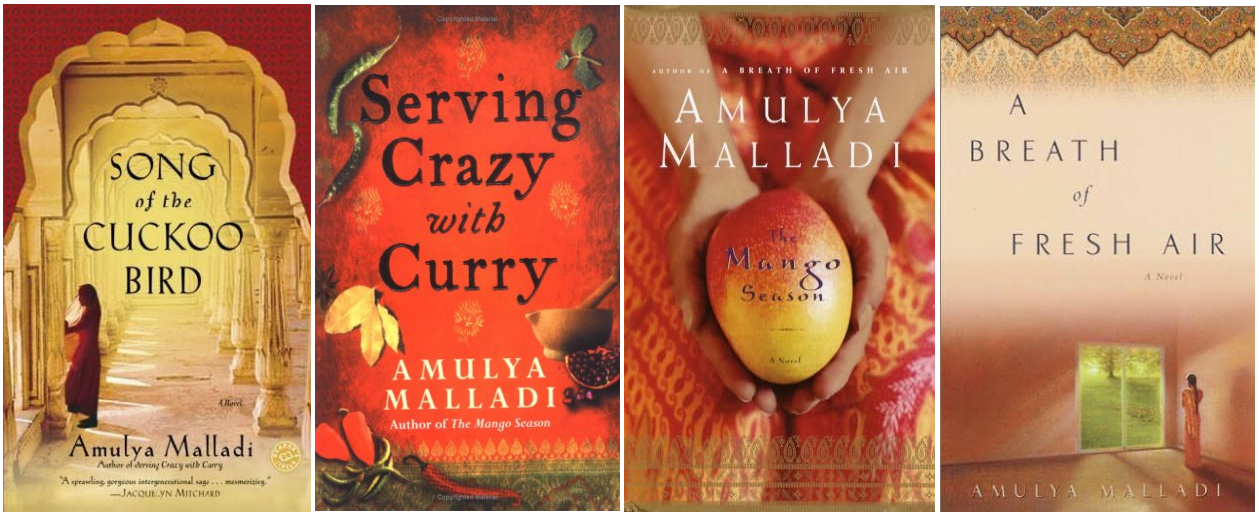

Other books by Amulya Malladi

I strongly recommend the other novels written my Malladi; each deals with an aspect of conflict between different ethic groups, the class of cultures, religions and generations. In each she draws on her experience of living in India, the U.S. and in Denmark. Engaging reads, they bring pleasure and insights into the human experience.

- *Song of the Cuckoo Bird*, Random House Publishing Group, 2005.
- *Serving Crazy With Curry*, Ballantine Books, 2004.
- *The Mango Season*, Random House Publishing Group, 2004.
- *A Breath of Fresh Air*, Random House Publishing Group, 2003.

(Continued from page 42)

cleaning up either his house or himself. Anna's death has destroyed his desire to live.

As the story opens just prior to the onset of spring, we learn that Gunnar and Anna had taken up beekeeping with each having their own hives. With the approaching season, Gunnar should be taking care of all the hives but he has lost interest even though he knows that the bees will die if not attended to.

When Christine brings Raihana to begin her *praktik,* Gunnar agrees (very reluctantly) to allow her to stay for a week without being in any way committed to help her learn her Danish.

Their relationship in the beginning is strained, not only because they have little shared language but Gunnar is certainly not open to being undertaking any new relationship. Raihana begins by cleaning the kitchen

(Continued on page 44)

(Continued from page 43)

and living room on a regular basis and with time they begin to talk about beekeeping (Raihana has only a superficial knowledge of the trade).

Slowly but surely as the novel unfolds, Gunnar teaches Raihana more and more about the raising of bees and together they end up producing a bumper crop of honey. By the end of the novel Raihana wants to take this up as her chosen trade.

Throughout the novel both Raihana and Gunnar are targeted by their respective families and communities; Raihana's host families and members of the Afghan community are scandalize that a young widow who refused to wear either the hijab or the burka would be working alone with an older man. They see her as a black mark against their community in Denmark. For his part, some but not all of Gunnar's relatives see it as inappropriate that Gunnar would have an immigrant woman working with him even if they realize that the reason for her presence there is to help her integrate into Danish society. They see immigrants as an unnecessary and unwanted presence in Denmark. Adding to the racial tension in the novel is Gunnar's grandson who has shaved his head, sports a swastika tattoo and has joined the neoNazi movement. He sees the likes of Raihana as a curse and, ultimately by his actions and that of his friends provokes a family crisis.

Raihana, who believed that by escaping from her home country she had put racism and gender issues behind her, has to confront anew the same issues in Denmark. The racial incident that nearly destroys her family brings together many Danes from the little village who, at Gunnar's intervention, come together to help Raihana and her relatives rebuild their lives.

Through the interactions of Raihana, Gunnar and their respective families, Malladi explores and reveals the difficulty faced by new immigrants as they try to surmount the barriers to successfully integrating in their new-found, but often not freely chosen, home. While language is certainly an important element it is not the only one; ethnic and religious background, cultural patterns and practices, gender roles, including access to education, attitudes of the host culture to immigrants in general and, the given ethnic background in particular, all are potentially factors that facilitate or militate against integration. ❖

(Photo © Søren Rasmussen)

Amulya Malladi has a bachelor's degree in engineering and a master's degree in journalism. Born and raised in India, she lived in the United States for several years before moving to Denmark, where she now lives on the island of Mors with her husband and young son. You can contact her at www.amulyamalladi.com.