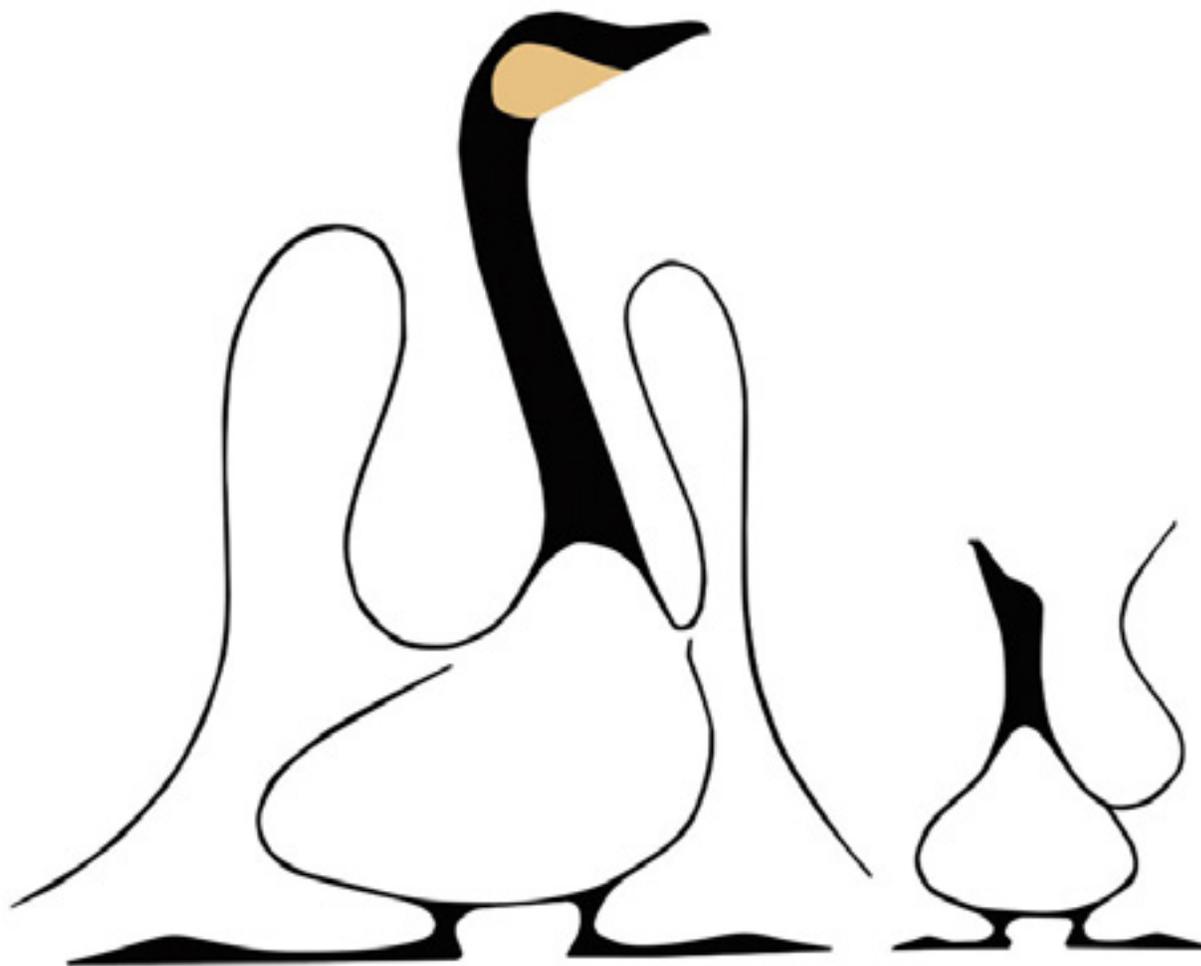


English Language Learning Magazine

# CONTACT

November 2016



*Benjamin Lake Lake*

**The least you should know  
about Ojibwa**

**Ideas from other fields**

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## Calendar

December 1–2	The Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators (CESBA). <a href="http://www.cesba.com/events/#Conference">http://www.cesba.com/events/#Conference</a>
January 5–8	Modern Language Association (MLA). Philadelphia, PA. <a href="http://www.mla.org/convention">http://www.mla.org/convention</a>
January 21	Technology for Teachers (T4T) Conference. <a href="http://teslontario.org/t4t-2017">http://teslontario.org/t4t-2017</a>
Feb 26–March 1	Languages Canada’s Annual Conference, Quebec, QC. <a href="http://languagescanada.ca/en/language-education-sector/annual-conference">http://languagescanada.ca/en/language-education-sector/annual-conference</a>
March 18–21	AAAL, Portland, OR. <a href="http://www.aaal.org/page/2017CFP">http://www.aaal.org/page/2017CFP</a>
March 21–24	Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Seattle, WA. <a href="http://www.tesol.org/convention2017">http://www.tesol.org/convention2017</a>
April 22	TESL Hamilton. <a href="http://www.teslhw.org/news-and-events.html">http://www.teslhw.org/news-and-events.html</a>
June 8–10	TESL Canada, Niagara Falls. <a href="https://www.tesl.ca/index.php/conferences">https://www.tesl.ca/index.php/conferences</a>
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*Stephanie L. L. L.*

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

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In the last issue we took a quick look at cognitive linguistics. This time, Jackie Nenchin introduces us to systemic functional linguistics (SFL). Elizabeth O'Dowd then shows us how one MATESOL program that teaches SFL is updating their curriculum, considering the growth of English as a world language. If revamping your program sounds good, and you think you have the management skills to do it, Kara Mac Donald and Ketty Reppert have some hints about how to become a program administrator.

Continuing with the least-you-should-know series about other languages, John Steckley provides a gentle introduction to the Ojibwa language. This also inspired our cover image "Learning" by Ojibwa artist Benjamin Chee Chee.

Our remaining articles are from Alina Filip, who describes dynamic writing assessment, and Jocelyn Wiley, who walks us through the oral group essay.

It's always good to cast a wide net when looking for new ideas. We round out this issue with a collection of brief essays looking at how other fields, from cognitive science to yoga, can inform our practice.

Finally, our long-promised website is finally, finally, finally, ready to launch, finally. This will provide access to past issues but also allow you to view individual articles in either PDF or web format. I hope you find the website convenient and useful.

If you are a presenter at this year's conference, please, consider publishing a writeup of your presentation in the conference issue of Contact.

Brett Reynolds

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## CONTACT

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## Cover image

Our cover includes the image "Learning" by Benjamin Chee Chee reproduced courtesy of Guy Mattar, Administrator of the Estate of Benjamin Chee Chee.

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# BEYOND TRADITION

## Using systemic functional linguistics in ESL teaching and teacher preparation<sup>1</sup>

By Jackie Nenchin, Molloy College

### Abstract

This paper examines some uses of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in teacher preparation and offers some ideas and activities for ESL classrooms. The paper begins with a rationale for the use of SFL in teacher training and language teaching, followed by a description of Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and its application to pedagogy, as represented by the work of Rose, Martin, Butt, Lock, and others. It examines certain aspects of grammar from an SFL perspective and provides an example of a project that was completed by teacher learners, including related activities for the classroom.

As an ESL teacher and teacher trainer, I have always been certain of the inadequacy of the traditional understanding of English grammar as a set of rules to be memorized and subsequently applied. So many rules seem woefully inadequate and riddled with exceptions. When considering where to do my doctoral work and what focus it should have, I found Macquarie University's online doctoral program in linguistics, where I learned about systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and the perspectives it offers on grammar, including the work of Halliday, Hasan, Matthiessen, Martin, and others. I discovered that much of their work was applied to language education. So it was that in my personal context of seeking a better way to understand and teach grammar, I found a professional home in SFL, the study of which has led me to apply SFL to teacher training and teaching English as a new language.

### The Argument

One of my most important goals is for my teacher learners, whether they are new to the classroom or already in the classroom and working towards their master's degrees, to develop a deeper understanding and more expansive view of grammar since as language teachers they have to teach a great deal of English grammar. From their time in primary and secondary school, most of them remember a few rules for spelling and grammar (*i*

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1. Based on a presentation given at TESOL 2016.

before *e* except after *c*...) and some mostly fallacious prohibitions (never start a sentence with *and* or *because*...). They may also recall the definitions of the parts of speech, whose categorizations may be problematic. For instance, I observed a wonderfully gifted student teacher deliver a third-grade ESL lesson on nouns as person, place, or thing. During the lesson, she presented the word *house* and asked the students whether it was a person, place, or thing. The answers were divided between place and thing. These responses caused her to question her own ideas about the categorization of *house* as place. Another example of the limits of categorization is the traditional division of verbs into two categories: action verbs and being verbs. This oversimplified labeling raises the question of how to categorize verbs such as *say*, *think*, *want*, and *believe*. I am convinced that SFL provides better ways of understanding and teaching English (and other languages).

## Description of SFL

SFL is a rich and expansive theory of language that allows teacher educators to go beyond the narrow bounds of traditional grammar instruction focused on syntax and rules to a broader, more holistic concept of language and language pedagogy that involves an understanding of the meaning-making resources of language and the interface between discourse semantics, lexico-grammar (the continuum between vocabulary and grammar), and phonology. It is a linguistic theory that models language as a social activity in which all participate. *Systemic* means that grammar is viewed as consisting of system networks that contain the patterns of choices through which people make meaning (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). *Polarity* is an example of a system: *He is sick. He is not sick. Functional* means that the practical uses of language in context are the focal point of the model, not rule-based or formal grammar.

There is a significant amount of research into and application of SFL in literacy pedagogy in Australia through the work of Halliday, Hasan, Martin, Rose, Rothery, Christie, Feez, Coffin, Butt, Mahboob, and others. In the US, Meg Gebhard, Mary Schleppegrell, Cecelia Colombi, Heidi Byrnes, Luciana de Oliveira and others have been promoting the use of SFL in teacher training and in ESL and foreign language classrooms.

In SFL, instead of viewing a clause as a two-dimensional line, one can view it from a trinocular perspective that involves the three metafunctions explained by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). For example, consider this independent clause, written by one of my bilingual teacher learners, *I began to study Spanish for proficiency*. It can be seen in light of the three metafunctions (see Table 1): ideational [experiential and logical] (language as experience: how speakers and writers represent the world), interpersonal (how speakers and writers interact or take a position) and textual (how speakers and writers organize their message; Butt et al., 2012).

Table 1

*SFL Analysis of a Clause*

	I	began to study		Spanish	<i>for proficiency</i>
<b>Constituency</b>	N o u n group	Verb group		Noun group	Prepositional phrase
<b>Experiential</b>	Senser	Process: Mental: cognition		Phenomenon	Circumstance: Cause: purpose
<b>Interpersonal</b>	Subject	Modulation: Time Finite+past	Predicator	Complement	Adjunct
<b>Declarative</b>	MOOD		Residue		
<b>Textual</b>	Theme	Rheme			

**Taxis:** independent clause

In this analysis, the first line (constituency) includes the parts of a clause, with which most teachers would be familiar, and the interpersonal section would be partly familiar as subject and predicate. But the experiential and textual sections would be a new way of looking at the clause for most teachers, as would the metalanguage associated with them. That is not to suggest that ESL teachers should have their students do this delicate analysis, but that teachers could gain an enhanced awareness that a clause is more than parts of speech grouped together to form a subject and predicate and that grammar is a resource for making a wide range of meanings. This awareness can filter down to the classroom and various age- and proficiency-level applications and to pedagogy about writing genres common in schooling and their associated lexico-grammatical features.

## Application of SFL

In addition to an explication of word classes and Common Core milestones (language progressive skills that meet US state requirements), the focus of my instruction is to explore some key concepts of SFL, such as the three metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal, textual), process types (semantic categories of verbs), modality (use of modal verbs and modal adverbs), cohesion (types of conjunction and other cohesive structures), and rank scale (independent or dependent clauses, embedded *that/who/which* clauses, and so on).

Since verbs form a large part of ESL instruction, one of the projects my teacher learners complete is on verbs (see Table 2).

Table 2

*SFL Group Project*

Parts	Assignment	Product
<b>Part 1</b>	Thoroughly describe your PROCESS TYPE in a Word doc based on information from the Lock textbook. Provide examples and details (700 words minimum)	Hand in a brief paper on the process type that your group was assigned. The paper should describe the process type and provide some basic examples of verbs of that type.
<b>Part 2</b>	Choose two verbs of your process type, one regular and one irregular, for a special focus on tense. Conjugate each verb in all primary and secondary tenses.	Two tables or other type of format for the conjugation of the two verbs in all primary and secondary tenses.
<b>Part 3</b>	Create ways to present this process to high beginning/low intermediate middle school ESL students. You may create posters and other visual materials. You may also create a webpage or other computer-based presentation (Prezi ...). Include plentiful examples of verbs that belong to this process type.	PPT, poster, Glogster, Prezi or other type of presentation of the process type
<b>Part 4</b>	Create 3 activities for students to practice the verb process type in the two tenses you have been assigned. Only use verbs of your assigned process type.	Write a description of all three activities to share with the class. You may show the descriptions of the activities on PPT, or you may explain them orally and give your classmates a handout with them.

For the project, each group of teacher learners is assigned a process type (as classified by SFL): MATERIAL PROCESS (verbs of doing, e.g. *jumping*), MENTAL PROCESS (verbs expressing the inner world: thinking, inclination, emotion, and perception), RELATIONAL PROCESS (verbs of being and having), BEHAVIORAL PROCESS (verbs of physiological behavior, e.g. *yawning*), EXISTENTIAL PROCESS (verbs of existing, e.g. *exist/there is*), and VERBAL PROCESS (verbs of saying).

For instance, one group of teacher learners completed their project on verbs of thinking. They researched this category of verbs and wrote an explication of it. They chose four verbs, two regular (*dream, believe*) and two irregular (*think, know*) to illustrate the type and created three activities (see Figures 1, 2, and 3).

Figure 1: Activity 1 “Help Me. I’m Stuck.”

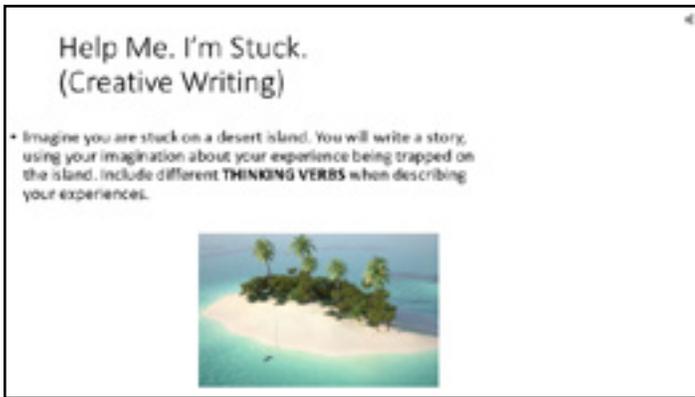
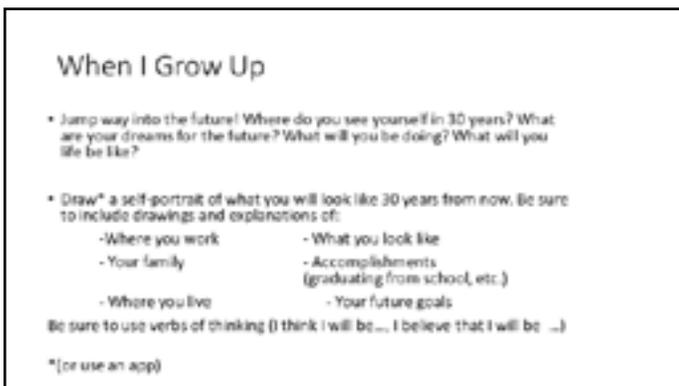


Figure 2: Activity 2 “I Have a Dream” with Sample Foldable



Figure 3: Activity 3



In fine-tuning instruction of verbs by semantic category through the SFL perspective, teachers can help their ESL students better navigate the verbs they have to learn and focus their attention on how these categories of verbs are used. Thus, for example, verbs of the mental process type are not usually used in the continuous form. Also, they often project a *that* clause (*I think that...*). Additionally, teachers can show students how these categories of verbs (process types) occur in school writing, such as recounts of experience (see Appendix A).

## Conclusion

SFL can offer teachers a deeper insight into English grammar, not just the topics explored above, but also such topics as nominalization (nouns formed from verbs, a feature of advanced language), lexical cohesion (the ways lexicon is used to achieve cohesion in writing or speaking), and modality and its role in communicative competence. There is much more about SFL that I cannot include here, but teacher educators can explore SFL through the resources listed below.

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## Appendix A

### Recount: My Most Embarrassing Moment (Kinesthetic Activity)

**Instructions:** 1. Stand up. 2. When you hear a verb of being (Relational Process), sway from left to right. 3. When you hear a verb of doing (Material Process), take a step forward. 4. When you hear a verb of thinking or feeling (Mental Process), take a step backwards.

#### My Most Embarrassing Moment

By Jackie Nenchin

It was a clear and sunny autumn day. The prison grounds at FCI Fairton, a high medium security prison for men, were beautiful and vivid with multicolored leaves everywhere. It was after nine in the morning, time for class to begin. My students were ready outside our classrooms, which were next to the library.

As I did every day, I passed through the security checkpoints. I walked across the courtyard with my escort, one of the other teachers. I entered the education building and turned right toward the classrooms. I saw all of my students lined up along the wall. I smiled at them, and they smiled back. Everything was going just as expected, when suddenly I felt something silky and swishy around my ankles. My slip had fallen down around my ankles in full view of all my students. I rushed into the nearby office where I always left my handbag and took the slip off. Then I went out to teach my class.

I felt so embarrassed. I was afraid to look at my students. I didn't want to see them looking at me. Somehow I was able to stay calm throughout the lessons, but I will never forget my most embarrassing moment.

### Debriefing

1. What is the main process type at the beginning?
2. What is the main process type in the middle?
3. What is the main process type at the end?
4. Can you match the parts of a recount [*orientation, complication, resolution, and coda* (evaluation)] to the text?

### Author Bio



Jacqueline Nenchin received a PhD in Linguistics from Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. She is an associate professor in the Graduate TESOL Program at Molloy College in Rockville Centre, New York, where she also teaches English composition, linguistics, and Russian literature in the English Department. Her teaching experiences include Russian and ESL teaching in public school, community college, and federal prison in New Jersey, and she is a published translator of Russian and German. Her research interests include Systemic Functional Linguistics and its application to pedagogy and translation, grammar, writing, and the role of technology in language learning. Her webpage is <https://www.molloy.edu/academics/undergraduate-programs/education/education-faculty-and-staff/jacqueline-nenchin>

# TEACHING, METHODOLOGY, AND ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

## Lessons for one MATESOL Program<sup>1</sup>

By Elizabeth O'Dowd, St. Michael's College

Our small university in northern New England has a 60-year tradition of preparing students to teach English in the USA and around the world. For several decades, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been our stated approach, while we acknowledge that the term itself is rather loosely defined and is perhaps best seen as a methodological umbrella that reflects several key cognitive, affective, and linguistic principles such as student-centered instruction, relevant and comprehensible input, balancing accuracy with fluency, and integration of productive and receptive skills. The CLT approach has allowed for flexibility of teacher styles and adjustments to the perceived needs of our students, both native (NS) and non-native (NNS) English speakers. However, in recent years we have realized that those needs are shifting in a direction that claims English as an *International Language*, rather than as a *Foreign* or *Second Language*. Acknowledging this shift has motivated us to revisit certain premises of the CLT approach that has served us well for so many years.

## International English

Despite its eclecticism, there is no denying the underlying assumptions of CLT that English “belongs” primarily to NS, and that the goal of English language learners is to communicate with NS, hoping eventually to sound as much like them as possible. These assumptions have been refuted in a growing body of literature from associated fields, which I collectively refer to as English as an International Language (EIL), but which include World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Drawing on Kachru's (1992) original metaphor of three concentric demographic circles in the English-speaking world, this literature points out that NNS (i.e., speakers from the “Outer” and “Expanding” circles) have taken ownership of the English language in the sense that they now outnumber NS three to one. Their language-learning purposes are domain-specific rather than generally communicative, including for example international business transactions, public policy statements, academic scholarship, or the global tourist industry. Within these domains, interaction takes place both with and without the inclusion of NS.

As the ownership of English is changing, so is the shape of the language. On the one hand, ELF corpora reveal a regularization of idiosyncratic features such as the -s suffix for plural

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1. This talk is based on a talk given at the 2016 TESOL Convention.

nouns, or the substitution of difficult pronunciation features like the initial sound in *think* with more universally common variants like /s/ (Jenkins, 2015). This movement may suggest a new standardized grammar for EIL. On the other hand, Graddol (2006) and others note the localization of English into regional varieties or World Englishes (Indian English being a notable example), much as Latin diverged into the dialects that later became Romance languages. In these contexts, grammatical or phonological accuracy as defined by NS norms becomes less relevant than “a capability of effective use ... exploiting whatever linguistic resources are available” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 197).

## Surveys

These findings send an explicit signal for change to “Inner Circle” TESOL programs such as ours. But first, in order to check the real-world strength of this signal, we conducted two surveys, one in 2005 and another still ongoing in 2016, of alumni who graduated from our MATESOL program within the previous ten years and who have taught all around the world. Our Survey-Monkey questionnaire asked whether respondents perceived a NS advantage in their profession, how the purposes of their teaching had changed over time and contexts, which aspects of their methodological training they had found most useful, and which professional skills they most needed to develop. Both surveys also offered prompts and open-ended questions to elicit suggestions for improvement of our program.

For the first survey, we received 75 responses; and so far, we have received about half as many for the second. Although these numbers represent only a small sample of our hundreds of graduates, they generally confirm the scenario presented by the EIL literature, with some interesting contrasts between 2005 and 2016. Across both surveys, alumni reported experiences from a total of 31 countries, covering a range of developed and developing countries across the Outer Circle (where English has official status, as in Pakistan) and the Expanding Circle (where English is a lingua franca, as in Switzerland, Tajikistan, or francophone Africa). About half the respondents were NNS. Remarkably, both surveys revealed a majority perception (64% averaged across both populations but slightly stronger with NNS) that NS still have a hiring advantage, suggesting that the global English teaching market has not yet acknowledged the demographic realities of NNS ownership.

More reflective of the literature were the perceptions of English learning goals. In 2005, ranked on a Likert scale, presentation skills took first place, followed by conversation and last, critical thinking. Ten years later, critical thinking and presentation skills both share the highest weighted average on the Likert scale (4.31). From a list of six approaches, CLT was identified in 2005 as the most useful, followed by content-based and grammar-based instruction; but in 2016, CLT (4.38 weighted average) is challenged for top place by English for academic purposes (4.33), while grammar-based instruction—the standard bearer for NS norms of ‘correctness’—comes last (2.91).

Asked which language skills they most often taught (Oral Skills, Reading, Writing, or

Grammar), alumni in both surveys placed oral skills first, but grammar has slipped from second to fourth place over the last ten years. As for professional development needs, curriculum design topped the list in both surveys; but English for specific purposes has replaced “fun ideas” for second place.

Most interesting are the 2016 recommendations, from 13 prompts, to improve our MATESOL program. The strongest recommendations were to

1. Offer more off-site practicum placements (4.31 average)
2. Focus on classroom management (3.92)
3. Focus on assessment methods (3.92)
4. Focus on pragmatics and cross-cultural awareness (3.77)
5. Encourage research related to prospective teaching situation (3.77)

Prompts related to English internationalization (e.g., allow more exposure to NNS, or focus on EIL) were the lowest-ranked, suggesting again that our respondents’ teaching contexts have not yet conceded ownership of English.

## Conclusion: Directions for MATESOL

Our 2016 survey continues, but results so far reinforce the importance of our offering a MATESOL curriculum that respects shifting demographics but that focuses on the core pedagogical skills that can transfer to any teaching context. While we certainly see content-based methodologies catching up with CLT and leaving grammar-based methodologies behind, the recommendations above signal that “method” itself is less important than the ability to adapt to the diverse teaching situations that our graduates will encounter. In their open-ended responses, alumni mentioned the ongoing need for professional development in such areas as leadership, institutional management, and implementing new approaches, all reflecting employers’ assumptions, as one respondent stated, that “people with MAs should be the coordinators of groups of instructors, work on curriculum design, create computer-based tests” and otherwise take charge from the start of their careers.

Thus, our findings support directly Penny Ur’s call for a truly post-method approach where we prepare teachers to “design their own ‘situated methodologies,’” (2013, p. 470). With this mission in mind, our curriculum reform is under way. Our revised list of student outcomes does not abandon the principles of language learning and teaching that inspired CLT. But we have adjusted our methodological focus to emphasize versatility and self-empowerment of our graduates in a global teaching context. Four key modifications are summarized here.

**Course plan:** The knowledge and skills of curriculum design and appropriate instructional technology are now woven more deliberately into the fabric of our required coursework, bearing in mind that many developing countries have easier access to computers and the internet than to physical teaching materials.

**Grammar instruction:** For several years, our program has balanced the traditional sentence-level approach with a functional perspective, using the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which explores the resources of grammar for constructing meaning on different levels. This strategy has proven effective in content-based contexts, specifically for our alumni teaching in USA public schools where the priority of English learning is academic literacy for grade-level standards in different subject areas. Our survey results suggest that a functional approach to grammar is similarly appropriate for teaching EIL. Our graduates should certainly be able to answer sentence-level grammar questions, especially in those settings where English is taught primarily for passing grammar-based examinations. But they must also be able to help their students unpack or construct meaning effectively for a variety of purposes such as understanding a complex scientific report, finding the right voice for an international business presentation, or checking the coherence of a political argument.

**Practicum:** Four of the five major recommendations listed above concern the practicalities of teaching in diverse situations. Our best response is to diversify our opportunities for practicum placements. Hitherto, we have placed most of our student teachers in local settings such as our Intensive English Program. These placements have offered a valuable learning experience. However, lessons about classroom management, appropriate curriculum design and assessment, or cultural responsiveness are best learned in those settings where our students intend to teach. We are therefore expanding our overseas practicum possibilities to include more representative sites. Some examples include

- bilingual immersion schools in Colombia and Puerto Rico;
- a technical college in Japan;
- a commercial language institute in Morocco;
- a non-profit community school in Tanzania;
- a high school in China

**Thesis topics:** Several of our students know exactly where they are going after graduation. For example, those supported by government scholarships are pre-assigned to return and improve English teaching curriculum in their countries. They are also expected to complete a thesis during their program. The needs of such students are reflected in the recommendation for research related to prospective teaching situations. In response, our thesis advisors are encouraging action research topics rather than more abstract explorations of theoretical or linguistic issues. The following examples of recently chosen topics suggest we are on the right track.

- The comprehensibility of Yemeni-English speakers
- The impact of online recording tool *Voice Thread* on interaction for Taiwanese college students
- Moving toward a functional grammar approach in Palestinian classrooms

- Conditions for introducing CLT in high schools in Iraq

Good teaching has always been about responsiveness to the needs and situations of learners. To the extent that CLT promotes this awareness, its principles are timeless. As we balance the counsel of the EIL literature with the teaching realities reported by our alumni, our MATESOL program will sustain those principles that emphasize the *who* and *why* of English teaching, while challenging the assumption of ownership by NS over the *what* and *how*.

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# TESOL PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

## How Do I Get the Skills to Become One?<sup>1</sup>

By Kara Mac Donald, Defense Language Institute & Ketty Reppert, Kansas State University

The need for formalized training for ELT program administrators is a recurring topic in the field of TESOL. Navigating the transition from faculty to administrative authority is rarely covered in TESOL programs, yet many TESOL graduates find themselves offered administrative and/or management positions based on their advanced degrees and classroom experience. Additionally, those who do not have a background in TESOL and would like to complete a postgraduate degree to legitimize their teaching experience, professionalize themselves, and gain management skills to move beyond the classroom find few options in TESOL programs with a management focus.

This article discusses the skill set educational program administrators and managers typically have and then compares those to the distinct skill set TESOL program administrators and managers may need. The article closes by describing how some TESOL professionals have acquired these skills informally and how some TESOL programs are beginning to respond to the industry's need for program administration and management training.

### General Program Administrator & Manager Skills

An educational program administrator is frequently responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating course offerings. However, these functions transcend both leadership and management roles. A position can consist of both leadership and management functions or just one or the other, depending on the institution. With respect to leadership, the position's functions range from assisting the organization to specify its vision, set goals, and plan a course of action to achieve that vision. These functions relate more to the macro-level operations of an institution; establishing long term objectives to ensure the institution is competitive in the future. This role requires an individual who understands the industry, where it is going and how to rethink the institution's brand image, internal structure, financial plan and so on. With respect to management, the position's functions relate to the actual implementation of operational tasks and the establishment of systems to accomplish the institute's mission on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Functions

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1. The content is drawn from a panel session at the 2016 TESOL Convention, Solutions for TESOL Programs Lack of Administrative Preparation as part of the NNEST-PAIS Intersection Presentation by Netta Avineri, Megan Forbes, Lynn Goldstein, Kara Mac Donald, Ketty Reppert, Bruce Rindler and Brad Teague.

usually include knowledge and implementation of pedagogy, organizational development, human resources, and professional collaboration.

These above skills are general to any educational program, whether it be a K-12 private school, a publicly funded community after-school program, a higher education certificate, or a degree program. On top of the knowledge of operating a public K-12 program, for example, there is the need for local knowledge, from a rural First Nations community to an urban Toronto neighborhood or even to a regional program in Quebec. The same holds true for TESOL program administrators across Canada in the variety of public and private programs offered to domestic residents, newly settled migrants, skilled professional labor, and international students.

## TESOL-specific Skills

Using a series of surveys of experienced administrators in University Intensive English programs (UIEPs), Megan Forbes (2012) sought to identify the skills, knowledge, and personal qualities necessary for successful UIEP administrators. The qualities in each of these categories were submitted by the administrators surveyed and refined over the course of several rounds of questionnaires to identify the items which most respondents felt were important. The items with the highest rating by the survey participants are included in Table 1. Forbes argues that other items identified in the survey are also worth considering and has refined these into a list of 65 items representing necessary skills and knowledge. Although some of the items produced through this process initially may not seem to correspond to the category in which they are listed (e.g., integrity as a skill), Forbes suggests that the results may prove useful for training and hiring UIEP administrators.

Table 1. Necessary Qualities of UIEP Directors, as identified and rated by survey respondents (Forbes, 2012)

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Personal Qualities</b>
Decision making skills	Knowledge of the financial structure of the program and how it fits financially with the institution	Ability to make difficult decisions
Effective communication skills	IEP standards	Ethical presence
Managerial skills	Institutional knowledge	Honesty
Integrity	Knowledge/acceptance of academic bureaucracy	Ability to prioritize tasks
Ability to define and articulate vision, mission, goals	Knowledge/acceptance of other cultures	Ability to work with others/be a team player and lead at the same time
Interpersonal/Interpersonal communication skills	Common sense	Ability to deal well with people at all levels of the university

Leadership skills	How the IEP is perceived/valued within the university	Cultural awareness/sensitivity
Ability to deal effectively with the needs/goals of the director's superior(s) and those of staff and instructors under the director	Knowledge of how to plan strategically and build a team	Fairness
Ability to interact and collaborate with many different constituencies	Understanding that a director is continually dealing with competing values	Interpersonal skills
Listening skills		Willingness to listen
Multi-tasking skills		
Personnel skills		
Problem-solving skills		

Some of the items identified in Forbes's study may not be widely applicable beyond the specific situation of a UIEP (e.g., Intensive English Program (IEP) standards), may be hard to teach (e.g., common sense), or may be quite institution-specific (e.g., institutional knowledge). Yet these show, in general, how valuable field- and institution-specific knowledge is, be it IEP or migrant ESL standards and so on. Other items identified in her research, however, such as managerial skills, knowledge and acceptance of other cultures, and knowledge of the financial structure of the program are probably more widely relevant. Several elements with an ethical dimension were mentioned (e.g., fairness & honesty). The results of the study demonstrate a perception that UIEP directors need leadership skills, management skills, and some field-specific skills or knowledge. This could be extended to predict that TESOL directors and other language program administrators across contexts and institutions would need much the same.

TESOL-field specific knowledge identified in Forbes's study as necessary for UIEP directors includes the following:

- knowledge of IEP standards
- second-language/ESL teaching skills and knowledge of second-language acquisition
- knowledge of the goals and aspirations of typical IEP students
- TESOL-ESL-IEP issues and priorities
- knowledge of trends in the field
- knowledge of where and how to find resources in the field
- knowledge of language assessment
- knowledge of other programs and innovations in those programs
- ability to understand L2 research
- knowledge of English grammar (Forbes, 2012)

The range of skills, knowledge, and personal qualities identified in Forbes's study reflects Kaplan's assertion that "an IEP is a many-splendored thing" (Kaplan, 1997) since it is called upon not only to teach language but also to "teach academic skills, culture, pragmatics... offer both academic and personal counseling; provide teacher training...; design, administer, and interpret assessment instruments; train international teaching assistants; engage in the pursuit of grants; recruit students and teachers; interact with other academic and administrative entities on and of the campus; interact with educational agencies...; and engage in a multiplicity of other activities" (Kaplan, 1997, p. 3).

Kaplan and Forbes are specifically addressing what is needed by administrators in a university-based intensive English program, but a similar skill set is reflected in Coombe, McCloskey, Stephenson, and Anderson's (2008) more general work on leadership in the context of English language teaching. Topics covered in this book include theories of leadership as they relate to English language teachers, strategies for communication, and skills and strategies for organization both personally and institutionally.

The second edition of *A Handbook for Language Program Administrators* (Christison & Stoller, 2012) expands on Kaplan's focus on IEPs and includes chapters for administrators in adult education programs, binational centers, international schools, and K-12 schools. The sections of the book reinforce the idea that language program administrators require skills in leadership and management as well as promotion and advertising, with chapters on empowering faculty, advocating for students, and promoting the language program.

*From the Classroom to the Boardroom: A Guide to the Successful Transition from Teaching to Administration for ESL and Beyond*, written explicitly for English language teachers making the transition to administration, identifies skills that language teachers may transfer from the classroom to an administrative role. It also highlights distinct skills that teachers will need to develop in order to become successful administrators. Specific qualities Boyd and O'Neill (2006) outline as essential for administrators include listening skills, patience, flexibility, balance, delegation, conflict resolution, kindness, and humor. They also discuss the importance of skill or knowledge in the areas of finances, strategic planning, evaluating employees, communication, culture, and decision making.

## Informally Acquiring the Needed Skills Set

Since teachers may not have formal coursework in the area of administration, Brad Teague, Assistant Dean and Director of English for International Students at Duke University, has described other avenues by which TESOL professionals may acquire these skills. A teacher can engage in taking on leadership roles in student organizations, conducting research on professional development, coordinating a local ESL program, and participating in conversations with the directors of various ESL program. Through these informal positions, a teacher can acquire skills that are later directly applicable to language program administration.

From there, it is possible that administrative training can occur on the job as the teacher may now be able to assume some form of entry level administrative position. In such a situation, the teacher may have immediate access to previous directors and benefit from the mentorship available from the senior administrator. Also, ongoing contact with colleagues from other programs at workshops and conferences allows teachers to build personal networks and collaborate on management research projects of mutual interest. Teachers can also join special interest groups with an administrative focus, such as TESOL's Program Administration Interest Section (PAIS), and participate in their activities and listservs. Finally, reading publications related to language program administration and attending relevant conference sessions can be a support for professional development.

## TESOL Programs Responding to Industry Need

In addition to the informal ways that individuals may seek training to prepare them for serving as administrators in language programs, the field is beginning to respond with more formal training opportunities. TESOL International Association has developed an ELT Leadership Management Certificate Program which is offered face-to-face at various locations worldwide (Bangkok, Thailand and Seattle, Washington, USA in 2017) as well as via an online format. Less specifically related to language program administration is the NAFSA Association of International Educators Management Development Program.

In addition, courses and specializations are being developed by some degree programs preparing future TESOL professionals. One example of this is the Language Program Administration specialization offered by the Middlebury Institute of International Studies directed by Lynn Goldstein, Professor and Program Chair. This specialization includes 17 units with some courses offered within the TESOL MA program (including Introduction to Language Program Administration and Language Teacher Supervision). Other courses are taught by the Graduate School of International Policy and Management (for example, Survey of Accounting and Marketing Management for non-MBAs).

The foundational course in this specialization is Introduction to Language Program Administration, created by Kathleen Bailey (Professor, MIIS) and recently taught by Netta Avineri (Assistant Professor, MIIS). It is taught as a 3 week online course in January with assignments related to internships and reflections extending into the spring semester. The course includes both theory and practice and touches on topics including intercultural communication, practices for hiring teachers, technology as it relates to LPA, and the transition from teacher to administrator within a language program.

Another course developed to train language program administrators is the Introduction to Language Program Management offered by the School of Education at Boston University taught by Bruce Rindler (ESL Program Management Consultant and Commission on English Language Program Accreditation). The course outcomes include developing awareness, attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Included in the course content is material on

personnel issues, leadership, intercultural communication, and academic management. Specific skills tied to this content include strategic planning, managing change, dealing with finances, program development, marketing, writing proposals, and program development. The course includes fieldwork or interviews with program administrators and engages participants in reflection on the content.

## Conclusion

The field has begun to respond to the growing demand to effectively prepare TESOL graduates and existing professionals to serve as language program administrators and managers. This article is part of TESOL Ontario's emerging dialogue and research on how TESOL professionals looking to move into administration and management can acquire the required skills to advance their careers. In the process, as they they look to develop programs or revise curriculums, Canadian TESOL programs will learn what training current students demand in today's marketplace.

Each national and regional context demands that TESOL administrators and managers have both theoretical and practical knowledge. Multicultural awareness, cross-cultural communication, and interpersonal competence are key for interacting with students, teachers and other levels of middle/upper management. Additionally, there is a need to be versed in the provincial/regional English language teaching regulations and the needs of the institute's student demographic, which are not necessarily acquired through formal instruction, but through being part of that teaching community. The current discussion is necessary at the TESOL international level across affiliates and locally within affiliates and their chapters in order to assist the field in better serving the TESOL community, including students, teachers, institutions, and other industry stakeholders in the years to come.

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## Author Bios

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# THE LEAST YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE OJIBWA LANGUAGE

By John Steckley, Humber College



Location of all Anishinaabe Reservations/Reserves in North America, with diffusion rings about communities speaking an Anishinaabe language. Cities with Anishinaabe population are also shown. (From <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Anishinaabewaki.jpg>)

*Aanii* “hello” or *Boozhoo* (adapted from the French *bonjour*), reader of this article. This is an article about a language that still has thousands of speakers across Canada, from Quebec west to Alberta. In the more northern of the Ojibwa communities there are still people who are more fluent in their native language than in English. This article concerns such people as students of English.

Perhaps the first important point to keep in mind about the Ojibwa language is that like the names of other Aboriginal peoples and their languages, Ojibwa is the name the settlers gave them, not what they called or call themselves. The people call themselves *Anishinaabe* (and this includes peoples otherwise often called Chippewa, Mississauga, Odawa, Algonquin and

Saulteaux). And before I forget, the language itself, a language in the Algonquian family of languages, the largest of the Aboriginal language families in Canada, is often called *Anishinaabemowin* by many of the people. While there is some debate as to what the first part of the word means, the *-naabe-* part means “man”. The opposite of *-naabe-* is *ekweh*, referring to a woman. Add the diminutive *-zens* to the word and you have reference to a girl. The Anishinaabemowin names of girls and women often end with *-kwe*.

If a woman wants to refer to her husband or male partner, she would call him *ninaabem*, “my man”. The *-ni-* is a first person pronominal marker, and the *-m-* at the end reinforcing that first person. That structure also tells a story about an Ojibwa word that entered the English language as a first person form: *totem*. It means “clan” in the language. When you introduce yourself in a ceremony or relatively formal gathering one of the things you say (if you know it) is what your clan is. The word that you use is *ntotem* meaning “my clan”. The noun root is *-ote-*. Actually, the way that most people I have heard pronounce the word is *ndodem*.

## Phonology

### Consonants & consonant clusters

Because there are many dialects, it is difficult to describe the phonology concisely. The *ntotem* or *ndodem* issue comes from lack of a voicing distinctions between /p/ and /b/, /t/ and /d/ and /k/ and /g/, in some dialects. Some dialects devoice word final /b/, /d/ and /g/, while others do not. But all dialects do distinguish between these consonant pairs in one way or another, sometimes with an aspirated/non-aspirated distinction, or sometimes with a long/short duration distinction.<sup>1</sup> In learning new words in which voicing distinctions are important in English, a native speaker of the language may unconsciously carry over their native-language distinctions. It may be useful to help them introspect on how their dialect makes this distinction and then help them understand how voicing works in English. The consonant inventory does not include /f, v, θ, ð, r, l/, although they can appear in borrowed words, such as names. Such borrowings can involve some change, such as English *Marie* becoming *Manii*, *angel* becoming *aanženii* and *Montreal* becoming *Mooniyaang*.

Unlike English, Ojibwa permits relatively few consonant clusters, especially at the start of a word.<sup>2</sup> The possible clusters are shown below:

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1. This made for some interesting choices by different English-speaking writers when the language was first being recorded on paper.
  2. In some dialects, the traditional word-initial vowel has been deleted, thus allowing some clusters to start a word.

medial only	medial or final
/sk/, /ʃp/, /ʃt/	/ʃk/
/mb/	/nd/, /ng <sup>3</sup> , /ndʒ/
/nz/	/nʒ/, /ns/

On top of this, any consonant (except /w/, /h/, or /j/) and some clusters can be followed by /w/. This means that initial consonant clusters, of which English has many, could be a problem, for example, in words like *strange*, *please*, *small*, *French*, or *three*.

### Vowels & stress

In contrast to English's rather large number of vowels, Ojibwa has a relatively small vowel inventory, including only the short vowels /i, a, o/ and the long vowels /i:, a:, o:, e:/. As you can see, vowels have a phonemic long-short duration distinction. In other words, /a:ni:/ ("hello") and /ani/ are as distinct as *apple* and *opal* are in English. Fortunately, the stress pattern is characteristically iambic (weak-strong), which is the same as English.

## Vocabulary

You should also know that along with *totem*, there are some Anishinaabemowin words that you already know, such as *bikaan* (think pecan) for "nut", *mooz* for "moose" (with a plural of *moozook*) and *wiigwaam* for "house" (with the plural *wiigwaaman*). The English word *chipmunk*, is an adaptation of the Anishinaabemowin word *jidmoonh*, referring to a red squirrel, and derived from a root meaning "face down", referring to the common upside down position of a red squirrel on a tree trunk.

## Grammar

### Nouns

Gender is quite different from what we have in English. First of all, there is no grammatical distinction made between *he* and *she*. That gender distinction in pronouns is ultimately a "foreign concept" to an Anishinaabemowin speaker. This is something that the language shares with a great majority of Aboriginal languages spoken in Canada. Don't take for granted in your Anishinaabe students an awareness of the importance of that distinction in English. Instead, of major importance in Anishinaabemowin is the gender distinction between animate and inanimate. This is thoroughgoing in the language, reflected in a number of ways in the verb, as well as in noun plurals. Animate typically refers to something being alive, and inanimate to that which is not alive. But don't let that lead you astray.

3. Note that this is /n/ + /g/, not the voice velar nasal /ŋ/ at the end of English words like *sing*.

I was first taught Anishinaabemowin by an Elder named Fred Wheatley in 1971–2. In an early lesson he gave, he told his students that “raspberries are animate but strawberries are not.” The word for *raspberry* is *miskomin*, literally meaning “red berry”. The *-misko-* means “red”, while *-min* means berry. By itself, *-min-* refers to a blueberry. As raspberries are animate, the plural is *miskominak*, with the animate plural *-ak* (sometimes written *-ag*).

Strawberries are called *dehmin* “heart berry”. When you say *ndeh*, you are saying “my heart.” As strawberries are grammatically inanimate, you use the plural *dehminaan*, with *-aan* being the inanimate plural marker.

Raspberries are the odd ones out here, as the vast majority of nouns using *min* are inanimate, such as *min* by itself (“blueberry”), *wiikwaasmin* (lit. “birch berry”) which refers to a cherry, and *minoomin* (lit. “good *-min*” referring to wild rice) are all grammatically inanimate. Also animate are beads, which are called *manitoomin*, literally “spirit berries”.

So there are a few words non-Anishinaabemowin speakers would think of as animate being inanimate. The opposite happens too. Included among the animate are stones (*asin* & *asinaak* plural), nets (*sab* & *sabiik*), and baseball mitts (*mijikaawan* & *mijikaawaanak*).

## Verbs

Anishinaabemowin is polysynthetic, which means that there are often a lot of morphemes in a single word, and often verbs are at the heart of a word. A short example is the word for “at the hospital” in the language: *aakziwigamigong*. It can be broken down as follows;

<i>aakzii</i>	be sick, sore
house	<i>wigamig</i>
<i>ong</i>	at (the <i>-ng-</i> locative is found in a great number of Canadian placenames that owe their origin to Anishinaabemowin).

And it is agglutinating, in that those morphemes that are strung together are very stable, and not significantly affected by the surrounding phonology (cf. the English *-ed* past-tense, which is pronounced three different ways).

When adding noun morphemes to verbs, there is a particular way that first and second person are marked. This is described by linguists as hierarchy of person, which functions under the principle that “you come first”. It works like this. The second person always comes first in a verb in which it appears. It is at the top of the hierarchy. Observe the following pronominal forms that appear with the verb stem *-waabam-* “see a person” (it is an animate form of the verb root *-waab-*). The bolded forms indicate the pronominal prefixes and suffixes that indicate the person involved.

## Author Bio



John Steckley has been teaching at Humber College in Toronto since 1983, and has also taught Anthropology at Memorial University of Newfoundland and at Trent University, and Native Studies and Anthropology at Laurentian University. He has published 14 books, including textbooks in Sociology, Anthropology and Indigenous Studies, and works about the Wendat (Huron) language, culture and history. He was adopted into the Wyandot tribe of Kansas in 1999, and was given the name Tehaondechoren (“He splits the country in two”).

Word	Translation	Pronominal Affixes
<i>Niwaabamaa</i>	I see him/her	<b>ni-</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> person) + verb root
<i>Giwaabaamin</i>	I see <b>you</b> (lit. You-to see-I)	<b>gi-</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> person) + verb root + <b>-in</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> person)

Hierarchy of person also occurs in first person plurals. As with Aboriginal languages in a number of different language families, Anishinaabemowin makes a distinction between *we* (including the listener; known as the first person inclusive) and “we” (excluding the listener; known as the first person exclusive). If I said to you, “We live in Bolton,” and the *we* included you then I would use the first person inclusive form. If I said, “We live in Bolton”, and you live in Toronto, then I would use the first person exclusive form. The following examples demonstrate how the first person plural forms also demonstrate hierarchy of person, with “you the listener” being given priority. The verb root used is *-gindaas-*, “read”:

Word	Translation	Pronominal Affix
<i>Ndoogindaas</i>	I am reading	<b>ndoo-</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> person) + verb root
<i>Gdoogindaas</i>	You (s) are reading	<b>gdoo-</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> person) + verb root
<i>Ndoogindaasmi</i>	We (exclusive) are reading	<b>ndoo-</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> person) + verb root + <b>-mi</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> person plural)
<i>Gdoogindaasmi</i>	We (inclusive) are reading	<b>gdoo-</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> person) + verb root + <b>-mi</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> person plural)
<i>Gdoogiindaasam</i>	<b>You</b> (plural) are reading	<b>gdoo-</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> person) + verb root + <b>-am</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> person plural)

So those are a few key aspects of Anishinaabemowin that should be known. *Miigwech* (“thank you”) for reading this article. There is no term for “you’re welcome.”

# DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT OF L2 WRITING

By Alina Filip, International Centre for EAP

“But I did everything you said and my grade is still low...” If you teach writing in an ESL or EAP class is quite likely that you routinely have a handful of students expressing their disappointment at the grades they receive. Teaching academic writing is of particular interest in my teaching setting, an EAP language program for international students who intend to pursue a masters in Education. While process writing is reinforced in my course, I often find that my students are feeling ineffective and frustrated with their writing progress. In order to help them develop their writing skills and nurture their confidence as writers I started using dynamic assessment (DA). In this article, I will try to define what dynamic assessment is and provide a model that could be easily adapted to any level. Furthermore, I will review some studies on DA and briefly outline some of its advantages and disadvantages.

The feedback we provide our students often takes the form of written comments on their final graded essays. Received by students at the end of their writing process, these comments rarely have a great impact on students’ writing development. One way to combine intervention and assessment of student writing is by using dynamic assessment. DA allows instructors to provide students with feedback on grammar, vocabulary, content, and organization while they are writing. By receiving feedback during the writing process, students are more inclined to use it to revise and edit their drafts than they would be if they received the suggestions on a graded copy (Lantolf & Poehner, 2005). They also have an immediate opportunity to try out the suggestions in their writing, allowing for meaningful applications of the feedback provided.

## What is Dynamic Assessment?

DA was born a few decades ago as a reaction of dissatisfaction with traditional methods of assessment. In fact, measuring students’ current performance level cannot provide assessors with enough information about learners’ potential ability. In higher education, DA has been used as a formative assessment for several decades, initially developed as an alternative and complement to “static” types of assessment, such as standardized tests. Lantolf and Poehner (2004) describe DA as a “procedure for simultaneously assessing and promoting development that takes into account the individual’s zone of proximal

development” (p.50). The goal of DA is to measure, intervene, and modify behaviors and to document the process of learning.

According to Shrestaa and Coffin (2012) most current approaches to DA are comprised of three stages: a conventional assessment of the abilities in question, an intervention targeting problematic aspects of learner performance, and a final assessment that parallels the initial one to assess the degree and nature of change. Pre and post-intervention levels are compared, and the difference is taken as an indicator of whether the abilities being assessed lay within the individual’s ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development).

The goal of dynamic assessment is not only to measure a students’ current performance, but, more importantly, to reveal the students’ learning potential, the extent to which he or she is able to absorb and integrate instruction during the mediation process. This enables instructors to formulate an optimal education intervention for each student.

One of the DA models that I’ve used consists of three parts: a **pre-task** (topic-choice stage, idea generation & structuring stage), **mediation** (provided in the form of either dialogues between instructor and students, or mediational tools such as guidelines, samples, reading materials, etc.) and a **post-task**. During the post-task, students are expected to use the feedback provided during the mediation phase which should eventually become part of the learners’ independent developmental ability. Every stage can be adapted by instructors to suit their students’ needs. The role of the mediator is to identify students’ problems during the pre-task and to provide the necessary mediation during the learning phase. The post-task should be identical to the pre-task in level, background knowledge, grammatical structures, new terminology, and required strategies (for example the same type of essay), but different in content.

After students try on their own to choose a topic (pre-task), the instructor will follow with topic negotiation, mostly in the form of dialogues, in which he or she might provide some hints, leading questions, suggestions and explicit feedback. In idea-generation and structuring stage, the students need to know some strategies, for example branching, and structuring techniques, such as clustering, mapping, webbing etc. After that, learners are given a task to generate ideas and define the writing purpose. Finally, they should make outlines for their compositions according to the kind of essay they need to write. In DA framework, the attempt of idea generation and structuring serves as a pre-task, and mediation is arranged immediately afterward. As a mediator, the teacher can observe learners while walking around and review and negotiate the outlines with the students if required. At this stage, a peer review of the outline might be included. After this students should start working on their drafts which should be finished for the next session. In post-task, the most important step is ‘macro-revising’. In this stage, content and organization of the drafts are to be negotiated and improved later. The mediation of the instructor and peers at this stage can include: teacher analysis of some samples, teaching relevant writing strategies and techniques and peer-to-peer interactive reading or discussion. If the stages

in this model are followed carefully, every student should show some improvement in the post-task.

The studies that I reviewed show that L2 writers particularly benefit from this approach by an increased number of opportunities to interact with the instructor in different forms of mediation and feedback in the process of DA (Swanson & Lussier, 2001; Lantolf & Poehner, 2005; Anton, 2009; Birjandia & Ebadib, 2012; Shrestha & Coffin, 2012). Instructors could also use DA as a supplement to other forms of assessment, particularly when learners have trouble internalizing the new learning items.

A major contribution of DA is the ability to identify those students who are likely to experience difficulties and to provide rich descriptions of the abilities of these students so that remedial programs may be developed (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004). Verbal and written feedback can be a powerful teaching tool if it is given while students are in the process of writing drafts. Comments on drafts of writing provide students with timely information about the clarity and impact of their writing. When students receive feedback while they are writing, they are more inclined to use it to revise and edit their drafts than they would be if they received the suggestions on a graded copy. They also have an immediate opportunity to try out the suggestions in their writing, allowing for meaningful application of what they have learned from the feedback.

On the other hand, DA critics have mentioned that, although dynamic testing has suggested promising results, it has yet to demonstrate its advantages over traditional testing following professional criteria (Grigorenko & Sternberg, 1998). In the studies that I reviewed, there seems to be a clear consensus that more research is necessary particularly in the area of implementation of the procedure during regular classroom instruction. There are reasons why DA procedures have not been widely adopted in educational settings despite the appeal of providing such rich information on individual learners. One of them is that DA procedures are ideally administered individually, which makes this type of assessment time-consuming.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, dynamic assessment is an interactive approach to formative assessment that embeds intervention within assessment. From my experience, it is particularly useful when learners have trouble internalizing the new learning items. DA, compared with the static ways of assessment, is communicative by nature and can prepare learners to see assessment as a learning opportunity rather than something frightening. Not only that DA can combine assessment and feedback, but it also has a great potential to enhance L2 learners' writing performance in the classroom context particularly with smaller groups of students (Taghizade & Alavi, 2014).

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### Author Bio



Alina has been teaching ESL and EAP for almost 15 years. Her diverse experience includes teaching in university preparatory programs in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and Toyama, Japan. With a M.Ed. in TESL from The College of New Jersey and an M.A in Applied Linguistics from York University, she is currently teaching at International Centre for EAP as part of the Toronto campus team. Her research interests include academic writing and third language acquisition.

# THE ORAL GROUP ESSAY

## Teaching Writing as a Collaborative Activity

By Jocelyn Wiley, American Community School of Abu Dhabi

Before I became an English teacher, I was a freelance journalist and a publicist. I wrote almost every day, almost always for publication. I remember working in a newsroom full of reporters, most of them muttering to themselves at their computers as they composed their stories. They would write a sentence, read it aloud, and alter it—or not.

In the classroom, I'd advise my students to read their writing aloud to themselves as they drafted, edited and proofread because that was what I'd learned by observing the professional writers around me. My students, however, were resistant. They thought it was downright crazy to talk out loud to themselves; they believed they could edit perfectly adequately by doing so silently, in their heads; or else they wrote assignments the night before the due date without ever editing their work.

When I started doing some research into the value of reading one's writing aloud, I came across the work of Donald Graves, who founded the Writing Process Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire. He had observed the writing process occurring naturally—that is, without teacher instruction—in young children, leading him to encourage educators to teach children to think of themselves as writers (Swick Slover, 2005). He had a name for my insistence on reading one's writing aloud: he saw it as part of a stage he called “rehearsal”, and he saw rehearsal as the natural act of productive writers, whether they were elementary schoolchildren or veteran journalists (Murray, 1978).

### Oral Language Rehearsal Strategies

A writer can rehearse in *written* language (through activities such as free writing, journal writing, note-taking, brainstorming, mind mapping, or even drawing) and also in *oral* language (through discussing or reading aloud with collaborators). Rehearsal can be seen as pre-writing, an early step in the writing process (Swick Slover, 2005).

As Donald Graves observed, young children tend to speak aloud what they might write on the page (Murray, 1978). Adults read aloud sensitive job-related emails. Professional writers read their own writing out loud. All of them know the benefits of oral language rehearsal. Doing it generates ideas more easily, develops a sense of audience, enhances revision, and even develops listening skills (Jones, 1989).

I tell my students, “Alone, you have no audience, but you do when you read to someone

and your listener says, I don't get it' or 'that sounds weird.' Speaking a sentence out loud often reveals its weaknesses: grammatical errors, awkward phrasing, or inappropriate word choice. The eye tends to automatically correct what is already on the page or screen, so reading your own writing out loud is a better way to edit.”

### **Rehearsal and Collaboration: How can we build these processes into the way we teach writing?**

We use rehearsal in many areas: music, drama, sports, public speaking. If rehearsal is a natural, productive process, and research suggests that it will build better writers, then how do we get our students to buy in?

Knowing that students generate better ideas together than alone, and that several editors/proofreaders are better than one (or none!), I created a structure for my high school students. I've used this procedure in a class of mixed-ability Ontario public high school students; in a class of mostly Mexican students at a private American school in Monterrey, Mexico; and in a class of international students in a private English-language school in the United Arab Emirates.

I wanted students to see the value in treating writing as a recursive, long-term process, where the writer re-visits a draft repeatedly, over a period of days. I wanted them to *rehearse*.

## **Planning and Assessing an Oral Group Essay**

I wouldn't necessarily follow this process with every writing assignment, but here is a procedure that I constructed for an Oral Group Essay. It's completed almost entirely during class time, in small groups, with only one laptop per group. I've found that if I allow one-to-one use of laptops, the technology has an isolating effect. Even if I ask them to use Google Docs, students will write alone, without verbal collaboration. They will tend to divide up the writing (“You do the intro, I'll do the first body paragraph, and she can do the second body paragraph”), produce sections independently, and then simply paste them together in a patchwork quilt of an essay. Not only does this mean they omit the step of rehearsing their writing, but it also leads to bad writing: these cut-and-paste essays predictably lack consistent voice and coherence as well as suffering from repetition and weak argumentation.

There are several ways of forming groups: students may choose their own groups; students may be randomly assigned to groups; or the teacher may choose. I prefer to form the groups myself, rather than allowing students to choose. Sometimes I tell them in advance that I'll form leveled groups based on their current grade in the class. Homogeneous groups tend to be non-threatening, so members may be more willing to accept criticism from their peers (Jones, 1989).

I arrange desks so that students can work easily in small groups, and post three basic rules:

1. Listen and respond respectfully.
2. Do your fair share.
3. Work collaboratively.

Students should already know what the term “writing process” means, but I remind them of its basic stages (pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, publishing). Students read their essay aloud at the end of the process: this is the publishing stage, when the finished piece is presented to an audience.

My responsibility as teacher is to:

1. Provide a clear definition of the tasks.
2. Provide a clear timeline.
3. Provide guidance that doesn’t interfere with students’ writing process (so I need to deliver the necessary lead-up instruction; rearrange the classroom to accommodate group work; select group members; define the rules).
4. Monitor the groups’ progress.
5. Validate their work through collaborative assessment, debriefing, and seeking feedback from students (Jones, 1989).

## The Process

In groups of three or four, students choose a topic from a list. Sometimes I provide the list; sometimes we generate it together. I prefer to allow students at least some choice of topic, so they’re more invested in the assignment.

Each group co-writes and co-edits a full-length essay. Every group member must participate in the process; students fill out a confidential peer evaluation sheet each day (see Rubric 1), so I can intervene if one student appears not to be participating.

I give four to five hours of class time in total (in a grade 12 class). I discuss my expectations for the writing process with them in advance. Each day, I list their goals on the board. A daily goal might be: “Draft thesis + outline body paragraphs in detail.” As they move through the process, they naturally *rehearse* their writing since they are working face-to-face with others, and since they have access to only one laptop.

I expect them to rehearse during *structured class time*. I point out that, since they all have so much homework (!), I’m building essay-writing time into the school day for their benefit.

## Assessment

The final product is read aloud to be assessed (and/or the teacher could collect a printed copy.) The presenters are marked by two sets of evaluators (the teacher plus another student group) as they present. Both the student evaluators and I use a rubric that is easy to annotate quickly as the essay is read aloud (see Rubric 2). The student evaluators then meet in the hall to come to consensus.

Both of our marking sheets are given to the presenters; the teacher's grade is summative. I use the student evaluators' marking sheet to debrief after the process, as it usually generates discussion questions such as:

- Who is your audience? How does that affect the structure or wording of your essay?
- What was confusing for your audience? Why?
- What strategies helped your audience follow your argument? How can you signal your intentions to your reader?

If there's a notable mismatch between the grade given by student evaluators and the grade given by the teacher, that could be discussed during the debriefing. Debriefing could also cover such questions as:

- How does the students' interpretation of the rubric compare to the teacher's?
- What standard is expected of their writing?
- How does the writing process, including rehearsal, help them meet those standards?

Students are engaged in the process from start to finish. They are part of a group that creates a written piece; they decide who presents the piece; finally, they help evaluate another group's writing.

## Effects and Results

For once, writing is a **social** activity rather than a solitary one (Jones, 1989). My students often approach academic writing as something to be churned out alone, silently, and as fast as possible, with little regard for audience. On the other hand, the Oral Group Essay is lively, sometimes even a bit scrappy, as face-to-face interaction forces participants to test, question and then defend or change their word choice, their syntax, or their content. Students form a mini-community, as they would in a writing workshop. For many of my students, this is the first time they'll actually use the steps of the writing process. I've had groups spend an entire hour writing one body paragraph. This leaves them astounded. Until that point, they'd simply been slapping something down the night before rather than following any process.

Students have commented that the oral presentation format forces them to listen and note-take more carefully than they're used to: more is at stake if they are fulfilling the role of student evaluators.

## Eavesdropping on the Oral Group Essay

This is a record of actual student dialogue during the writing process of the oral group essay, from classrooms in Ontario (public schools with some students whose first language was not English); Monterrey, Mexico (where almost all students spoke Spanish as their first language); and Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (with an international population, many of who spoke English as their second language). All were English language and literature classrooms at the Grade 12 level, where students were writing either comparison-contrast essays or argumentation-persuasion essays. I collected these comments to use during the debriefing, where my students and I reflected on how their interactions improved different aspects of the essay.

### Comments about Organization:

- “No, that IS the proof; we can’t use it as the point!”
- *1st student*: “How come you’re switching back and forth?”  
*2nd student*: “That’s the structure, look at the handout. See, you do topic A first, then topic B.”
- *1st student*: “Oh, so topic A is that character?”
- “Where’s our rubric? We should check that.”

### Comments about Ideas and Support:

- “Wait, wait, what’s the thesis?”
- “First of all, what are we trying to prove?”
- “No, that’s too much like our other point, we’re just repeating ourselves.”
- “Where’s that part where the character says she’s ashamed to be her father’s daughter?”
- “No, no, wait, I found a better quote.”
- “We’re saying nothing.”

### Comments about Conventions:

- *Student typing on a laptop, taking dictation*: “What am I doing here? Semi-colon, comma, open quotes, what?”
- “Is minute [adjective] spelled the same way as minute [noun]?”

### Comments about Sentence Fluency:

- “OK, I’m going to read this and you tell me how it sounds.”
- “‘We have received information from a source from the UN?’ That sounds weird.”
- “What’s with all the rhetorical questions?”
- *1st student*: “What do you mean, ‘at the peak of their colonization’?”  
*2nd student*: “Like, when they were colonizing a lot.”

- 1st student: “Should we really say that?”
- 2nd student: “No, it’s just fluff.”

### Comments about Word Choice:

- “How would you say ‘segunda plata’ in English?”
- “You know how Gratiano’s a loudmouth? And he’s always shooting his mouth off? What’s a word for that, an adjective?”
- “Fairy-tale-ish? Fairy-tale-y? Fairy-tale-like?”
- “Can you share differences? I mean, you can share similarities, but can you share differences?”
- “We can’t say ‘brawl’ [in a sentence referring to a massacre] -- it sounds like they’re just pushing each other.”
- 1st student: “How do you say ‘shows’ but in a better way?”
- 2nd student: “Envisions?”
- 1st student: “No, that doesn’t fit, but that’s a good word.”

### Comments about Voice:

- “You can’t say, ‘happily ever after,’ that’s corny.”
- “We have to change ‘having a hard time.’ That’s so cheesy.”
- Here are three students having a sophisticated, productive conversation about their own writing – and they did not need a teacher to have it:
- 1st student: “Paige, you’re unhappy with this.”
- Paige: “Well, just read the whole sentence again.”
- 2nd student: “You’re just unhappy with the word ‘masses’.”
- Paige: “No, I think we’re too focused on writing more and longer, and we should be more succinct.”
- 1st student: “Well, I think we’re still brainstorming, we just have too many ideas.”

## Addressing Potential Problems

1. Groups do not use time effectively.  
*Solution:* As a student said during one debriefing: “You know what really helped? That you put a daily schedule on the board for us.”
2. Instead of working collaboratively, students simply divide up the writing, then email it to one student who cobbles it together.  
*Solution:* Warn them of the pitfalls (incoherence, inconsistency, repetition, redundancy). The teacher must monitor progress. If the assignment is a five-paragraph essay, don’t allow five-member groups as this encourages them to divide the assignment into one paragraph per student.
3. Students lack proficiency in reading aloud.  
*Solution:* Not every student has to read aloud, but stipulate a minimum of two

readers so that a change in readers can be used to signal a new paragraph. Also, reassure readers that no one is watching them, as their evaluators will be too busy listening to them and taking notes. Give readers class time to rehearse the oral presentation so they can be coached by the rest of the group to read slowly and clearly, to pause at natural stops, to say “open quote/close quote” if necessary to indicate quotations.

4. Evaluator groups may be most concerned with what grade the group they’re marking gave them if they are allowed to mark each other. That is, they may want to take revenge!  
*Solution:* Do not allow two groups to mark each other; instead, set up a rotation system.
5. Evaluator group can’t reach consensus or can’t recall part of the essay they heard.  
*Solution:* Provide a printed copy of the essay, but only if the group reaches an impasse. Another option is to record the presentation.

I’ve included the peer evaluation form (Rubric 1) and the essay rubric (Rubric 2) that I’ve used, but you can construct your own, depending upon the level of your students and the type of writing assignment. Perhaps you will choose to use the small group oral process to produce an essay that students will “publish” in print, rather than by presenting it orally. The real objective is to encourage students to rehearse their writing, and to see the value of the writing process.

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Oral Group Essay  
Peer Evaluation

My Name
---------

Group  
Members


**Directions:** Evaluate the members of your group by writing the name of each group member (including your own) once in every row in the appropriate column to indicate their contribution to the group. I've demonstrated how to do this with "Student".

Qualities to Evaluate	Level of Contribution to Group Tasks				
	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
Met deadlines for outlining, research, finding quotes, writing paragraphs.		student			
Stayed focused and worked diligently during class work time			student		
Looked for and suggested ways to improve the essay during editing and revising			student		
Spoke English during class work time				student	

COMMENTS:

**ORAL GROUP ESSAY MARKING GUIDE**

## Paragraph 1: Introduction

- opening sentence grabs your attention 0 1
- clearly indicates topic of essay 0 1 2
- thesis is a clear statement of opinion 0 1 2

## Paragraph 2: First Body Paragraph

- topic sentence relates to thesis and clearly states topic of paragraph 0 1 2
- point 1 stated logically and clearly 0 1 2
- proof 1 is best choice to back up point 0 1 2 3
- comment 1 is thoughtful, intelligent, not a repetition of proof or point 0 1 2 3
- point 2 stated logically and clearly 0 1 2
- proof 2 is best choice to back up point 0 1 2 3
- comment 2 is thoughtful, intelligent, not a repetition of proof or point 0 1 2 3
- effective concluding sentence 0 1 2

## Paragraph 3: Second Body Paragraph

- topic sentence relates to thesis and clearly states topic of paragraph 0 1 2
- point 1 stated logically and clearly 0 1 2
- proof 1 is best choice to back up point 0 1 2 3
- comment 1 is thoughtful, intelligent, not a repetition of proof or point 0 1 2 3
- point 2 stated logically and clearly 0 1 2
- proof 2 is best choice to back up point 0 1 2 3
- comment 2 is thoughtful, intelligent, not a repetition of proof or point 0 1 2 3
- effective concluding sentence 0 1 2

## Paragraph 4: Third Body Paragraph

- topic sentence relates to thesis and clearly states topic of paragraph 0 1 2
- point 1 stated logically and clearly 0 1 2
- proof 1 is best choice to back up point 0 1 2 3
- comment 1 is thoughtful, intelligent, not a repetition of proof or point 0 1 2 3
- point 2 stated logically and clearly 0 1 2
- proof 2 is best choice to back up point 0 1 2 3
- comment 2 is thoughtful, intelligent, not a repetition of proof or point 0 1 2 3
- effective concluding sentence 0 1 2

## Paragraph 5: Conclusion

- first sentence restates thesis, but does not repeat word for word 0 1 2
- ends on a general statement about topic 0 1 2
- adds something thoughtful to what we heard in introduction 0 1 2

### Overall Style

diction is precise and sophisticated level 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

sentence structure is grammatical, clear, free of wordiness and redundancy

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Total / 86

### Author Bio

Jocelyn Wiley has been living and teaching outside her home and native land for more than 15 years after beginning her teaching career in Ontario. Her first international posting was in Bermuda; after that she managed to again escape Canadian winters by teaching at the American School Foundation of Monterrey, Mexico.

Since 2006, Jocelyn has lived in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, where she teaches IB English Literature, IB Language and Literature, and Theory of Knowledge to an international student body at the American Community School. She is also an assistant examiner for Paper 1 in Language A: Literature.

# CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT AND YOGA

## What have I learned?

By Liying Cheng, Queen's University

Yoga has been the practice that kept me sane over the years. More than 10 years ago, my husband and son brought me a neighborhood yoga flyer and encouraged me to give it a try. I was struggling to find the balance between life and work. So I started to go to yoga classes, albeit with great hesitation. Anyone who has practiced yoga knows how difficult it is to step out to go to a class after a day's intensive work. In spite of the difficulties, every time when I returned from a yoga class, I was happy, relaxed, and centered. Slowly, yoga has become a natural part of my life's rhythm, and I no longer have to think about going—like brushing your teeth in the morning! Going to yoga class has become a part of me and who I am. I've learned many important life lessons in yoga. Most importantly, but “accidentally”, the lessons that I learned about yoga are those I could apply to classroom assessment, for example, self-awareness, self-monitoring, and self-assessment (Cope, 2000; 2007; Roach, 2005).

My personal journey with classroom assessment started on the first day when I went to school. As a young girl growing up in China, I experienced a highly standardized educational system driven by large-scale testing. Thus, I am deeply aware, on a personal level, of the power of test results to determine survival and success. My initial research activities started in China, where public examinations were, and to a large extent still are, driving the teaching-and-learning environment and affecting the life opportunities of tens of millions of students and teachers. I, thus, have had a lifelong interest in testing and assessment issues, and early on in my career I worked on a number of projects all involving national public examinations in China (Cheng, 1990). My master thesis investigated the validity of the Test of English for Educational Purposes (TEEP) for international graduate students at English-speaking universities in UK (Cheng, 1996). My doctoral research investigated a major curriculum change brought about by an assessment-driven reform in Hong Kong (Cheng, 2005). This study revealed the complexity of the educational phenomenon known as “washback”—the influence and consequences of testing on classroom teaching and learning—and demonstrated how important it is to understand the role that assessment plays in teaching and learning. This understanding, at the personal level and also supported by empirical evidence, naturally led to my research on classroom assessment when I first arrived in Canada as a Killam postdoctoral fellow in Alberta (Cheng & Couture, 2000). Since then, my research activities have focused on the intersections between teaching and testing, between theory and practice, and most recently, between teacher classroom

assessment practices and their efforts in supporting student learning (Cheng, 2013; Cheng & Fox, 2017).

Ontario's Ministry of Education, in its *Growing Success* document (2010) covering Grades 1-12 schooling, defines classroom assessment in these three broad dimensions:

- **Assessment of learning** refers to assessments that happen *after* learning has occurred, to determine whether learning has happened. They are used to make statements about a student's learning status *at a particular point in time*. These practices are those of traditional testing: large-scale or classroom-based end-of-term testing.
- **Assessment for learning** refers to the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by students and their teachers to decide *where* students are in their learning process, *where* they need to go, and *how* best to get there. These practices are what we do on a day-to-day basis in gauging what we can do better or target in supporting our student learning.
- **Assessment as learning** occurs when students reflect on and monitor their progress to inform their future learning goals. It is regularly occurring, formal or informal (e.g., peer feedback buddies, formal self-assessment), and helps students take responsibility for their own past and future learning. It builds metacognition as it involves students in understanding the standards expected of them, in setting and monitoring their own learning goals, and in developing strategies for working towards achieving them.

Assessment *as learning* is where yoga's main principles work in guiding our classroom assessment practices, specifically, on self-awareness, self-monitoring, and self-assessment. In yoga practice, individuals are encouraged to practice at their own pace, at their own strength level, and while listening to their own body and mind. This philosophy resonates with what we do in assessment *as learning*.

Assessment *as learning* supports students to, *personally*, monitor their learning processes and progress, by involving students in self-monitoring and self-assessment activities, as well as using feedback to effectively guide their *own* learning. Assessment *as learning* is the use of a task or an activity to allow students the opportunity to use assessment to further their *own* learning. Self-assessments encourage students to reflect on their own learning and identify areas of strength and needs in their learning trajectory (journey). Such tasks offer students the chance to set their own personal goals and advocate for their own learning. This is particularly important for students coming from various educational backgrounds and with various levels of achievements within the context of TESL Ontario. These students need to connect their prior learning to the assessment tasks in their current classroom. Research has demonstrated that, without the opportunity to connect, students will not progress effectively (Stiggins, 2005). In our own classroom, if students do not want to learn (motivation), do not know how to learn (feedback against learning criteria), or do not have the awareness or meta-cognitive strategies to learn (assessment *as learning*), whatever teachers do is not going to help such learners (Wu, Cheng, & Bettney, 2014).

Three specific assessment practices can support student learning accordingly:

- Teachers can share with their students the assessment criteria, create the assessment criteria with their students, or even better let the students create the criteria. Both assessment processes are valuable practices for students to see teachers as allies in their learning. This practice honors yoga's philosophy of respect, gratitude, and the concept that everything we know is already inside ourselves.
- Teachers can use student work as exemplars to illustrate levels of performance. In fact, teachers and students can work together to figure out what "good work" is, what such work looks like, and how to achieve it. This practice coincides with yoga's principle of guidance and practice.
- Teachers can let their students take more responsibility for their own learning. Teaching students to take responsibility for their own learning is a big but essential step towards their being successful. That success will have a long-term impact on their life, and teachers can demonstrate that through the use of self-assessment tasks. In fact, all assessment tasks should start from some form of self-assessment tasks before a whole class activity. In yoga, self-assessment and self-awareness are part of the core principle to practice and to live.

Learning is a journey. It is important for students to know where they are in this learning journey and where they are headed. The best classroom practice shows students this goal through assessment as learning activities. And there is no lesson and philosophy that best represents the metaphor of a journey than yoga.

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## Author Bio



Liying Cheng (Ph.D.) is Professor and Director of the Assessment and Evaluation Group (AEG) at the Faculty of Education, Queen's University. Her primary research interests are the impact of large-scale testing on instruction, the relationships between assessment and instruction, and the academic and professional acculturation of international and new immigrant students, workers, and professionals to Canada. She conducts the majority of her research within the context of teaching and learning English as a second/foreign language including immersion and bilingual contexts.

# “PLEASE LOOK AT ME!”

## Cross-cultural competence in the ESL classroom

By Trudy O’Brien, Carleton University

Our understanding of theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and more specifically teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) has traditionally been grounded in linguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, and more recently in pragmatics and speech acts. I would like to argue that in order to do the most effective teaching of ESL, especially in light of the many recent newcomers to Canada, we must also have a stronger sense of the theories and best implementation of cross-cultural communication<sup>1</sup>.

How often have we been in a classroom, intent on being as helpful and constructive as we can, only to find that some students are resistant or silent or respond in totally unexpected ways? Even when we fully intend to respect the diverse cultures of our students, we are nevertheless entrenched in our own and cannot always control our unconscious reactions to differences that are strange, unfamiliar or even unsettling. I’d like to present a brief overview of some highlights from cross-cultural studies and relate them to my own experiences teaching ESL in Canada which I began professionally in 1976. Since then I have also taught courses in applied linguistics, including undergraduate and graduate courses in cross-cultural communication. Over the years, my understanding of the need for clear theoretical guidelines has been augmented by continuing to work with international students and colleagues here and overseas.

Our worldview is inevitably grounded in how we are exposed to and taught the cultural values we adhere to. Whether we accept the stronger or weaker version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (i.e., that culturally based worldviews affect language and vice-versa; see Hoijer, 1985, for a good overview), we cannot deny that we must learn to recognize and appreciate points of similarity as well as differences in how we approach tasks, interpersonal exchanges and roles. Geert Hofstede’s study (1991) suggesting the key dimensions that control cultural perspectives may offer some guidelines to our own and our students’ reactions. His large-scale study of IBM culture worldwide in over 50 countries revealed that each section of the company could be understood as a representation of the national/group culture of the region it was based in. Hofstede proposed that differences could be seen along the lines of various continua: INDIVIDUALISM-COLLECTIVISM (relationship of the individual to the group), POWER DISTANCE (the degree of acceptance of social and political hierarchies), MASCULINITY-FEMININITY (the extent of nurturing versus aggressive responses to others), and UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE (the degree of tolerance for matters one cannot control). Hofstede later considered LONG-TERM ORIENTATION and INDULGENCE as additional factors in the analysis, but his main dimensions remain the key features for cultural comparisons, despite much debate over their generalizability.

1 For the purposes of this brief overview I use the term cross-cultural here as interchangeable with intercultural.

In ESL classroom terms we might think of students who prefer the teacher to be an authority figure and strong guide rather than a facilitator who allows too much flexibility in responses or tasks. Some students who expect personal favours in class are not trying to “cheat” but rather are adhering to the roles of ranked interrelationships and mutual dependency. Or we could think of students who cannot work easily in groups and prefer to make and defend their own decisions.

Other cultural concepts that might explain our students’ behaviour include Hall’s (1976) analysis of high and low contexts. Japanese students who read broader and indirect signals in a situation and reply in very vague ways are used to the subtleties of a high context culture, while our German students might prefer explicit and direct instructions with no room for ambiguity. This can also relate to non-verbal mannerisms which are not familiar to all in the classroom. A former male student who was quite devout in his religion almost never looked me directly in the eyes, keeping his head down while answering, and never using my first name. While his behaviour could have been interpreted as insolence or simply shyness, I appreciated his respect for an older woman in charge of his class. Nevertheless, I confess I really wanted to lean down to look up into his face and say: “Please, look at me!” Of course I never did so, but it supports the point that even an understanding of a well-meant cultural gesture does not mean we can control our inherent responses to behaviour that is at odds with what we are most familiar with.

Silence, too, can be misinterpreted; as noted, apparently silent shyness may actually be a sign of respect for authority and does not mean the student is incapable of speaking. In some cultures a pause that is longer than expected from the listener before responding shows the listener’s respect and consideration of the speaker’s words rather than an attempt to ignore or disregard the message. Burgoon’s *EXPECTANCY VIOLATION* (2005) may also explain why students react so strongly when something “goes wrong” from their perspective: entrenched expectations about what is proper, usual or comfortable can provoke unexpected reluctance to engage in tasks or to accept those who don’t talk or do things as they “should”. Although I am here focusing on behaviour, language inappropriateness is also clearly a feature that has roots in cultural understanding. Miscommunication at either a sociopragmatic or pragmalinguistic level is rather common. We are, I’m sure, familiar with cases where our “Bye, see you later” elicits a student’s “At what time?” or a request like “Do you have a light?” evokes a “yes” or “no” but no match or lighter. When I taught a group from Venezuela I received lovely sympathy cards as students tried to assure me they found me quite “simpática”. Or I’ve had students who email me with “Hey prof” even before they have met me in class and although I pride myself on being comfortable and relatively informal with my students, I still find that rather grating. These are linguistic manifestations of cultural and social ignorance in the true sense of simply not knowing how to respond according to different cultural, social, and academic norms.

Facework, as outlined so well by Stella Ting-Toomey and others (1994), as a cross-cultural take on Goffman’s (1972) and later Brown and Levinson’s research (1987) is also evident in how much we expect our students to dance with identity management. Years ago I was asked to help a graduate student in Geography prepare for his Master’s thesis defense. He was a Chinese speaker from Taiwan whose supervisor feared his very poor English pronunciation would jeopardize his oral. He and I worked for almost eight months, during which time a referral to a speech pathologist revealed

not only that he was hard of hearing (and so could not hear either English or Chinese well enough to distinguish sounds as needed) but that he was also literally (physically) tongue-tied. He admitted that he had always been reluctant to seek help, even in Taiwan, since that would mean he would lose face and respect both at home and in his department. His initial shyness with me eventually faded and he did improve his pronunciation enough, but the supervisor's initial concern was based entirely on an assessment of the student's English speaking ability and not the underlying factors related to cultural expectations about face.

The summary above only touches the surface of what a better notion of cross-cultural and intercultural communication can entail. I strongly believe that both teachers and students would benefit from a systematic and thorough exploration of the theories and cases of cross-cultural communication as they strive together to ensure full ESL proficiency and pragmatic competence not only within but also in front of the classroom.

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## Author Bio



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# INSIGHTS FROM COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY FOR THE ESL CLASSROOM

By Jeff Brown, George Brown College

Reflecting on the question of what recent findings or ideas ESL teaching might take from other fields, I suggest that recent insights on learning from the field of cognitive psychology are worth exploring. Cognitive psychology is the study of the neural processes that underpin mental operations such as memory, attention, and creative problem-solving, among others. It is a broad, multi-disciplinary area of study, and its empirical findings have been drawn upon by a range of other fields. ESL teachers would do well to take notice of some of these findings.

My remarks here draw exclusively upon Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel's (2014) fascinating book, *Make it Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*. I highly recommend it to anyone curious about the vast body of research in cognitive psychology. The central argument of the book, put simply, is that the most effective learning strategies are often counter-intuitive. Specifically, there are three primary principles that ESL teachers should reflect upon and consider incorporating into their classroom practice (even if this means questioning or abandoning practices that we've come to take for granted).

## 1. Mix up your practice

There is probably nothing immediately counter-intuitive about this principal. Many ESL teachers already vary the activities they do in class, even more so if the class they are teaching is an integrated skills course. But it is still worth noting that the research shows that massed practice—the 'practice-practice-practice' mentality—is less effective than interleaved practice, which involves the interaction of more than one skill at a time. Perhaps most importantly, this suggests that retrieval/recall—and the utilization of a variety of approaches to achieve this—is more effective than review and rereading. So, completing a quiz, say, after a reading or listening is better than reviewing notes.

ESL teachers here might specifically apply this to the study of vocabulary. We have probably all seen students poring over a long list of vocabulary items, hoping that dogged repetition will anchor the words in their memory. However, a series of short quizzes focussing on retrieval rather than recognition would better strengthen the neural pathways that underpin retention. Presenting these quizzes as retrieval exercises, and explaining their purpose, can help students see the value in an alternative approach to vocabulary study and can also, as a fringe benefit, gradually alleviate the anxiety they feel when taking actual tests.

## 2. Embrace difficulties

The science clearly shows that learning that is *effortful* is stronger and more likely to be retained. Basically, if it's difficult to learn, it's more likely to stick. Struggling with a problem and eventually finding a solution is more conducive to learning than being provided with a formula or rule for finding the solution. A specific application of this principle for ESL teachers might be with respect to grammar instruction. It lends support to the effectiveness of an inductive method for grammar instruction as opposed to a deductive approach. At the very least it suggests that—at least occasionally—it might be preferable to let students struggle to identify grammar structures through context rather than provide them with a formal rule from the outset.

More generally, this principle of learning might be a welcome balance to the tendency in ESL teaching to make all our activities entertaining. This is understandable. Being told that your class is fun or enjoyable is often more affirming than being told that it is difficult or challenging. However, given that learning is an often laborious (at least) three-step process involving information encoding, consolidation, and retrieval, it only stands to reason that some classroom activities will indeed make students feel like they are *working*. While some teachers might already tacitly subscribe to this view, it's vindicating to have the science to back it up.

## 3. Leave behind the learning-styles model

We are all familiar with the learning-styles model: some people are visual learners, some are tactile learners, and some are auditory learners. However, the idea that a person learns more effectively when they are taught in a manner that conforms more to their preferred learning style is simply not supported by the science. Given these findings, learners are advised to resist settling into a comfortable niche or preferred learning style—to avoid complacency and the appeal of the familiar or of what “feels best”.

It falls to us as teachers, then, to foster this approach in our classrooms and in our lessons. It's also clear how this third principle is implicated with the first two. Not catering to the preferred or perceived learning styles of our students entails embracing difficulties and, by definition, mixing up the practice in which we ask our learners to engage. This may often involve coaxing learners out of their default comfort zones, which in turn might mean moving beyond *our* comfort zones as teachers.

Clearly, there is a limit to this principle—and to the application of the other principles highlighted here. Varied activities can only be interleaved to the extent that the learning outcomes of a given class are supported; material should not be so difficult that it leaves students discouraged; and pushing students too far beyond their comfort zones is obviously counterproductive. Being a reflective and responsible practitioner means incorporating these insights into one's teaching while being aware of such parameters.

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### Author Bio



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# LITERACY LESSONS

## Core Concepts from Multiliteracies for Language Teachers in Contemporary Times

By Rachel Heydon, Emma Cooper, & Annie Tran, Western University

Three nine-year-old boys are sitting on a porch in urban Canada. They are engaged in a multiplayer session of *Terraria*, a video game that purports to combine the creativity and freedom of a sandbox environment with the strategic requirements of an action game. Each child is holding his own device—an iPod Touch, an iPad, an android tablet. Their eyes are fixed on their own screens, sometimes scanning over to the others', fingers busily pushing and swiping as they build biomes. During the game, one of the boys opens an Internet browser, types in a term from the game, and the children collectively research how to find an element they want. Through the search results they read blog posts from other players and add their own information to the mix. All the while they are playing, the boys are talking away to each other. If you were to listen in and focus on the discourse, you'd hear all seven of Michael Halliday's functions of language: instrumental ("I want to build..."), regulatory ("Do this here and..."), interactional ("Let's..."), personal ("Watch me when..."), informative ("When you go here..."), but especially heuristic ("What happens when you...") and imaginative ("In this world..."). Given such events, literacy research has been grappling with questions like, what is literacy in this new communicational landscape (e.g., is video gaming a literacy practice?) and what are the implications of the response to this question for education?

Though the vignette above might scream of concerns germane to the present day, they actually predate the turn of the century. Recognizing that communication technology and globalization were creating unprecedented changes to the ways in which people were communicating and that this would have massive implications for education, in 1996 a group of scholars convened in New London, US, and established the New London Group. The group's mandate was to consider the evolving nature of literacy and its implications for teaching and learning. Its first product was the revolutionary paper published in the *Harvard Educational Review*, entitled, *A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures*. The paper emphasized the concept of designing which the NLG defined as the forms and "process of shaping emergent meaning" (p. 74). The NLG argued that as designers of meaning, teachers and learners alike could become "active participants in social change" (p. 65). We read this work to mean that if people are designers of meaning, then they are de facto designers of social futures, as they shape, reshape, and represent meaning and put all of this out into the world ready to be shaped and reshaped by others.

The NLG's concept of design rejects the idea that literacy means one thing to all people, that this one thing is unchanging for all time, and that it is equal to a set of skills that can be passed from teacher to student. The pedagogies and research that have come out of and since the NLG instead express some similar fundamental principles that emphasize the prefix *multi-* and reframe literacy as **literacies**. Among them:

1. Being literate is not one thing; what constitutes literacy is dependent upon the situation you're in (e.g., being literate in a game of *Terraria* is different than being literate in a science classroom).
2. Linear reading and writing is not all that there is to being literate; people communicate through gesture, image, music, and the like by using a variety of what NLG member Gunther Kress calls "stuff".
3. With global movement and interconnected networks, literacies may involve more than just English and even English itself is, like literacy, plural, changing, and domain-specific.

The original pedagogy of multiliteracies proposed by the NLG has been adapted and revised over the last two decades, but the frame remains significant enough to repeat. It relates four general pedagogical components. In brief they are,

1. **Situated Practice:** learners are immersed in environments and communities with others who have experience with the literacies that are the target of the learning and where people can design together in ways that are meaningful to them.
2. **Overt Instruction:** learners are explicitly scaffolded to acquire a metalanguage for design and supported in collaborative meaning making.
3. **Critical framing:** learners are supported to connect designs to (at least) their socio-cultural contexts and implications, as the learners come to name and confront the forces at play in meaning making.
4. **Transformed Practice:** learners transform, re-create, and apply designs of meaning in settings that are of import to them.

Now, in 2016, scholars continue to build from the principles and pedagogy above, advocating for ways to enhance literacy education so that it is as dynamic and intricate as the practices it is trying to teach. For instance, NLG member, James Paul Gee, has focused much of his work as of late on video gaming. In doing so, he has come to a potent finding: when gaming, people will persevere through complex, sustained, and difficult problem solving, and they will love doing it. In fact, they will pay money to do it. This finding is reflected in the opening vignette which also, when considered in relation to multiliteracies, contains evidence of literacy practices. The implications for education are massive, with Gee himself asking, "How do you get someone to learn something long, hard, and complex and yet enjoy it?" (Gee, 2005, p. 34), and how do you do this in an era of multiliteracies? The NLG has started us on our way.

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# THE INTERDISCIPLINARY NATURE OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

By Julie Kerekes, University of Toronto

The English language classroom is one of only a handful of settings in which language is used and learned simply for the sake of using and learning it. Beyond the classroom, English is used for a myriad of transactional reasons—getting things done—and relational reasons—using language to build relationships. Just as one's L2 is used beyond the classroom in innumerable disciplines and for infinite purposes, so too can multifarious fields contribute to our approaches to teaching the language. Here I will touch on three that have influenced my teaching in ways that have been useful to my students in their real lives, beyond the classroom.

The first is phonetics (i.e., how the human body makes the sounds of a particular language). How can English learners' awareness of phonological processes enable them to accurately articulate the sounds of English which do not exist in their native languages? While the training of language teachers commonly includes instruction in the grammatical structure of English, many teachers do not know how the sounds which make up English are formed within the vocal tract (the parts of the human body used to make language sounds, beginning at the lips and nostrils and going all the way down to the vocal cords in the larynx). Knowing what the tongue position looks like, whether or not the vocal cords are vibrating, and how the airstream is obstructed, or not, in the articulation of each English sound, enables me, as a teacher, to explain and **show** my students how the sounds are made. It enables me to suggest adjustments to the student's tongue position in order to produce a more target-like sound. The sounds that come before and after the one which is being learned—say, the /æ/ in *pat*—influence how it is articulated. This is why *pat*, in which the vocal cords are still for the final consonant, has a shorter-sounding /æ/ than *pad*, in which the /æ/ is longer because the vocal cords vibrate for the final /d/. Phonetics has already contributed vastly to researchers' understanding of how languages are spoken and learned. Teachers and their students who understand the mechanics of constructing the sounds of English can visualize and, much more quickly, imitate the English sounds that they hear.

In thinking about English beyond the language classroom, one of the most common contexts that comes to mind is employment. The field of human resources gives ESL teachers a rich knowledge base regarding the language used in seeking employment (the job interview) as well as on the job. Social psychological experiments have shown that prospective employers form their first, and often lasting, impressions of job candidates

within mere seconds. The message a job candidate communicates within the first few seconds of a job interview is formed by much more than just words. The job candidate's physical appearance, facial expressions, intonation patterns, and eye contact, to name just a few nonverbal factors, are all contributors to the overall impression the candidate effects. Language teachers who are informed about how people can make positive impressions on the people with whom they interact can share with their students how establishing rapport and discovering common ground with one's interlocutor can be just as important, or even more important, than speaking English fluently and articulately. Workplaces are more diverse than ever, in terms of the demographics but also employee mobility and employee roles. One can express flexibility, adaptability, and enthusiasm within split seconds of an encounter. These qualities can be addressed in the language classroom, and will contribute greatly to first impressions at work.

Finally, the teacher can go beyond what is helpful to her students as individuals by taking a feminist theoretically informed pedagogical approach. Feminism, while aimed at recognizing and treating all people equally, emphasizes variability in terms of what each student (and each teacher) needs in order to be able to learn (and teach) effectively. Rather than a teacher-fronted class in which the teacher determines what the students need and then delivers it to them as a group, in a feminist-oriented classroom there is room for negotiations between teacher and students which enable the teacher to understand better what will help each student. A feminist approach promotes relationship-building in the classroom, through which the teacher becomes more invested in each student's success, while the students also become more involved in each other's positive learning experiences. While individual learning (and teaching) styles are taken into consideration, the overall effect of a feminist pedagogical approach is a more collective learning experience. The linguistic and cultural differences that make up a classroom community are seen as, rather than obstacles that stand in the way of clear communication, an eclectic set of resources contributed by each student and the teacher. Members of this community build rapport with each other through sharing of common as well as unique experiences. Language learning is not merely an individual activity and achievement, but it is co-constructed by those within the learning community.

## Author Bio



Julie Kerekes is an Associate Professor in Language and Literacies Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. Her research and teaching focus on language and power in conversational and institutional settings, particularly workplace ESL, as well as on the professional development of second language teachers. Her current projects examine the employment trajectories of internationally educated professionals, interlanguage pragmatics in email communications, and provincial policies affecting second language teacher education.

# LET'S REMEMBER

By Eufemia Fantetti

Years ago, while I still lived in Vancouver, I came across the Italian translation of Ehrmann's "Desiderata" online and sent it to my father.

He called as soon as the mail arrived. "Thank you for the nice poesia you sending, so beautiful."

For a moment, I considered letting him think I wrote the poem. I wondered how bad it would be for my karma to be so low as to claim authorship. This mistaken identity situation happened once before by accident, when my parents wrongly assumed I had written our graduating drama class production—a little known play called *Oedipus Rex*. I was a member of the chorus, dressed in a black, hooded cloak with my face painted to look skeletal. I crawled around the auditorium stage in this harbinger of doom costume with eleven other teenage girls, mournfully yelling out "Plague!" and "Pestilence!" in unison. There was a fog machine pumping out misty smoke—a semblance of smog rolled out into the audience. My immigrant parents sat at the edge of a row in the middle of the crowd, completely bewildered and confused.

Driving home afterwards they were stone silent. When we stopped at a red light my father looked back over his shoulder and asked, "That's the play you was writing?" He sounded alarmed.

"I no like," said my mother.

"You guys think I wrote a show about a man who killed his father and married his mother?"

"I really no like," said my mother. "I no understand what's happen."

I had that very same thought watching the results of the American election unfold: I can't understand what has happened. That fateful Tuesday, I woke up hopeful and my optimism grew as watched a live stream of men, women, and children lining up to pay homage to Susan B. Anthony's gravesite in Rochester, New York. A feminist activist at the forefront of the women's suffrage movement, she died fourteen years before most women got the vote in America. I was having a good day during a busy week—keeping up with marking, working on a lesson plan for a new class—all the while I smiled in anticipation of the future with a Madam President. I was brimming with excitement and ignored friends on social media who insisted the inept, incompetent opponent would win. I heard the rumblings and

thought the idea was completely preposterous: most people would not pick a hate-speech fuelled fear-mongering fascist for a president.

That night, watching state after state go red, I called my father way past his eight o'clock bedtime. He was still up, watching the results.

I started crying and said, "What's happening? WHAT IS HAPPENING?"

My dad said, "The people is crazy. I never was imagine they choosing this idiot. He's a disgrace."

In the aftermath, I vented, I ranted, and I wept. Clearly, I am not cut from the same cloth as Caesar. My father did his best to pacify my mounting concern, telling me I shouldn't get so upset about these events I had no control over. He reminded me that he had always said the world was full of injustice, cruelty and unfairness. And he repeated the message I grew up hearing more than any other: "There's nothing we can do."

We argued. Okay, I argued and he listened, interrupting again and again with, "There's nothing we can do. We're not millionaires. We're not politicians. We're not people with power."

"Democracy is burning," I said at dinner three days after the calamity, "and you're not helping."

Every morning, every evening, one thought returned, firing through my synapses, pulsing through my heart: I don't understand what is happening.

I looked at the *Desiderata* again, the poetic advice on living life from 1927. The stock market hadn't crashed yet. Hitler was making an impression on the powers that wanted-to-be with his skill in public speaking; his fans found him inspiring and said he had a talent for being bombastic. Everyone believed it couldn't happen again, "it" being another world war. There's a line in the *Desiderata* that has always comforted me: "And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should." In the travesty that is Trump's election, the quote has ceased to offer solace.

2016, I decided, is the year I can officially add Broken Heart Syndrome to my medical chart. (Yes, it's a thing.) I feel my heart ache in the wake of the American election like it did when I got divorced, or when my father was sick in the hospital. During those sad and scary episodes of personal strife, the muscles that pumps blood through my body raced out of sync with its usual rhythm and felt like a broken internal metronome keeping time by measuring anxiety and worry—every beat felt like a thump against my rib cage.

In the days since Brexit and the American election, I asked myself many questions. The short list includes: Don't people still have to study history in school? Would the Canadian election have gone the same way as our continental cousins if not for a photographer being present to witness a horror—the place where Canada-bound toddler Alan Kurdi's

body washed ashore? What exactly does Kellie Leitch mean when she uses the term “anti-Canadian values”? When we discuss Canadian values, are we willing to shine a light in the darkness to acknowledge and bear witness to the suffering that has happened in this country with the brutality of the residential schools and the genocide of first peoples? Are we not capable of doing more to make amends for the atrocities committed by our ancestors? Are the citizens of my hometown—the huge, diverse, good Toronto—really okay with carding? Are the citizens of the internet fine with women receiving death threats (and worse) for expressing an opinion on social media? Do Canadians think themselves immune from the problems currently destroying democracy south of the border, a parallel line drawn in the sand? How many times have I been asked where I’m from “originally” because my name doesn’t sound “Canadian”? Are people arguing that racism and misogyny can be measured in degrees like the weather? Do people seriously expect me to believe that denying basic human decency to all is acceptable on any level, for any reason?

Like I said, that’s my short list. My insomnia went to town last week. In fact, it stuck a feather in its cap and called this all baloney. I am, in the words of the Dixie Chicks, not ready to make nice or able to accept the “There’s nothing we can do” philosophy my father raised me with. There is plenty we can do. As ESL teachers, there is much we must do. Humanity took many blows this year and instructors everywhere are compelled to act. Teaching, we’ve all heard, is the profession that creates all others. The time has come for everyone to weigh in on the issue of basic human decency and respect being a fundamental right of all the people who share this earth home. Time marches on and there are too many who would dance us backward from the progress that has been made by our fragile, sensitive and selfish species.

Listen, I’m not trying to tell anyone how to teach or even what to teach, I am relatively new to the profession myself. What I am saying is that many teachers changed the course of my life and made it infinitely better—through lesson plans, selected course readings, and compassion. I didn’t learn all the values I hold most dear (courage, empathy, generosity for a start) from my loved ones, and I know I am not alone in that experience. My mother did not want me to get an education and argued vehemently that I should stop attending school at age twelve. She would have deprived me (and many other women) of great joy and deep fulfillment due to a breathtaking level of ignorance and misogyny.

The classroom has been my acropolis, my citadel, my arena for daring greatly and my shelter from the worldly storms. May schools continue to be a place of refuge for the weary, the timid and the brave with educators who cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.

In this November of our souls, let’s remember the words of WWI veteran Harry Patch who called war “organised murder.” Let’s remember the words of Toni Morrison to her students: “When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else. This is not just a grab-bag candy game.” Let’s remember the lesson in Aesop’s fable of the lion and the mouse: “No act of kindness, no

matter how small, is ever wasted.”

Let’s remember to be enormously, tremendously considerate of each other in the days, weeks and months ahead. Let’s remember to celebrate all the love and generosity we have ever received by sharing, giving, and creating more love and generosity. Amplify and magnify every kindness that has been shown to you. Ignore the small hurts and betrayals in order to push us all forward, to fight the good fight.

Finally, let’s be careful out in the wild wide world; some people behave in ways that don’t honour the fundamental values of dignity for all. Some people have a broken moral compass. Some people aggressively fight progress and hold onto power by calling to the devils on our shoulders instead of addressing the better angels of our nature.

Let us remember to watch out for each other and keep each other safe from harm in the days, weeks and months ahead. It is the very least we teachers can do.