

## *Learning Outside the Classroom*



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# Letter from the President



Dear Members,

At the beginning of December we launched a comprehensive survey to our past and present members to elicit feedback on how we, your professional organization, are doing and what we can do to make BC TEAL even more relevant to you. In all we received 228 responses, which, we're told, is a good representational figure for our membership that currently numbers around 850.

We collated the responses and all the board members reviewed the report to ensure we collectively understood the current thoughts of our members. Some of the responses were concrete suggestions that we can look to implement in the near future. Some responses indicated that we need to better communicate aspects of our organization; for example, this newsletter is open to members and non-members alike, and you don't need to remember your password to access it. Some responses ruffled our feathers. And other responses reminded us that we need to clarify continually who we are and what we do, specifically that we are a 100% volunteer board of professionals from across the EAL industry.

The timing of the survey worked out well for the BC TEAL board retreat, which happened on Sunday, February 16th. The board, along with some invited advisors and past board members and a professional facilitator, met for a full day where we sought to clarify a vision for BC TEAL in light of our mission statement and the results of the survey. It was an extremely

productive day that reignited our passion for this organization and provided guidance for our next steps. The biggest message coming out of the day was that while BC TEAL continues to be an excellent provider of Professional Development for our members, we need to focus on our role as an "advocate on behalf of teachers and learners of English as an additional language in British Columbia" (BC TEAL mission statement).

Over the next few months the board will be moving forward to craft our vision and strategic plan and then to present it to the membership. Be assured that the survey responses will no doubt feed into that plan, as our first priority, is and continues to be, meeting our members' needs. We hope to have a session at the upcoming TEAL conference in May to present our findings as well as call on you, our members, for some more input and suggestions as we pursue a stronger advocacy role.

BC TEAL has recently renewed our TESOL affiliation, and I'm excited for the possibilities that this connection might have for our BC TEAL members. I will be representing BC TEAL at the TESOL conference. Along with two BC TEAL board members, I will be at the affiliates booth on Friday, March 28th from 8:30 – 9:30. If you'll be in Portland, please drop by to say hello, meet some of the TEAL board members, and let us know your thoughts in a face-to-face venue.

The newsletter's theme is learning outside the classroom, and I feel that the BC TEAL board has learnt quite a bit in recent months, all outside the classroom. We have learnt from you, from each other, and from voices outside the profession. I believe that as much as we are a profession of teachers, we are strongest in our role as continual learners.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shawna Williams". The script is cursive and fluid.

Shawna Williams

President, BC TEAL



# Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the Winter Issue of the TEAL News.

It is another year; this means a number of us have made resolutions (many of which may have already been broken) and others of us made resolutions to not make any resolutions.

In talking about resolutions, last year one of the students in my class said her resolution was to try to learn even outside of school. That statement was the birth of the theme for this issue: Learning Outside the Classroom. Of course, the student was referring to using and studying outside of class time to improve her English. However, as I thought about her plan I realized that this was actually something all of us are probably doing without being aware of it; if we are not, we probably should be trying to learn outside of whatever 'classroom' (physical, social, cultural, mental) space we sometimes let delimit when and where we learn.

In this issue you will find different explorations of this theme. In "Key Concepts" we are asked our thoughts about authentic and simplified texts and which one we think can help us promote our students' reading beyond the classroom. In a new column called "Lessons from Learners" some ELSA in the workplace learners made lists suggesting ways to learn outside the classroom. Of course, where there are learners there are teachers – so in the column "Tips from Teachers," three instructors shared some of their favourite 'out of the classroom' learning ideas.

As instructors we want to empower our learners. One way we do this is by involving our students in the learning process. One form of involvement is asking learners to share stories from their life experiences, from their lives outside of school. In the article on digital storytelling, the author explains how and why this process not only empowers students but also

helps in their language acquisition. Should you decide you want to try digital storytelling with your students, check out this article and then the "Classroom Corner" column for a digital storytelling lesson plan another instructor has shared.



In "Reflections" we have two different articles with a common theme. Each challenges how we may view things within our profession. Read "Lessons from John and Yoko" and "On Not Being 'an ESL Teacher' All the Time." I guarantee you will find food for thought.

Finally read about Moo Ler Pwei and Wonderful Wonderful, the inspiring winners of the 2013 TCF Refugee Award and the exciting plans of the other TCF Award winners.

On a last note, most of us learn outside the classroom by attending professional development events – so, don't forget to sign up for the upcoming BC TEAL Conference and make sure to apply for the available bursaries.

I hope you enjoy the articles and, as always, remember, if you feel inspired, submit an article for the next TEAL news and make your dream of sharing what you know with others a reality.

Chris-Anne Stumpf  
Editor, TEAL News





innovation

change

bc teal 46th annual conference

may 23/24, 2014

challenges

### Plenary Speakers

Friday: **Randi Reppen,**  
Professor of Applied Linguistics,  
Arizona State University

Saturday: **Lionel LaRoche,**  
Founder and principal,  
Multicultural Business Solutions

meeting



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## Announcing BC TEAL Conference Bursaries and Travel Grants

In response to feedback from some of our members who indicated a strong desire to attend our annual conference, but with financial circumstances not allowing it, BC TEAL is pleased to announce that 10 conference bursaries will be available for this year's conference at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, May 23-24, 2014.

The bursaries include five two-day and five one-day complimentary registrations. Priority will be given to applicants displaying financial need, particularly those whose employers do not offer professional development funds. Any BC TEAL member in good standing, including current board members of BC TEAL as well as the TCF, are welcome to apply. The application deadline is April 1, 2014. Successful applicants will be notified prior to the early bird deadline of April 25, 2014.

Please visit <http://fluidsurveys.com/s/teal-2014-conference-bursary/> to apply.

As in previous years, BC TEAL is also offering five travel grants of \$100 each to individuals who live 100 km or more from the conference venue, and are carpooling with one or more other conference attendees. The deadline for applying for the travel grants is April 1, 2014 and successful applicants will be notified prior to the early bird deadline of April 25, 2014.

Please visit <http://fluidsurveys.com/s/teal/travel-grant-2014/> to apply.

## From the Learners' Lips

### *ELSA Level 4, Douglas College Training Group*

ELSA Level 4, Douglas College Training Group share how they learn outside the classroom:

1. Talk to neighbours
2. Read newspapers
3. Go to the library
4. Go to meetings at a community centre
5. Speak English on the phone
6. Join a Canadian party
7. Join an English corner
8. Volunteer in schools
9. Make new Canadian friends
10. Get a part-time job
11. Speak English at home to children
12. Speak English at the shopping centre
13. Text with your cell phone
14. Search the Internet
15. Send English emails
16. Write in English
17. Watch TV
18. Listen to the radio
19. Read books and magazines
20. Do grammar exercises
21. Help your children with their homework
22. Communicate with people
23. Speak with friends



# Should Non-academic L2 Reading Instruction Involve Authentic or Simplified Material?

by Li-Shih Huang



What are your thoughts about whether to use authentic or simplified texts as the sources of language input in the process of teaching beginning and intermediate-level second-language learners? If you find yourself on both sides of the fence, then you are not alone. The pedagogical benefits of using authentic vs. simplified readings have long been an issue of debate and concern among second-language learning theorists, researchers, and practitioners. I recently had an opportunity to review a set of teaching grant applications, and the topics seemed to confirm a prevailing assumption that using authentic materials is unquestionably a better practice in second-language reading instruction, and that experience prompted me to write this piece. Is this assumption supported theoretically and empirically? What kind of text do you prefer to use in your classroom and why? Which kind do your students enjoy more? And in line with the theme of this issue, *learning beyond the classroom*, which type of reading can help us promote reading beyond the classroom?

In this installment, I will briefly clarify what is meant by “authentic” vs. “simplified” texts and describe some of the theoretical support for and arguments against each type in the “What does it mean?” section. In the “What does research say?” section, I’d like to invite you to explore your beliefs or assumptions and compare

them with findings from a recent study about various key linguistic features of authentic vs. simplified texts. The “What can we do?” section deals with considerations that instructors can take into account.

### What does it mean?

Authentic texts have been generally defined as texts “originally created to fulfill a social purpose in the language community for which [they] were intended” (Crossley et al., 2007, p. 17), whereas simplified texts generally refer to texts created “to illustrate a specific language feature ... to modify the amount of new lexical input introduced to learners; or to control for propositional input, or a combination thereof” (p. 16). Since the 1970s, the term “communicative language teaching” has referred to “a multitude of different things to different people” (Harmer, 2003, p. 289), and its meaning “seems to depend on whom you ask” (Spada, 2007, p. 272). Still, one may say in general terms that communicative language teaching prominently features the use of authentic materials with the pedagogical goal that learners will be exposed to *real* language used in *real* contexts (Larsen-Freeman, 2002). The influence and strong trend toward communicative language teaching over the past four decades has led teaching professionals to prefer the use of authentic texts, despite the lack of

empirical evidence to support their superiority over simplified texts. Other theories or approaches that have been cited in favour of the use of authentic materials include, for example, Krashen's *input hypothesis*, which suggests that "*natural communicative input* is the key to designing a syllabus" (n.d., para 11). The whole language instructional approach also focuses on using authentic materials in the process of facilitating language development (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 113) and on the need for language learners to be introduced to enriched context and to experience language in its totality (Goodman, 1986). The major perceived benefit of using authentic texts lies in the way it makes it possible to introduce natural and contextualized language to learners (Larsen-Freeman, 2002). At the same time, many arguments against the use of authentic texts centre on their linguistic difficulty, such as lexical and syntactic complexity and conceptual and cultural density (Young, 1999; Crossley & McNamara, 2008).

The proponents' preference for the use of simplified texts centres on their practical value, with major theoretical support from, for example, Krashen's *comprehensible input* and *affective filter* hypotheses. The former states that "the learner improves and progresses along the 'natural order' when he/she receives second language 'input' that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence, which simplified texts arguably are able to provide" for beginning and intermediate learners (n.d., para. 11). The latter theory asserts that a high level of motivation and low level of anxiety facilitate better second-language acquisition (n.d., para. 12). As such, appropriately selected simplified texts presumably could motivate learners more than authentic texts, which might be overly challenging for learners with lower proficiency levels. In addition to making texts more comprehensible, simplified texts are thought to facilitate learning by excluding distracting idiosyncratic styles and offering enhanced redundancy and elaborated explanation (refer to Crossley & McNamara, 2008).

In response to practitioners' prejudice against simplified texts, Nation (2005) argued that those materials "should be seen as authentic in that they provide conditions under which learners at all levels of proficiency can read with a degree of comprehension, ease, and enjoyment that is near that of a native speaker reading unsimplified text" (pp. 587-588). For Nation (2007, p. 1), any language instruction or activities in a language course must maintain a balance among what he called "the four strands of meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning [accuracy] and fluency development" (see also Nation, 2005). Proponents of simplified texts value how such texts attend to learners' cognitive load in reading, provide aids to learning, and hold the key to illustrating specific language features, modifying the amount of new or unfamiliar lexical input, and repeating coverage of the most useful language items. In addition, as we know well, decoding and comprehension are crucial to reading. The use of simplified or graded readers helps learners engage in extensive reading, which involves focusing on meaning and fluency, and to promote reading beyond the classroom for pleasure and for the development of reading fluency. For Nation (2013), reading fluency develops when it is meaning-focused and easy, when learners are encouraged to perform at a faster speed, and when the quantity of input is substantial. The texts have also been heavily criticized, however, out of an important concern that they may deny learners the opportunity to learn natural forms of language (Long & Ross, 1993; Newnham, 2013).

### What does research say?

Before discussing what previous research has revealed, let's take a moment to explore our beliefs or assumptions in relation to the following key features of authentic vs. simplified texts. In the "My Prediction" column, indicate which you think would score higher – authentic or simplified texts – by marking "A" if your prediction that specific linguistic feature is higher for authentic texts, or "S" if your prediction is higher for simplified texts. Try not to read ahead before noting your predictions.

Continuing on page 9



Feature	Meaning	My Prediction?
<b>Causality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The text's ability to convey causal content and causal cohesion</li> </ul>	
<b>Connectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive (e.g., <i>also</i>, <i>moreover</i>) and negative (e.g., <i>however</i>, <i>but</i>) additive, positive (e.g., <i>after</i>, <i>before</i>) and negative (e.g., <i>until</i>) temporal, causal (e.g., <i>because</i>, <i>so</i>), and logical operators (e.g., <i>or</i>, <i>and</i>, <i>if-then</i>)</li> </ul>	
<b>Coreferences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noun overlap: how often a common noun appears in two sentences</li> <li>Argument overlap: how often two sentences share common arguments</li> <li>Stem overlap: how often a noun in one sentence shares a common stem with other word types in another sentence</li> </ul>	
<b>Parts of speech</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Categories to which words are assigned in accordance with their syntactic functions (e.g., noun, pronoun, adjective, determiner, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection)</li> </ul>	
<b>Polysemy and Hypernymy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Polysemy: the number of meanings a word has</li> <li>Hypernymy: the number of levels a word has in a conceptual, taxonomic hierarchy</li> </ul>	
<b>Syntactic complexity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A feature exhibited through, e.g., number of modifiers per noun phrase, sentences and constituents per word and per noun phrase</li> </ul>	
<b>Word information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Word frequency: how often a word occurs in English</li> <li>Concreteness: how concrete a word is</li> <li>Imagability: how easy it is to construct a mental image of a word</li> <li>Meaningfulness: how associated a word is with other words</li> </ul>	

Now let's check your predictions in relation to findings from a recent study (Crossley & McNamara, 2008), which replicated an earlier study (Crossley et al., 2007), but with a larger collection of texts at different proficiency levels:

- **Causality:** This feature tends to be higher in authentic texts (statistically nonsignificant).
- **Connectives:** There is no difference in all connectives except for the use of logical connectors, where authentic texts had a significantly greater density of all logical connectors, but there was a significantly greater density of noun phrases in simplified texts.
- **Coreference:** Simplified texts showed a higher level of coreferentiality than that of authentic texts.
- **Parts of speech:** Authentic texts exhibited a significantly greater number of infrequent

linguistic features (e.g., past participles and wh-pronouns); simplified texts had more occurrences of nouns and past-tense verbs.

- **Polysemy and hypernymy:** Verb hypernymy and polysemy values were significantly greater in simplified texts.
- **Syntactic complexity:** Authentic texts were significantly more syntactically complex than simplified texts.
- **Word information:** Simplified texts had a significantly higher level of word familiarity and meaningfulness than authentic texts.

### What can we do?

How did your predictions compare to findings discovered by Crossley and McNamara (2008)? What are some implications that may be relevant to our

teaching or pedagogical material development?

The *causality* feature relates to a text's readability. Causal verbs (e.g., *make*) and causal particles (e.g., *as a result*) concern the causal relationships between events and actions (e.g., texts with causal mechanisms or stories with an action plot). In the process of simplifying a plot, for example, a practitioner needs to be mindful of the causal verbs and particles that may be circumvented, as such circumvention may lower the text's ability to illustrate causal content and cohesion.

*Connectives*, which play a crucial role in the creation of cohesive ties between ideas, affect the density and abstractness of a text. The use of connectives and logical operators is a concern in simplified texts, because the lack of such devices place demands on a learner's working memory.

*Coreferences* facilitate text comprehension and reading speed. Because the simplification of texts often takes the need for clarification and elaboration into account, the level of coreferentiality tends to be higher in simplified texts than in authentic texts.

The evidence so far seems to suggest that the density of major *parts of speech* is also likely to be different in authentic vs. simplified texts, given the intentional control of infrequent parts of speech in simplified texts. The limited exposure to less common parts of speech in simplified texts is a matter that instructors might like to keep in mind when making their text choices as learners progress.

*Polysemy* and *hyponymy* have to do with a text's

ambiguity and abstractness. The process of simplification by shortening words and phrases, removing low-frequency words, and using less abstract vocabulary often leads to the use of more common words that tend to have multiple meanings. As a result, simplified texts may exhibit higher values of polysemy and more lexical ambiguity.

As previously mentioned, a major criticism of authentic texts relates to *syntactic complexity*. However, previous studies have also suggested that simplified texts "may create a burdensome syntactic structure that does not lead to either authentic discourses or ease of understanding" (Crossley et al., 2007, p. 26). Text modifications, such as through simplification of syntactic structures, may change the distribution of information or the linguistic cues embedded within a text (Newnham, 2013). Such changes warrant researchers' and practitioners' further consideration about how syntactic complexity in simplified texts may affect learners' reading comprehension.

Finally, regarding *word information* features, simplified texts, as anticipated, tend to contain more familiar and more frequently used words. This feature suggests the strength of simplified texts in aiding text comprehension and the development of reading speed.

It's helpful to be aware of what up-to-date research can potentially offer us in terms of thinking, guidance, or insights in the process of making informed pedagogical choices, but, as I stated in 2012 Spring of *BC TEAL News*, "no studies or research articles in the sea of literature out there can ... directly answer your own

pedagogical question" (p. 16).

I'd like to invite you to consider trying out the freely accessible and user-friendly *Coh-Metric* tool

(<http://goo.gl/On8ro>) to do your own simple text analyses or make comparisons between authentic vs. simplified versions using simplified texts you have selected or created on the basis

THE ONLINE GRADED TEXT EDITOR

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This is a BETA version and works reliably in Firefox in Windows. Compatibility for other browsers is coming soon.

Current wordlist is  ➡ Current Level is  ➡

Words in the Current List		Words out of Current List			Coverage
% up to the selected level	% beyond the selected level	Proper nouns	Ignored	Other	(A+C+D)
0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
A	B	C	D	E	

of your experiences and professional intuitions. You could also make use of such tools as *The Online Graded Text Editor* (<http://www.er-central.com/ogte/>), which are freely available and created specifically for the English language-teaching community. Goals include developing a better understanding of some of the linguistic features mentioned in this short article, making informed choices about the purpose of your use of a specific text, and ascertaining whether the chosen material will match your pedagogical purpose for a specific learner group. Naturally, our students' reactions to a selected text and our observations of their process of working through the text can be very revealing and helpful as we consider and reconsider our choices. Above all, nothing is more gratifying than seeing the text you personally carefully modified or selected from available sources achieve its intended pedagogical purposes!

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## From the Learners' Lips

### *ELSA Level 4/5 Douglas College Training Group*

ELSA Level 4/5, Douglas College Training Group share how they learn outside the classroom:

1. Make Canadian friends
2. Chat online
3. Watch and listen to English TV & radio
4. Review what you learned in class
5. Use only English-to-English dictionaries
6. Speak English with your family
7. Write a dairy in English
8. Start to work in a Canadian environment
9. Participate in library clubs
10. Listen to some English news and write it down
11. Use your small notebook to write any new vocabulary
12. Read loudly sounds (pronunciation)
13. Read newspapers
14. Attend community groups including sports groups
15. Read short story books
16. Choose a topic for yourself and speak about that
17. Meet children's parents and communicate with each other in English
18. Communicate with your friends, classmates, neighbours, and co-workers in English







# Using Digital Storytelling in the Classroom for English Language Learning

*by Patricia Nicoli*



Recently there has been more awareness of the concept of language learning with Digital Storytelling. I became interested in Digital Storytelling while reading an article for a course I was taking at the University Of Manchester. I found a web link and read Joe Lambert's introduction to Digital

Storytelling. I was immediately interested in this form of blended learning. It combines the elements of language learning by allowing students to express themselves with their own authentic life experiences. It also gives an opportunity for the students to use technology as a way to communicate the stories. I felt that this could be a perfect combination of blending language learning and technology. Soon afterwards, I attended a TESL Canada conference in Kamloops, BC and had the privilege of attending a workshop about Digital Storytelling by Sarah Yuen, Jennifer Chow, and Vesna Radivojevic, from Vancouver Community College. These instructors conducted a fabulous workshop that was thorough, clear, and organized and allowed the participants to make their own digital stories in order to demonstrate the necessary steps when conducting digital storytelling in their own teaching practices.

## **What is Digital Storytelling? What are its benefits? How does it work?**

As described by Bran (2012), "Digital Storytelling is a short (usually 3- to 5-minute) clip, which consists of a series of still images, combined with oral and/or written text. Additional music is sometimes used to evoke emotion or induce other effects. Digital Storytelling is an appropriate way to communicate what we do, who we are and what we care about or what we are interested in." It was first developed in the 1990's at the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) in Berkeley, California.

The content for Digital Stories can vary. It can come from students' own personal experiences. It can be from a past experience or a wish for something to

do in the future. For example, the "theme" used in the workshop was to tell a story about something from our "bucket list". Students were to tell a story about something they have always wanted to do or a place they have wanted to visit. Another theme could be a place that, in pairs or groups, students have visited together. They tell about it in the form of a digital story. Some examples would include a museum, a charity organization, a tourist site, a restaurant, a neighbourhood in the city, or an eco-friendly green building.

## **What are its benefits?**

The benefits to Digital Storytelling are evident. It is Collaborative, and Creative in nature, develops Critical Thinking, encourages Risk Taking, promotes Accuracy, and is able to do all of this because it is Meaningful.

## ***Collaboration and Creativity:***

Collaboration and creativity are a natural consequence of the storytelling process. Students are encouraged to interact with each other to produce a final project. The students, who work in pairs or groups of three to create a story, must be interactive to succeed at their task. This in turn enables the students to get acquainted which allows them to bond quickly through social learning and communication. This grouping promotes sharing and building of ideas; as a result, the students become engaged and are motivated to create their story.

Students are also encouraged to be creative, and draw from their own experiences, thus making the process meaningful. The freedom to select photos and music also provides an opportunity for students to express themselves creatively and to tell about their unique identities. Barette (2004) considers Digital Storytelling as deep learning "a constructivist" model. (2004) The fact that each student needs to contribute ideas and draw from their background schema in order to come up with ideas enhances the creativity. Each student is responsible for participating and contributing to the story. Swain (1995) suggests that collaborative activities, "lead learners to reflect on their own language production as they attempt to



create meaning” (Kessler, 2009, p.80).

The collaboration required in Digital Storytelling is typical of social constructive approaches. According to Beetham and Sharpe (2007), “Peer learners and teachers play a key role in development by engaging in dialogue with the learner developing a shared understanding of the task, and providing feedback on the learner’s activities and representations.” Clearly, this is what happens during the digital storytelling process.

### **Critical Thinking:**

As stated in Garrison and Kanuka (2004), the benefits of working in collaboration include fostering critical thinking as well as a positive sense of community. They state: “connection with others is essential to realize a community of inquiry characterized by reflective written or spontaneous verbal dialogue. A sense of community is also necessary to sustain the educational experience over time so essential to move students to higher levels of thinking” ( p.99).

The movement to higher levels of thinking is supported through Digital Storytelling; thus Digital Storytelling can be aligned with the pedagogical perspective of Problem Based Learning. When students work in pairs or groups, they need to make a plan of action as to how they will conduct their research, how they will gather the information, and where they will go to gather this information. The rationale in supporting this step of Digital Storytelling is to describe three fundamental perspectives and the underlying principles. These three perspectives are stages in a cycle, as described by Mayes and Fowler as cited in Mayes and Frietas (2007), which address different aspects of the progression towards mastery of knowledge or skill.

1. The Situative: addressing the learner’s motivation,
2. The Associative: focusing on the detailed nature of performance, and
3. The Cognitive: the role of understanding and reflecting on action.

Each of the three perspectives are integral to learning.” ( p.20)

### **Risk Taking and Accuracy:**

Not only does digital storytelling develop critical thinking it encourages risk taking and promotes accuracy. Students at higher levels of language learning may feel confined by repetitive grammar; therefore incorporating activities which allow them to take risks with the language is promoted. Digital Storytelling also addresses students’ errors. The


students can have the instructor edit the script or they can choose to peer edit each other’s sections. This act encourages students to be motivated to focus on accuracy when writing the story and specifically when speaking during recording and re-recording in order to produce a finished product that they are comfortable sharing with others. The students are asked to take only between 2 to 5 minutes for their stories so this encourages them to be cautious about using the language economically to express their story. The students gain confidence when they have the ability to hear their progress with the story. As referenced in Alonso (2005), Schulman states that reflection and re-examining the final product in a social context allows the students the opportunity to analyse any misconceptions or misunderstandings (p.230).

### **Meaningful:**

Finally, Digital Storytelling offers an exciting and engaging way to allow students to share ideas and background knowledge in order to produce an authentic and meaningful product that they can feel proud of. It allows them to realize that their life experiences outside the classroom are relevant to their language learning inside the classroom. The learning that takes place develops their awareness of the concept that the skills they learn while interacting with each other are the same skills they will need to continue to develop not only with their language learning, but also with their role in this new culture outside of the classroom.

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#### **Audio and Visual Resources:**

Video Creation for PC: MyBrainShark, MovieMaker, PhotoStory

Video Creation for Mac: iMovie, Sound Resources, iPhoto  
Audio Recording: VoiceThread, Audacity

#### **Free Music:**

<http://findsounds.com>  
<http://www.archive.org/details/audio>  
<http://www.freeplaymusic.com>

#### **Free Images:**

Free Digital Photos.net <http://freedigitalphotos.net>  
Internet Archive Main page <http://www.archive.org/>  
Unesco Photobank <http://photobank.unesco.org/exe/index.htm?lang=en>

#### **Websites on Digital Storytelling:**

Digital Storytelling in Education: By Sara Yuen, TESL Canada ESL Digital Storytelling Workshop: <http://www.esldigitalstorytelling.wordpress.com>  
Centre for Digital Storytelling <http://www.storycentre.org>  
Jake's Online! Digital Storytelling <http://www.jakesonline.rg/storytelling.htm>

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# Lesson Plan for Digital Storytelling

*by Yalda Ahmadvand*

### Objective:

Students will:

- Produce a product that demonstrates competence in creative writing
- Develop a story, write a draft, edit the story with feedback from the teacher and classmates, and write and type the final script for the movie.
- Express their social, and cultural perspective through story development
- Develop fluency through practicing the script for recording their voice

### Preparation:

- Download Photostory 3 (free software for Window XP) Or iMovie (for MAC) on the computers
- Designate places in the classroom to sit in a circle
- Prepare computer and projector for viewing their stories

### Steps:

- The first step in creating a story is script development. In this step students will write the story, often with a group to provide story development ideas and feedback on the story. Since students work in a group, they are participating and speaking over the story they are going to write. This stage usually takes more than one session depending on your learning objectives. Ask students to submit the draft of their script first in order to check their grammatical mistakes.

- The second step is collecting pictures. Depending on the topic they have chosen, students download and edit images that they want to choose for their story. This part helps students to use their creativity in finding original images that are meaningful reflection of their stories. To make this step more meaningful, as a teacher you might have them to justify their choices.
- In the next step, students should record their voices first. In this process, before recording, students need to practice their narration, and work on their pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. As with the writing part, the teacher decides what areas they need to pay more attention to. Then they should combine the narration and images, and add music tracks.
- The last step is presenting the finished version of the digital storytelling project. To make it more fun and enjoyable for the students, teachers can use a computer projector and hold a special presentation session. It is better not to give them feedback on the form and structure right away or even after finishing their presentation, because this project is mainly based on the communicative approach and its focus is primarily on the process not the final products.

**Homework:** Have the students work on their story ideas at home. They can communicate via email as a team, or over the phone.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me: Yalda Ahmadvand: [yaldaav@yahoo.com](mailto:yaldaav@yahoo.com)





# Learning Outside the Classroom:

## *Tips from Teachers*

When asked, "Where can our students get practice speaking and listening in English outside the classroom?" three teachers shared their suggestions:

T1. The first thing I recommend my students do is to get friends who do not speak the same language. This is so obvious, but so many of our students "hang-out" with friends from their own country which fits their comfort level instead of challenging themselves.

T2. Yes, that is a good thing to suggest! I also suggest some web-sites. There are many interactive web sites to practice listening, reading, pronunciation, and even writing.

"I like:"

[www.englishclub.com/esl-games/](http://www.englishclub.com/esl-games/)

[www.bogglesworldesl.com](http://www.bogglesworldesl.com)

[www.evaeaston.com](http://www.evaeaston.com)

[www.international.ouc.bc.ca/](http://www.international.ouc.bc.ca/) (for pronunciation/ and listening)

[www.manythings.org](http://www.manythings.org) (for word games, puzzles, quizzes, exercises, slang, proverbs and much more)

and of course my favourite [www.esl-lab.com](http://www.esl-lab.com) which is an excellent listening and vocabulary site

T3. True, those sites are good and students do use technology. For those that want more in-person things, I like to steer them towards the free lectures that go on - for example, the Philosophers Café at SFU and the Vancouver Public Library. They can also join tours at the Art Gallery and all our wonderful museums.

T1. I like to suggest [Meet-up.com](http://Meet-up.com). It is a wonderful site for many activities and even many ESL conversation clubs. There are activities there for everyone. I tell them about the groups I have joined and the fun things and people I have met. . .

T2. I love to shop. So, one of my favourite things to do is to get my students who love to shop to make it into a learning opportunity by shopping for things that they would not normally go shopping for. For instance, I suggest they go to Home Depot and ask the sales staff the best way to fix the toilet by themselves or which light bulb is best. They can also buy something at any store, but they have to return it and explain why they did not want it. One of my students went up and down Robson Street and visited every store along the strip.

T3. We are very fortunate to have many free reading materials – for example, 24 hours, Metro, The Georgia Straight. One of the exercises I gave my class was to plan an evening's entertainment. They could spend up to \$500 on one evening but it must be strictly on entertainment. Later as a class we voted for the best plan. However, I think the best result was that a few of the students started to check out the local events and to go. They'd then report on Monday about their weekend adventures. One lesson shared early on was NEVER sit at the front in a comedy club....not only do you get embarrassed, but if you do not understand what is going on it is hard to look at the other customers for clues....



# Celebrating English as an Additional Language

*by Sheila Mattila, BC TEAL Secretary and Membership Chair*



What do the Province of BC, a group of volunteers, a class of ELSA students, and a professor from Trinity Western University have in common? They are all proudly celebrating English as an Additional Language (EAL) in BC.

BC Teal launched its inaugural “EAL Week” November 17th to 23rd, 2013 with official proclamations from the City of Vancouver, the City of Kelowna and the Province of BC. These proclamations help bring awareness and recognition to our growing field.

EAL week kicked off with a Volunteer Appreciation Brunch to recognize and celebrate the hard work and dedication of the numerous volunteers that make the great work of BC TEAL possible.

Over 80 individuals lend a hand to BC TEAL every year, and this was our chance to say thanks.

Throughout the week, students and teachers from around the province pulled out their cameras and documented their English learning experiences in BC as part of a video contest. Congratulations goes to Andrea Eaton's ELSA Level 4/5 Class in Delta, BC with their winning submission “The Story of My English Learning Experience in BC” (available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNgN67jNd20>).

EAL Week wrapped up with a day of professional development at the 2013 Lower Mainland Regional Conference. Over 90 individuals participated the conference at Columbia College where Dr. William Acton, Director of the MATESOL at Trinity Western University, helped attendees in “Celebrating Our Profession” with an interactive plenary on e-Motional methods: cognitively complex, hands-on teaching and learning.



Thank you to everyone who participated in EAL Week, whether from behind the scenes or in front of the camera. We look forward to making this an annual event.





# Moo Ler Pwei and Wonderful Wonderful Win TCF Refugee Awards



Moo Ler Pwei and Wonderful Wonderful are this year's winners of the TCF Refugee Awards. This year's awards recognize the achievements of two outstanding and courageous young people who began their lives in Canada as refugees.

Moo Ler and Wonderful were both very young when their families were forced to flee their villages in Burma. In Moo Ler's words, "Our farms and houses were burned and destroyed by Burmese soldiers. We couldn't stay any longer because there was no food and we constantly had to go into the jungle to hide to save our lives."

Both families escaped from Burma to Thailand and lived for twelve years in UNHCR refugee camps. Moo Ler describes her life being a refugee, "We lived in crowded conditions and food supplies were scarce. Finally after twelve years, we were given a chance to apply to move to Canada. When we were accepted, we were full of excitement and hope for our new lives in Canada."

The early years in Canada were very difficult for both Moo Ler and Wonderful because they spoke no English. Their first ESL classes were with Susan Ellis at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School. Wonderful describes his first day at school in September 2007, "I felt scared because I knew

that I could not talk to anyone and if anyone talked to me I could not answer them. I was very lonely." For the next five years both Moo Ler and Wonderful persevered and with the help of their teachers and friends graduated from high school in the spring of 2013.

Winning this year's TCF Refugee Award is important for Wonderful because it enables him to attend Douglas College and study to be a fire fighter. Wonderful describes the difference the award will make, "The problem is my family is poor. My parents can't afford to help me, even though they know education is important. No one in my family finished high school, so the jobs they have do not pay well. My parents work really hard and they give up everything for us."

Winning this year's TCF Refugee Award is also very important for Moo Ler because it means that she can pursue her dream of attending Douglas College and becoming a nurse. Moo Ler describes how important the award is for her, "Money is scarce for a family of five kids and a single mother. My mother has given all she has for her kids. She works really hard to provide a home for us. The TCF Refugee Award will help me achieve my goal of becoming a nurse."





# Congratulations to the 2014 TCF Award Winners!

## **Pat Wakefield Scholarship awarded to Cynthia Caswell**

Cynthia is currently completing her doctorate in Applied Linguistics by distance at the University of Aston in Birmingham UK. Her research focus is teacher education in TESOL. She will use her award to attend the 2014 IATEFL Conference and has submitted a workshop proposal titled, "Graduate Problem-based Learning in an MA TESOL Programme" to the 2014 IATEFL Conference Committee.

**The Pat Wakefield Scholarship** was established in 1985 to honour Pat Wakefield's leadership and commitment to the field of English as an additional language. It is a scholarship for an ESL educator to travel to a country that is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations for the purposes of EAL professional development or research and is valued at \$2500.

## **BC TEAL/TESOL Bursary awarded to Janice GT Penner.**

Janice will use the award to attend the 2014 TESOL Conference and present her workshop titled, "Sustaining Learner Investment through Facilitating ELL Self-correction Goals". Her presentation will report on class action research about self-efficacy, learner autonomy, or self-regulated learning. The study employs the Social Cognitive Theory [SCT] framework and will include pre- and post- course Self-Efficacy Inventory responses.

**The BC TEAL/TESOL Bursary** is a travel grant for a member of TESL Canada or TESOL affiliate. The award is to be used for attending/presenting at a TESL Canada or TESOL Conference and is valued at \$1000.

## **Project Funding Award awarded to The New Vancouverwrite.**

**The New Vancouverwrite** is a magazine written by new immigrants in ELSA classes [Levels 3 to 5 ] and has been in existence for two years. It features entertaining, informative and descriptive articles.

Cairn McArthur describes this publication, "The mandate for **The New Vancouverwrite** is to provide writers with workplace experience with the opportunity for creative expression and sharing as well as a forum to document the cultural shocks and joys of living in a new country." The award will be used to finance the continued publication of The New Vancouverwrite with a commitment to provide copies of the magazine to the 23 ELSA classes at SUCCESS as well as classes from other ELSA organizations.

**The Project Funding Award** is awarded for funding research projects, special ESL projects and professional development events. The award does not fund individual scholarships, individual bursaries, research projects, or projects that will generate profit and is valued at \$2000.

## **The 2014 Nan Poliakoff Memorial Scholarships awarded to Karen Densky and Saeed Nazari**

**Karen Densky** will use the Nan Poliakoff Memorial Scholarship to attend the 2014 TESOL Conference. At the conference, Karen will present a workshop titled, "Feeding It Forward: Exploring and Reviewing the Teacher Observation Process." and has organized and will participate in two panels with a focus on "Teacher Education."

**Saeed Nazari** will use the Nan Poliakoff Memorial Scholarship to give a presentation titled "The Role of Consciousness Raising in the Use of Language Learning Strategies by L2 Learners across Two Contexts" at the Association of American Applied Linguistics [AAAL] Conference.

**The Nan Poliakoff Memorial Award** was established in memory of ESL instructor Nan Poliakoff and provides funding to support professional development and can also be used for attending and/or presenting at an ESL conference or for ESL resource development and is valued at \$750.



## The 2014 AIDS and Health Fund awarded to Catherine Evaschuk

Catherine's goal is to use the AHEF award to provide face-to-face lessons focusing on sexual health for students in ESL classes. She will also provide workshops on sexual education for ESL instructors and student teachers as well as professional development for ESL schools and post-secondary institutions.

**The AIDS and Health Fund** was established in 1992 to promote AIDS and health education through content-based English language instruction and is valued at \$3000.

## The 2014 Mary Ashworth Scholarship awarded to Beth Maschmann.

Beth is a graduate student in Educational Studies at UBC. She will use the Mary Ashworth Scholarship to attend the 2014 TESOL Conference and make a presentation in collaboration with her peer professional development group titled, "Paradox, Possibility, and Professional Development in TESOL."

**The Mary Ashworth Scholarship** is a travel scholarship in memory of UBC Professor Emeritus Mary Ashworth. The award is for a graduate student attending UBC who is registered in a graduate TESL/ TESOL, Applied Linguistics, or related program. The award can be used by a UBC graduate student to attend a TESL Canada or TESL Conference and is valued at \$1000.



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# Lessons from John and Yoko

*by Curtis Emde*



In the early 1970s John Lennon and Yoko Ono moved from England to New York City, where they became involved in radical politics, hanging out with leftist activists like Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman. The transplanted

couple saw their battles on behalf of women's rights and their anti-Nixon protests as very progressive. Lennon was galvanized and excited by the energy of the movement, but he was also wary of certain elements of the scene in New York. He disliked the rudeness with which some activists dismissed those who disagreed with them, even once chiding Rubin in public: "that's not how you change people's heads." But even more absurdly, Lennon found that even the most radically-minded of the bunch were, at heart, as conservative and anti-change as their so-called antagonists. There was a restaurant that they all used to hang out in called Max's Kansas City. One day the owner announced his plans to change the decor and renovate, and the reaction - from the coolest, most small "l" liberal crowd in the country - was apoplectic: how dare he change the decor? It's always been the way it is! Why touch it? Lennon, bemused by the contradiction, concluded "the underground is just as straight as the overground!"

A newcomer to that particular situation, Lennon was able to see it through a different perspective, from a healthy vantage point. I've been thinking about his observations recently, and how they might connect to those of us teaching English as a second language in British Columbia, as I stand at an interesting professional crossroads: I'm about to start work at my third private language school in Vancouver. Some of my current and past colleagues have racked up more impressive number of schools in their time, but even with my more limited experience, I have observed a curious resistance to even beneficial change at each place I've worked at - resistance that includes administrative practices, technology and even in-the-trenches classroom teaching.

Each of my previous schools had its strengths and weaknesses. While I don't intend to catalogue either and have no particular grievances to make, what strikes me looking back is how both aspects seemed almost arbitrary much of the time: teachers were simply lucky that many strengths were initiated early on, and the weaknesses would rarely be eliminated. Once the wheel - just about any wheel - is set in motion, any fundamental change proved difficult, even if the fixes would have been relatively straightforward and advantageous to all sides.

We often accept the first way we learn something as the best or even only way of doing it, whether it's how we tie our shoes or how administrative matters are handled at language schools. I certainly accepted the first-day student testing and placement procedure at the first Vancouver school I taught at full-time as simply the way it should be done without thinking too critically about its shortcomings. I was aware of those shortcomings every time I participated in the procedure - there was a time-pressure that seemed unnecessary, and I vaguely resented the constant calls to hurry up, but I had nothing else to compare it to. I'd concluded that the cumbersomeness of the process was an inevitable by-product of the hectic nature of intake day. It wasn't until I began working at another similar institution that I realized that inefficient placement and testing was not inevitable. The solutions were so obvious I couldn't believe they had never occurred to me or anyone else working at the previous place. By no means was the new school's system perfect, of course, and even it could have benefited by borrowing at least some elements of the first school's method (few things are all bad). I even was so bold as to offer a suggestion once at the new school, on how to refine the process even further, but I knew, even as the words were leaving my mouth and were politely acknowledged, the suggestion would never be acted on. Once a procedure is in place, budging it is extremely difficult. Procedures tend to be added to, paperwork work increased, supplements added, without fundamental renovation ever really happening. The most rational and logical arguments struggle against the weight of tradition.



This resistance to change can be extended to technology and how it's approached and used in modern language schools. I've sensed a battle against students and their smartphones for a couple of years. Not only is this a battle that cannot be won, it's not even one that should be fought.

Not long ago my most recent place of employment underwent an official audit from a body that governs such matters. The woman leading the audit gathered a focus group of teachers for a question and answer session. She asked us what we would love the school to have if money was not a concern. "Smartboards," I said, "in every classroom." This comment was greeted in two ways: with confusion (several teachers didn't know what smartboards were, and I doubt my garbled description clarified them for anyone) and with protest. I was quite unprepared for the backlash: "a good teacher doesn't need fancy gadgets to teach" was the most heavily sneer-laden comment. My lone supporter responded brilliantly, however, by saying, "yes, but a good teacher doesn't need a whiteboard, either - but it's sure nice to have one, isn't it?" I'm not a technophile at all - I have never owned a mobile phone, and in fact have a rotary phone at home; I collect vinyl and watch super 8 films - and was, frankly, astonished at how people ten or fifteen years younger than me were arguing so passionately against having more high technology in the classroom. My arguments were mainly based on student expectations for up-to-date learning environments, as well as pointing out that smartboards allow increased interaction with students through digitized course books. Many of the best course book series are available in digital versions accessible by smartphone, reducing or even eliminating the need for hardcopies of books students are increasingly hesitant to be saddled with as well as cutting down on the amount of whiteboard photo-taking (which is well on its way to replacing traditional note-taking). Digital course books presented on smartboards and accessible on every mobile device in the class allow schools to take advantage of the ubiquitous student smartphone in positive, productive ways from marketing and even pedagogical perspectives.

Not expecting such a severe reaction to my smartboard wish list I had not been prepared to outline a sound case in its favour and may not have stated my case clearly. Even so, I was surprised at the reactionary attitude of my colleagues. When the scoffing abated,

one of the detractors threw me this bone: "I guess I see what you mean. But a good, old laser projector would be just as good." To me, this suggestion was akin to suggesting someone trade in their brand new iPhone for a 1999 Blackberry.

A stubborn clinging to the past can trickle down to individual classroom practice as well. A personal habit that took years of trial and error to identify and then finally address is as follows: I have tended to equate the time spent on lesson planning with quality. If I stayed up till midnight cutting up bits of paper and preparing a complex lesson involving pictures, sticky tape, handouts, and many steps, I would insist my precious materials be used and appreciated to the maximum, regardless of their effectiveness with actual students. If the materials were a hit the first time, I would lie in wait until the next opportunity. Even if that first time success turned out to be a total fluke and the lesson bombed with each subsequent airing, I would continue dragging it out, believing its triumphant return to be just around the corner. Likewise, if the lesson sank the first time, I would give a sigh and retire the materials for good, not taking the time to revise what I'd done to see if things could be reshaped or improved. It was hit or miss. The self-satisfaction of a lesson that worked would be my own, and the blame for a flop would be placed squarely at the feet of the students. How many times have we heard colleagues in staff rooms say things like, "...whew, they were total zombies today." Were they? How many times was their zombie-like reaction a totally justifiable response to an ill-conceived lesson or an outward student expression of inward teacher confusion produced by unclear aims?

Not everybody likes to take responsibility for a lesson misfire. I'm often reminded of one of my favourite training gambits, the "52 Cards" from Jim Scrivener's *Learning Teaching*. One card that deserves regular review states, "don't be afraid of genuine feedback." If our complex, time-expensive lesson doesn't work, we should accept the students' feedback, direct or otherwise, and stop trying to force it onto them. Of course, students don't always know what's best for their own learning, and sometimes straight-forward hard work is not always pleasant and may produce a zombie-esque response even with the most well-conceived, pedagogically sound lessons. But we also need to be ready to surrender our egos and cut what clearly doesn't work.



But it's not only about what "clearly doesn't work": many of us will maintain the old chestnut that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," a viewpoint that, I believe, combines faith in continuity and comfort in that which is reliable and familiar, along with a pinch of laziness (change takes more effort than non-change). Generally speaking, not fixing that which is unbroken is a perfectly sound position to take and avoids the kind of make-work nobody likes or needs. However, this position can also block us from seeing that while something may not be technically 'broken', it can still be improved.

Is there a way to navigate the issue? Is there a way to learn from each other's strengths while acknowledging and addressing our own shortcomings, whether at the institutional or at the individual teaching practice levels? Reflective teachers will always question their own practice with a view to refining and improving it, and this process can be done on one's own or in tandem with trusted colleagues casually on the job or more formally at gatherings like TEAL conferences. Private language schools, on the other hand, are businesses and see each other as rivals, so I doubt they'd jump at the chance to share their best administrative techniques with each other in a BC TEAL-esque structure. But the people who run these schools should lean in a little more when receiving feedback from the teaching staff: we just may be suggesting a change worth making .

*Curtis Emde has taught in Poland, Latvia, Japan, and the UK. He now lives in Vancouver, where he has been teaching, writing and working on video projects since 2006.*

*Photo by Silmara Albi*



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# On Not ‘Being an ESL Teacher’ All the Time

*by Joel Heng Hartse*

Most of us got into English language teaching because we genuinely enjoy language, culture, learning, and teaching, and many of us began our professional lives not as confident, well-trained language experts, but enthusiastic amateurs excited by the possibilities of our field. Over time, we learn the rules, the jargon, and the boundaries of what it means to be ESL teachers, as well as how to give the corrective feedback students often need in order to improve their proficiency. But what if we gave ourselves a little room to step outside our identities as expert ESL teachers? What if outside (or even, sometimes, inside) the classroom, we took a fresh new look at what “ESL” means, challenged some of the rules we’ve internalized, and tried not “being an ESL teacher” all the time?

I’m thinking of my own tendency to be pedantic outside the classroom when I make this suggestion. I find it difficult sometimes to avoid pointing out any use of “who” when “whom” is called for, or correcting someone’s pronunciation, or making assumptions about people’s language difficulties when I find out where they are from. In short, I’m all too guilty of acting like everyone’s ESL teacher, even when I’m not in the classroom.

Below, then, I suggest some ways to reconsider the E, the S, and the L, of ESL, in ways that might help me (and all of us) be a little more open-minded about language when we’re not marking exams or coaching beginning learners’ pronunciation.

English: The question quickly becomes: which English? Inside the classroom, we can only teach what we know: in my case, a mostly ‘standard’ American English with some special attention to the Canadian features I’ve come to know since moving to Vancouver. But the language certainly extends well beyond the catch-phrases of American sitcoms, or even the standard Canadian English of CBC announcers. Outside our classrooms, there are many unique features of global Englishes that don’t conform to our own linguistic preferences, but are, nonetheless, valid and worthy of respect on their own merit: the unmarked third



person verb of English as a Lingua Franca (“he go,” “she go”), the Singaporean tag question (“isn’t it?”), myriad Indian English vocabulary items (lahk instead of “a hundred thousand”), the lilting but “uneducated” Southern U.S. or Northern U.K. dialects.

Sometimes we are all too beholden to the folk rules of standard English to loosen up outside the classroom. Put a preposition wherever you want! Allow the passive voice to be used! If we expand our understanding of what English is – or Englishes are – outside the classroom, we’ll be better able to appreciate the numerous variations that allow English users to express themselves around the world.

Second: While we’re accustomed to being called ESL teachers, BC TEAL wisely reframes the common acronym as EAL, or English as an Additional Language. Indeed, aside from the fact that English is often a third, fourth, or fifth language for millions of people around the world, it’s also usually part of a complex multilingual repertoire, often from a young age. What’s the “first” language in Kingston, Shanghai, Los Angeles, or Dubai? (Or Vancouver, for that matter?) There’s no one answer to this question. Is it the language spoken at home, at school, on the street, in the temple? Separating “native” from “non-native”, first from second or third language, is never simple – nor, in fact, is it always possible to disentangle the many mixed codes people use to express themselves in a variety of contexts. I remember with some shame the time I told a struggling student, over lunch, that I was impressed with her progress in English even though I knew learning a second language was difficult for her. She



paused, and counted up the village dialects, regional varieties, and foreign languages in her repertoire. “I can speak,” she said modestly, “five languages.”

Language: Not to get too philosophical, but what exactly is “a language”? We know the old adage: it’s a dialect with an army and a navy. Standard languages are not born: they’re made, imposed, regulated – and then they completely change. (Read any Chaucer lately?) There’s no linguistic, scientific, or moral explanation for what turns a way of communicating into a legitimate language, to say nothing of other modes of communication: image, gesture, music, touch. We’ve got these miraculous minds, voice boxes, ears, eyes, and hands, and the possibilities for communication are endless. Rather than abiding by the assumption that people can only speak discrete languages, let’s enjoy the in-betweens: Spanglish and Franglais, annoyingly funny internet image macros, sounds, whistles, drawings, and music, to name a few. All of these are modes of meaning-making, and if we watch and listen carefully, we’ll see a world of ways to communicate beyond language.

I am not, I should emphasize, suggesting that we should let the ideas mentioned above give us license to turn English language classrooms into anarchic free-for-alls, where anything goes, linguistically speaking. What I do think, however, is that an openness to the diversity and possibilities of English, and of multilingualism, and of modes of communication apart from language, will make us better teachers insofar as it will make use more understanding and open-minded about language. While I very much like being an ESL teacher, I’ve also noticed that my identity as a teacher sometimes leads me to assume that whenever a question about language comes up, I will inevitably be the one who is right. When I’m outside the classroom, at least, I’d like to try to change that. Perhaps the best way is by remembering to do the first thing we had to do with language, before we were speakers, before we were teachers: to really listen.

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## Change of Name Announcement

ELSA Net is pleased to announce our new name LISTN = Language Instruction Support and Training Network. As we embrace our new name, we also emerge with a renewed intent and vision to work with and support EAL professionals in the settlement language field. We remain committed to the profession, and would like to acknowledge the daily efforts you as classroom instructors and administrators make on behalf of immigrants and refugees to BC. Thank you all!

Please also be advised that as of April 1, 2014 the ‘ELSA Program’ will transition in name to the ‘LINC Program’ (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada), funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Brenda Lohrenz  
Executive Director, LISTN (formerly ELSA Net)

# WAESOL Conference Report

*by Yalda Ahmadvand*



The Washington State Affiliate of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (WAESOL) conference was held at Highline Community College, Des Moines, Wash. on October 18th and 19th 2013. The conference featuring presentations and workshops including a professional

development pre-conference, brought plenty of academics, instructors, and graduate students under one umbrella to share their expertise and knowledge in language education with others. The theme of the conference was Embracing and Enhancing Multi-dimensional Learning, with a keynote address by Christina Cavage.

In the keynote speech, Cavage elaborated on 'Blended Learning', which she believed is a thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experiences. The other terms that are used for blended learning are brick and click, tailored learning, and web-enhanced. According to this speech, the classroom needs to get back to being a social, cooperative, learning environment and this can happen using today's tools to lecture, watch, read interactively, and even collaborate. When this happens, students become more responsible for their own learning, which is what is aimed at in most ESL classes.

Then the discussion proceeded to what blended learning means for ESL students, and how they benefit from it. It is believed that blended learning extends the learning process because it extends the time learners are exposed to content; more importantly, when it is effectively employed, learners take an active role because of its more engaging and motivating content. Furthermore, it paves way for better use of classroom time and helps learners to organize their knowledge and become more autonomous. Cavage referenced a Department of Education 2009 study that found that students in a blended learning course performed significantly better than those in an online or face-to-face course.

Blended Learning appeals to a wide variety of learning styles, takes a multi-modal approach to teaching, and can be perfectly employed when an ESL professional knows its role. It can be used as a tutor by providing instruction, feedback, and testing; it can be used as a tool because students can have access to written, audio, video, and other visual materials relevant to language; it can be used as a medium for interpersonal communication, distance learning, and participation. It provides an opportunity for the teachers to bridge experiences and expectations and to be better informed. Above all it offers flexibility. At the end, the message of this speech was "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand."

At the WAESOL Conference I had a chance to present my paper as well. My presentation was about the "Benefits of Using Digital Storytelling in ESL Classrooms."

Digital storytelling is described by some as a powerful tool for self-expression and it has become a powerful instructional tool for both students and language education. The use of digital storytelling in the classroom has become popular as it has a strong positive effect on learning and teaching. In this presentation, I explained the meaning of digital storytelling and described how it can be used to as an instructional aid in ESL classrooms. I also added what the important components of digital storytelling are, and how students who learn to create their own digital storytelling improve their language learning skills. In addition, I explained the tools that can be used to support the educational use of digital storytelling, and discussed the challenges that educators must take into consideration before applying digital storytelling in an ESL classroom.

*Yalda Ahmadvand began her ESL teaching career in 1998, and she has been teaching ELSA, ESL, EAP, and TESOL. She has a Master's of Applied Linguistics and TESOL from the University of Leicester, England. Her special interest is Educational Technology. She is TESL Canada certified, standard three and currently she holds the position of Senior Educator Administrator and works as a TESOL instructor.*