English Language Learning Magazine

CONTACT

August 2013

Minority group experiences

- Aboriginal children, ESL, and the residential schools
- Framing LGBTQ issues

- Connectionism: Is this how language learning works?
- What the future holds for non-credit ESL in Ontario
- In the classroom: Folktales & TED talks

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TESL Ontario
CONNECTION • COMMUNITY • EMPOWERMENT

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September 13–15	Second World Congress in Extensive Reading http://www.er-korea-2013.org/
September 21	TESL Windsor's Fall Workshop http://www.teslwindsor.com/events.html
September 26	TESL North York's Fall Conference & AGM http://www.teslontario.net/teslnyy/events.htm
October 3–5	The 5th Biennial International Conference on Task-based Language Teaching http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/tblt2013/
October 5	International World Teachers' Day
October 20-26	ESL Week
October 23–25	Educational Computing Organization of Ontario Conference http://bringittogether.ca/
October 24–26	TESL Ontario' 41st Annual Conference: "Merging and Emerging Pathways through Language" http://teslontario.net/conference
October 25–28	JALT's 39th Annual International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning http://jalt.org/conference
November 1–2	Ontario Modern Language Teachers Association Fall Conference http://www.omlta.org/upcoming-events/fall-conference-2013/
November 2	People for Education; Conference http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/events-workshops/come-to-our-conference/
November 22–24	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages; ACTFL Annual Convention and World Language Expo https://www.actfl.org/convention-expo/
November 21	TESL Peel-Halton-Etobicoke's Fall AGM & Event http://www.teslontario.net/phe/events.html

Please, contact us (editor@teslontario.org) to let us know about upcoming events.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Two recent *New York Times* essays, both by doctors, have uncomfortably probed their professional interactions. Reading each was like biting down hard on a sore tooth: a startling recognition followed by a lingering ache.

The first article was about doctors badmouthing other doctors. "Shifting blame, doctors are taught, demoralizes other clinicians, undermines patient trust and compromises patient outcomes," and yet, the article goes on to say, doctors commonly do just that. Again, I thought about my position as a teacher. How often have I disparaged other teachers? We've likely all heard about teachers with some ideas and practices we find very strange, if not harmful. And when students say, "but my previous teacher said..." it's hard not to get defensive. But usually the best response is restraint, a willingness to find out more, and offers of support and assistance. I hope I have lived up to that sentiment most of the time, but I know I that there are also times I haven't.

The second told the story of Dr. Peter Attia and his relationship with a former patient, a woman who came to him in the emergency room requiring an amputation for an ulcer on her foot, a complication of type-2 diabetes. Attia looked at the obese woman and thought to himself that she had brought this on herself. If only she had diligently followed guidelines about eating and exercise, she would not be in this terrible situation, he thought. Years later, he realized how inappropriate this had been and how much more she needed his empathy than his judgment.

The parallels with teachers and our students are stark. How often I have judged my students, I hesitate to guess. What barriers do they face that I'm unaware of? When I succeed where they fail, how much of that is luck and privilege? When they succeed where I haven't tried, how often do I notice?

I always appreciate finding writing like this that makes me question what I'm doing, and while I don't wish you a tooth ache, I hope that some of the articles in the current issue of *Contact* will linger with you well past their reading, the way these essays have stuck with me. I have enjoyed putting together this issue and I look forward your feedback. As always, we welcome and, indeed, depend on your contributions.

Brett Reynolds
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Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

CONTACT

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Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

LANGUAGE TEACHING

Fran Marshall (1939 – 2013)

Fran Marshall, a well known and beloved TESL/ESL professional, passed away this last June. In the next issue of *Contact*, a tribute section has been set aside in memory of the dedication and work that Fran gave to our profession.

PTCT Training Fee Reimbursement Application Available Now

TESL Ontario has received funding approval from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)-Ontario Region for PTCT training fee reimbursement.

Instructors who work full time or part time for CIC-funded programs (LINC, ELT, and OSLT) in Ontario, including those who are currently on maternity leave but will be returning to their teaching positions in CIC-funded programs in Ontario, are eligible for PTCT training fee reimbursement application.

Eligible instructors may visit the PTCT Fee Reimbursement Site at http://ptct.teslontario.org/ to open an account, select a PTCT course, and book a reimbursable seat while funding is available.

For more information about approved PTCT courses, please visit the TESL Ontario website at http://www.teslontario.net/PTCT-courses or contact the PTCT providers directly.

Skills for Change launches "Seniors Mentoring Entrepreneurs" program

Skills for Change launched the first module of its new mentoring initiative for aspiring entrepreneurs, the Seniors Mentoring Entrepreneurs program. SME aims to increase the success rate of start-up entrepreneurs by equipping them with knowledge and expertise they need to make right business decisions.

Read more at *Prepare for Canada*

POLITICS AND IMMIGRATION

Changing Face of Wealth Study: Diversity Dominant Among Affluent in Ontario

According to a study released today by BMO Harris Private Banking, the high-net worth segment in Ontario (defined as those with investible assets of $1 million or more) are diverse and well-educated. The study is the first in a series over the next year that will examine trends among the wealthy.

The inaugural study found that 45 per cent of high-net worth Ontarians were either born outside of Canada or are first generation Canadians (with at least one parent born outside the country).

Read more at BMO

More people failing revamped citizenship tests

An increasing number of landed immigrants are struggling to complete the final stage before becoming citizens: passing the citizenship exam.

The failure rates have increased significantly since Citizenship and Immigration Canada introduced new and harder tests last year on March 28 and July 23.

Read more at *CBC News*

Universities worried about damage to Canada's reputation

The unprecedented job action Monday by Canada's striking diplomats sparked recriminations in the tourism sector as an estimated 150 visa officers walked off the job in 15 foreign missions.

Read more at *Maclean's*

The new underclass

Melanie Cullins's degree in applied linguistics was the gold standard of ESL qualifications. But she graduated in the thick of the 2008 financial meltdown, and the entry-level position she imagined would launch her career never materialized. Governments cut back on language transition programs. Resumés piled up in recruitment offices. Her calls to program directors went unanswered. "For me, that was a huge blow," she says. "I had almost perfect performance reviews from my practicums, but I couldn't even get an interview. You start to wonder: what's wrong with me?"

Read more at *Maclean's*

Chris Alexander has 'big shoes to fill' as Immigration Minister

Mr. Alexander, 44 and elected to the House of Commons for the first time slightly more than two years ago, vaulted into a mid-level cabinet position as Immigration Minister in Mr. Harper's July 15 shuffle.

Read more at *The Globe and Mail*

Jason Kenney to maintain hold on ethnic file despite new job, in move to flank Trudeau in next election

Jason Kenney, Canada's new Minister of Employment and Social Development, will hang on to the multiculturalism file, Postmedia News has learned.

The long-time citizenship and immigration minister got a brand new portfolio Monday focused on jobs and the economy, but senior officials say Tim Uppal, the new minister of state for multiculturalism will report to Kenney, not Chris Alexander, the new minister of immigration whose department he actually falls under.

Read more at *The National Post*

Undocumented immigrants: Toronto may be a 'sanctuary city,' but agencies still ask about status

Almost half of Toronto's community agencies ask for clients' immigration status, and 30 per cent say they would share the information with police and immigration officials.

Those statistics are from a new city-funded report, the first ever to survey community service agencies about their policies on serving "non-status residents" — a growing population of migrants who are in Canada without immigration status.

Read more at *The Toronto Star*

LANGUAGE NEWS

Picking Up a Second Language Is Predicted by Ability to Learn Patterns

Some research suggests that learning a second language draws on capacities that are language-specific, while other research suggests that it reflects a more general capacity for learning patterns. According to psychological scientist and lead researcher Ram Frost of Hebrew University, the data from the new study clearly point to the latter:

"These new results suggest that learning a second language is determined to a large extent by an individual ability that is not at all linguistic," says Frost.

Read more at the Association for Psychological Science

How Do You Say *Shaolin* in Sign Language?

When Killer Mike took the stage last week at the Bonnaroo music festival, he spotted amid the crowd a white woman rapping along to his lyrics, shaking her body and contorting her face to the beat. The Atlanta rapper has his share of white, female fans, but he quickly realized this woman was different: Holly Maniatty wasn't, in fact, a fan, but a sign language interpreter.

Read more at *Slate*

Why Do Americans and Brits Have Different Accents?

In 1776, whether you were declaring America independent from the crown or swearing your loyalty to King George III, your pronunciation would have been much the same. At that time, American and British accents hadn't yet diverged. What's surprising, though, is that Hollywood costume dramas get it all wrong: The Patriots and the Redcoats spoke with accents that were much closer to the contemporary American accent than to the Queen's English.

It is the standard British accent that has drastically changed in the past two centuries, while the typical American accent has changed only subtly.

Read more at *Live Science*

Why foreign language education is important at every age

People used to think that exposure to two languages was bad for children. It would cause children's language skills to develop more slowly and stunt their vocabulary growth. Now we know that the opposite is true. Bilingual children, for example, know as many words as monolingual children, but they know some of them in each language. Their brains are more limber, too, and they have more practice at executive-function tasks. Here's a breakdown of how foreign language education is important at every age.

Read more at *Bilinguish*

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN ONTARIO:

The Early Aboriginal Experience in 19th Century Residential Schools

By John Steckley, Humber College

Today when we think of teaching English as a Second Language in Ontario, we think in terms of teaching immigrants new to the province. But there is a long history of teaching English as a Second Language to people who are old to the province: 11,000-years-plus old.

The schools that first taught English as a Second Language to Aboriginal people were established in the first half of the 19th century. Their students spoke one of nine Aboriginal languages, all of which still have speakers today, although in some cases there are very few left. These languages belong to two different language families: Algonquian and Iroquoian (see figure 1, and). The Algonquian languages are Ojibwe, Cree and Lenni Lenape (Delaware). Algonquian loanwords in English include caribou, chipmunk, moose, pecan, squash, totem, wigwam, and woodchuck, as well as many place names in the province, including Etobicoke, Nottawasaga, and Oshawa. The Iroquoian languages are Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora, all spoken on the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford in southwestern Ontario. Place names such as Toronto, Ontario, Niagara and Erie reflect the province's Iroquoian heritage.

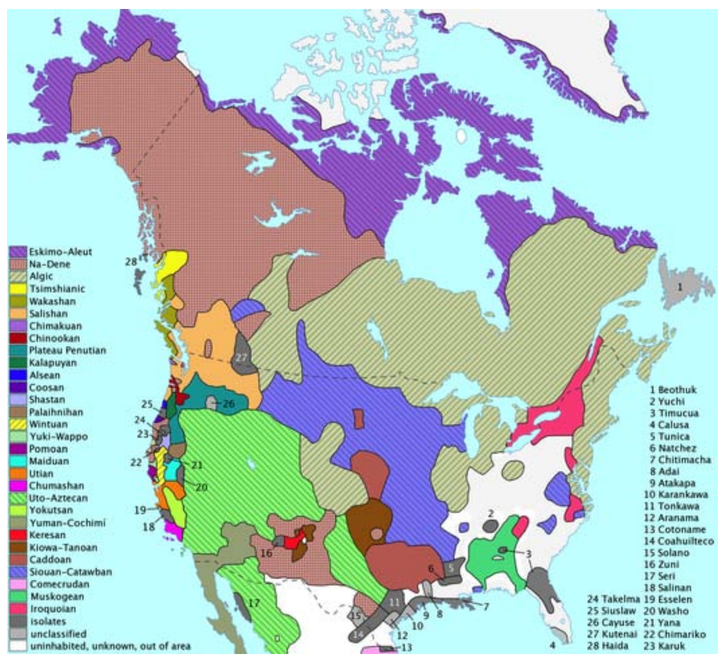

Figure 1. distribution of North American language families north of Mexico. CC-by-2.0 by ish ishwar from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Langs_N.Amer.png

Teaching English to the Aboriginal peoples of Ontario involved special challenges. They did not have a writing tradition. Compared to English, these languages have many more verbs than nouns, and have on average longer words, with fewer words in each sentence. Algonquian languages have mandatory noun classes of animate (usually referring to elements that are alive) and inanimate (usually referring to elements that are not alive). Verbs have mandatory suffixes reflecting the appropriate noun class. While there are no sounds in these languages that would seem strange to English teachers, Iroquoian languages had a full complement of nasal vowels, but lacked the labials /p/, /b/, /f/, /v/, and /m/. And some concepts would be new and would require a lot of explaining. None of these languages had concepts of innocence and guilt. And in none of these languages did people swear. That was what English was for!

The schools in which the Aboriginal children were taught were in some senses like other schools in the province, but were otherwise unique. William Lyon Mackenzie, writer, mayor of Toronto and rebel, described an Aboriginal one-room school house that stood beside the Credit River west of Toronto as follows. The building had:

> tiers of raised benches in the rear; on one division of which sit the girls, and the boys on the other. There are also desks and slates for ciphering and copy books and copper-plate lines for those who write. The Bibles and Testaments are chiefly those of the London Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge… Among the school-furniture, are a handsome map of the world… attractive alphabets on pasteboard; regular figures illustrative of geometry. … The walls of the school are adorned with good moral maxims… [including] *No blankets to be worn in school* [emphasis added]. (As cited in Fairly, 1960, p. 46)

The first schools used to teach English to the Aboriginal people of Ontario were run by churches: Methodist, Anglican and Catholic. The Methodists had an aggressive conversion mission, which had the positive result of incorporating a number of the natural leaders of the people they worked with, the Anishinabe (known in English as Algonquin, Chippewa, Mississauga and Ojibwa). One of their success stories as an English student was George Copway (Gaagigegaabaw "He Stands Forever"), who in 1847 published the first book every written by a Canadian Aboriginal person, the autobiographical *The Life, History and Travels of Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh*, which quickly became a best seller.

Another leading Anishinabe who learned English in a Methodist school was the Reverend Peter Jones, known in his native Ojibwe language as Kahkewaquonaby ("Sacred Feathers") was heavily committed to the formal education of his people:

> I feel very anxious to see an institute of this kind established among us, for I am fully persuaded that our children will never be what they ought to be until they are taught to work and learn useful trades, as well as to learn to read and write. (As cited in MacLean, 2005, p. 98)

In 1847, Egerton Ryerson, who started his career as a Methodist missionary teaching Aboriginal students, a foundational figure in the development of education in Ontario, after whom a university in Toronto is named, declared his plans for Aboriginal education. He clearly articulated the assimilation goals of all residential schools that were to follow. Teaching English and other subjects was directed at ridding the students of their Aboriginal heritage and acquiring a new, "civilized" culture:

> There is a need to raise the Indians to the level of the whites…and take control of land out of Indians' hands. The Indian must remain under the control of the

> Federal crown rather than provincial authority, that efforts to Christianize the Indians and settle them in communities be continued… that schools, preferable manual labour ones, be established under the guidance of missionaries. … Their education must consist not merely training of the mind, but of a weaning from the habits and feelings of their ancestors, and the acquirements of the language, art and customs of civilized life. (As cited in Steckley & Letts, 2010, p. 239)

The Schools

Alnwick Residential School

In southern Ontario the Methodists were the most aggressive in developing schools where English could be taught to Aboriginal people. One of their most successful institutions was the Alnwick Residential School. Initially run by the Reverend William Case, it began in 1828, on Grape Island, in the Bay of Quinte, at the eastern end of Lake Ontario, as a small learning establishment with four girls aged 10 to 14. It was thought that they would provide teachers for similar establishments across Ojibwa country. The school moved to Alderville in the Rice Lake area in 1837, with funding provided by the annuity payments (annual payments for land surrendered in treaties), and by butter and cheese made and sold by the students.

In 1853, James Musgrove remarked on the success of students in the difficult task of memorizing and being able to recite verses from the Bible:

> Thousands of verses have been recited. Henry Jones, from Owen Sound, recited between 2 and 3,000 alone. Others have approximated Henry, and done admirably, but none have been able to commit so many verses and to recite them so accurately. (As cited in MacLean, 2005, p. 116)

It should be remembered that these people came from an oral tradition in which stories remembered and religious text were passed down orally. This English teaching strategy was playing to the traditional strength of the people's language experience.

The school closed in 1966.

Mount Elgin Industrial Institute

Affiliated with the Alnwick school was the Mount Elgin Industrial Institute in southwestern Ontario near London. Founded in 1851, it was funded largely by 25% of the annuity payments from surrounding First Nations and was run by the Wesleyan Methodist Society. With the exception of four years in the 1860s, it ran continually from 1851 to 1946, when the buildings were condemned and the school was shut down. English was far down the list of subjects taught, as the students were taught skills that enabled the farm attached to the school to successfully function financially. In 1851, students had a schedule running from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. They daily spent some 7.5 hours in physical labour, the boys learning and working at carpentry, shoemaking, blacksmithing and wheelwright work, the girls were assigned tasks sewing, spinning, knitting, weaving and tailoring. Only 5.5 hours were spent in the classroom (MacLean, 2005, p. 114; figure 2 is a photo of the classroom). Students were strapped for speaking their native language, which could be Ojibwe, Delaware or Oneida, all with speakers in the area. As with all such religiously run institutes, the main body of English teaching related to the Bible and religious works.

Figure 2. Students in class the Mount Elgin Institute, circa 1909. Retrieved from http://thechildrenremembered.ca/photos/?id=1608&school=Mount%20Elgin

In 1854, Samuel Rose commented on the "progress" in English in the school (shown in figure 3):

> Over 107 have been received since its commencement... sixty of these have been taught reading, writing, geography and arithmetic, and 13 have made some considerable advancement in to them, the difficult study of English grammar, while the remainder, owing to the limited amount of time spent in the institute, have not advanced beyond the primer. (As cited in MacLean, 2005, p. 114)

Figure 3. Boys lined up at the Mount Elgin Institute, circa 1909. Retrieved from http://thechildrenremembered.ca/photos/?id=1636&school=Mount%20Elgin

Mohawk Institute Residential School

So far, I have not mentioned the "dark side" of residential schools, which was a consistent part of these educational institutions in Ontario as in the rest of Canada. This black mark on Canadian history is perhaps best illustrated by another school in southern Ontario, the Mohawk Institute Residential School, beside the Six Nations Reserve. It was run by the Anglican Church.

It was the first and longest running residential school, established in 1831, and closed in 1969. The main building still stands as part of the Woodland Cultural Centre. My own memory of that building is of sitting outside on a park bench reading a biography of the Onondaga athlete, Tom Longboat (1887–1949), Canada's most accomplished long distance runner of the first half of the 20th century. I was reading about how he hated the school and, appropriate for his life's career, ran away from it. I looked up at the building, imagining it through a child's eye, and felt intimated by the sheer institutional bleakness of what I saw (see figure 4).

Figure 4. The Mohawk Institute Residential School. Retrieved from http://archives.algomau.ca/drupal6/sites/archives.algomau.ca/files/2010-007_001_102.jpg

Another famous Six Nations individual, E. Pauline Johnson (1861–1913), a Mohawk writer whose poem, “The Song My Paddle Sings” was memorized by generations of Canadian school children, could have been a student in the Mohawk Institute Residential School, but fortunately for her she was “sickly”. She was home-schooled by a series of governesses (her family was well-to-do) and was taught the finer points of the language that way.

The school was called “Mush Hole” by the inmates, speaking of the poor quality and general lack of food served there. In 2011, archaeologists uncovered the bones of some children who had attended the school. This school, like most of the others, had a high death rate, and children were often buried anonymously, and doubtless unceremoniously, the victims of disease and probable abuse.

Conclusion

The first schools teaching English as a Second Language to Aboriginal children, the ones discussed in this short article, probably were quite positive at the beginning, being mostly small, and some of the leaders of the people were engaged in their children’s learning. Historically important Canadian educators were involved. James Evans (1801–1846), for example, who began as a missionary in 1827 to the Rice Lake Anishinabe first developed a syllabic writing system for their language that was adapted for use by the Cree and the Inuit. It made the former people one of the most literate groups in Canada by the late 19th century. But over time, the initial enthusiasm waned, the quality of the educators and the

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education diminished sharply as funding became more and more inadequate. In 1910, the curriculum was deliberately "dumbed down" by the Minister of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott. Tuberculosis ravaged the schools, so death became almost as common in some institutions as graduation. Abuse became rampant, a people greatly suffered and is suffering.

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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").

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

ON THE VALUE OF CONNECTIONISM TO SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

By Robert N. Nelson, Jr., The University of Alabama

Connectionism is an approach to the study of human learning and memory that involves simulating the activity of networks of neurons on a computer. These simulated networks share many of the properties and abilities of biological neural networks. Connectionism has diverged, over the years, into two overlapping pursuits. One exploits the properties of these networks to achieve practical goals that are beyond the power of standard computers. The other uses these networks to explore the properties of the brain and its dynamics at the micro-level.

Two pioneers of the use of connectionist networks to achieve practical goals (such as recognizing handwritten digits or determining a person's credit worthiness) are the French scientist Yann LeCun and the University of Toronto's Geoff Hinton. Because these networks are used to solve practical problems, they use processes not observed in low-level brain dynamics. However, they are often used, with great success, to explore the higher-level statistical properties of first and second language learning.

Other researchers have focused on developing neural networks that use only the properties of biological networks. Through the 1970's, 80's, and 90's, Stephen Grossberg and Gail Carpenter in the USA and Teuvo Kohonen in Finland developed biologically realistic models that explored the micro-dynamics of human learning, memory, and behavior. There have been some more recent developments in biologically realistic neural networks (simulate spiking frequencies and the release and reuptake of specific neurotransmitters), but most of what I will discuss in this article arises from Grossberg and Carpenter (1987), because this work relates the phenomena we find in language learning to the structure and dynamics of the neural networks that we find in the our brains.

Connectionism and the naturalness of the learning experience

With this brief overview out of the way, the rest of this article will focus on answering the question implicit in the title: why should language learners and teachers care about computer simulations of the brain? That is, what value can we derive from this work? What I hope to do is to answer these questions by using the connectionist perspective to naturalize the problems that learners face. That is, I hope that I can show that many of the

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difficulties language learners encounter arise naturally from basic cognitive processes that we use all day, everyday. The best way to begin, then, is with some concrete scenarios.

Scenario 1:

I hope I am not the only person who has done this: I was walking along the sidewalk with my daughter when I spied a new coin. A quarter, I thought. As I bent down to pick it up, I realized it was a bottle cap—smashed flat and made shiny by the feet of less oblivious pedestrians. Slightly embarrassed, and marginally wiser, I moved on. While you probably have better eyes (and, hopefully, a less great need of quarters), I am sure something similar has happened to you. I am sure of this because this is exactly the kind of thing that we are evolved to do.

Scenario 2:

Here is another example of the same kind of cognitive act: Some years ago, my wife was listening to a song by the Columbian singer Jaunes. The titular refrain of the song was "*a dios le pido*", or "*to god, I ask*". But I was not a good Spanish speaker (still not), so I heard *a dios* ("to god") as one of the few Spanish words that I knew: *adios* (i.e., goodbye). The closest thing in my memory to the string of sounds in the verb phrase *le pido* was the Roman family name Lepidus (which, for Imperial consuls, was the onomatological equivalent of a red shirt in *Star Trek*). So I asked: "who is Lepido and why are they going to kill him?" This question seemed quite natural to me given the data: someone saying goodbye to someone whose name is remarkable for being shared by many who met an early and brutal end. Of course, it struck her as strange in the extreme (I suppose I am lucky that I am still married).

Scenario 3:

Recently, I entered a large public market in Lima, Peru. As I entered, I recalled, very vividly, a time I entered a similar market in Ho Chi Minh City, twenty years earlier. This was the first time I had thought about that market in many years. However, the impression was so strong that in the ambient language of this Peruvian market, I heard some Vietnamese words.

In each of these scenarios are issues that we, as language learners and language teachers, encounter everyday: There was a stimulus (that is, some characteristic of the environment was registered by a sensory surface). This stimulus produced a perception. This perception occurred when my brain formed hypotheses about the things in the outside world that generating the stimulus, and then presented one of those hypotheses to my consciousness. In the scenarios above, the hypotheses were wrong. It is the fact that they were wrong that makes them interesting.

It is valuable to decompose these errant experiences into insights into the structure and dynamics of the underlying neural system. The first insight is that perception is not veridical: the image of the coin that emerged in my mind's eye was not created completely, or even mostly, by optical sensation—it was created by my memory trying to explain incomplete optical data. This tells us that the underlying neural networks are not just transducing external stimuli into neural signals, but that each and every perception is a creative combination of memory and stimulus.

The second is that these (and all) perceptions depend on the ability of our memory to constantly generate multiple, parallel hypotheses for the data collected by our senses. Carpenter and Grossberg call these *expectancies*, because they are things that we expect to perceive, given a particular situation. Expectancies are automatically activated by sensory data, and they are active to the degree that they match incoming sensory data. For example, encountering a shiny disc on a sidewalk automatically activates the memory for coin because a coin is the most typical kind of shiny disc that we expect to find on a sidewalk.

The third insight is that the agreement of an expectancy and a pattern of perceptual data captures our attention: I *noticed* the putative coin and the refrain of the song. This process is also automatic, and it is the reason you cannot *not* read a word. That is, for fluent readers of a language, an encounter with a written word in that language will automatically produce recognition of its meaning—you cannot choose to not understand a word you have read. Advertisers know this and use it against you. The final insight we need to consider is that memory is associative. The recall of one memory (entering a public space) often leads to the recall of others (hearing the wrong language). These chained instances of memory recall take place in networks, wherein memories are embedded and interlinked.

The structure and dynamics of perception

We can take these insights and sketch a rough picture of how they are enacted in a connectionist system. The following figures show a simple connectionist network at three points in the cycle of recognizing a stimulus pattern.

The most salient feature of the network in figure 1 is that it consists of two layers of circular nodes (let's call these cells). This structure reflects the layered, or laminar, structure of the human cortex. Each cell in these layers can represent a single neuron, or a smaller clump of interacting neurons (as shown in the inset) that behave in concert. The layer at the bottom of the network contains sensory cells (the stimulus input layer) and the top layer contains cells that index memories. This does not mean that these cells contain memories. Memories are distributed across the connections that run between the layers. This is a very important point: the cells do not have semantic content—memory and meaning are distributed throughout the connection matrix of the network.

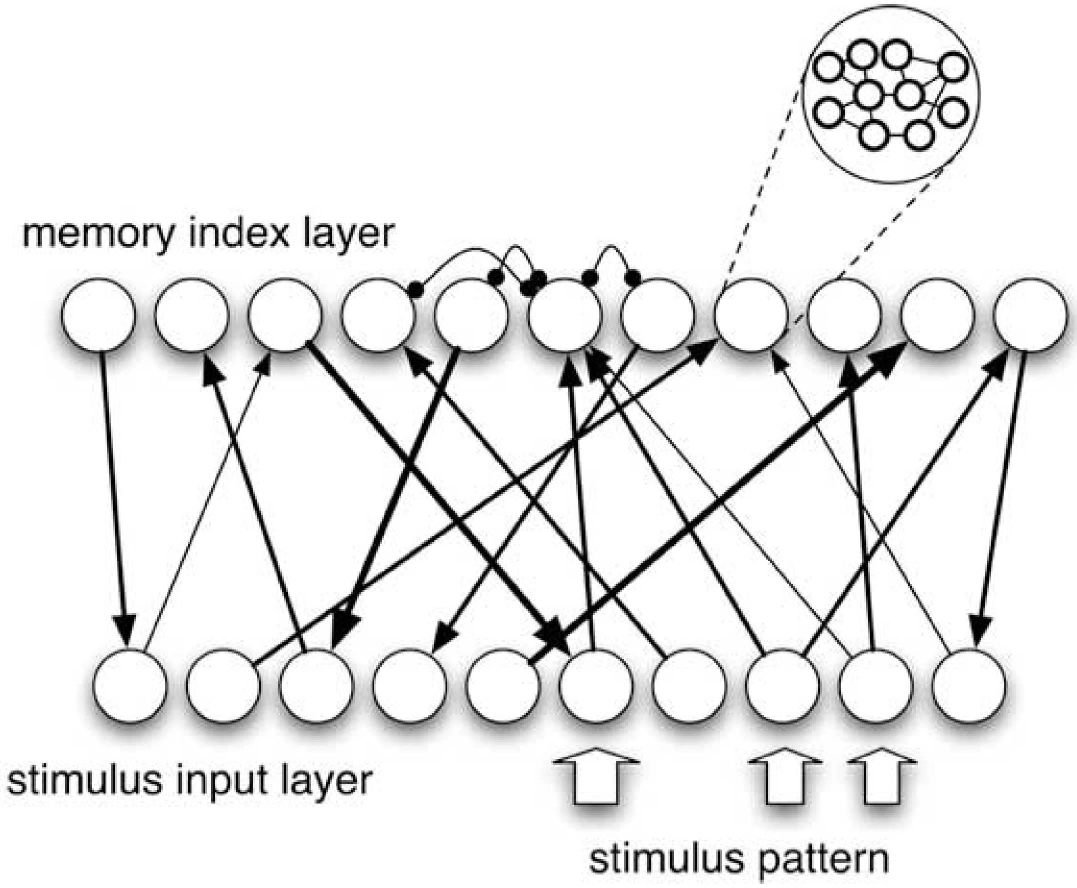

Figure 1. A connectionist network showing a stimulus input layer and a memory index layer of circular nodes or cells, with arrows of various weights representing excitatory connection strength and direction and lines with filled circles representing inhibitory connections. The inset shows that the nodes can represent a single neuron or a group of neurons.

Figure 1 shows that input is *selective*, exciting some cells more strongly than others and some not at all. This is shown by the arrows coming from the stimulus pattern to some (but not all) of the cells in the stimulus input layer. This reflects the fact that our own sensory nerve endings are restricted either in the kind or in the range of stimuli that they can respond to. Note that the connections that run between the layers end in arrows. This means that these are excitatory connections, with excitation flowing in the direction of the arrow. These connections represent the synaptic connections between neurons, and they run from the bottom to the top and from the top to the bottom. Some of the connections are stronger than others. Stronger connections are more efficient at transferring excitation from the sensory cells to the memory cells. Learning is the process of modifying the strength of these connections, known as their "weight".

The top-down connections—those from the memory index layer (or simply the memory layer) to the stimulus input layer—are especially important. These connections encode the expectancies of the network. That is, when these top-down connections are present, we have a greater readiness to perceive the events or objects encoded in those connections: we are biased toward perceiving these events and objects. If the top-down connections are not present, they must be established through learning. However, when they are present, they drive perception. That is, most of what we perceive in the world are memories that are encoded in top-down connection arrays. This arrangement works very well in “stationary” environments (i.e., those that do not change significantly over time), as it allows us to instantaneously recognize simple objects (“is that a fork or a spoon?” is a question we seldom ask ourselves) and frees up the brain for higher-level problem solving (“which fork is for the salad?” is a question we often ask ourselves).

Note that there are connections between the cells of the memory layer. While figure 1 shows only a few of these, they run between each cell in the layer. These connections stay within the layer; all have the same weight, and terminate in filled circles. These circles mean that these connections are inhibitory. That is, the cells in this layer are constantly trying to dampen each other’s level of excitation.

Figure 2 shows a stimulus pattern causing excitation in the stimulus input layer of cells. The degree of excitation is shown as a darker gray. The cells of this layer transmit their excitation to the cells in the memory layer through the excitatory connections that run between the levels. Several memory-layer cells receive this excitation, some more than others. Here is the critical part: the amount of activation each memory-layer cell receives depends on the degree that the connections between that cell and the excited input cells are similar. That is how these connections function as memory; they match the stimulus coming from the outside world.

These memory-layer cells compete against each other by inhibiting each other’s level of activation. This inhibition is delivered through connections that run within the layer (in figure 2 these connections are indicated by lines terminating in circles). Each memory-layer cell that is excited is a *hypothesis* about the nature of the stimulus that is exciting the cells in the input layer. Only one hypothesis can win, but we are not guaranteed that it is the “correct” hypothesis. For example, given the stimulus input, “quarter” might be the best match for shiny metal disc on the ground. But if the perceiver continues to interact with the stimulus (e.g., by getting closer, squinting, picking it up, etc.), she may change the input so that another hypothesis is able to win. This is a very important point because it shows where in this process of perception a teacher’s intervention is most likely to lead to better outcomes.

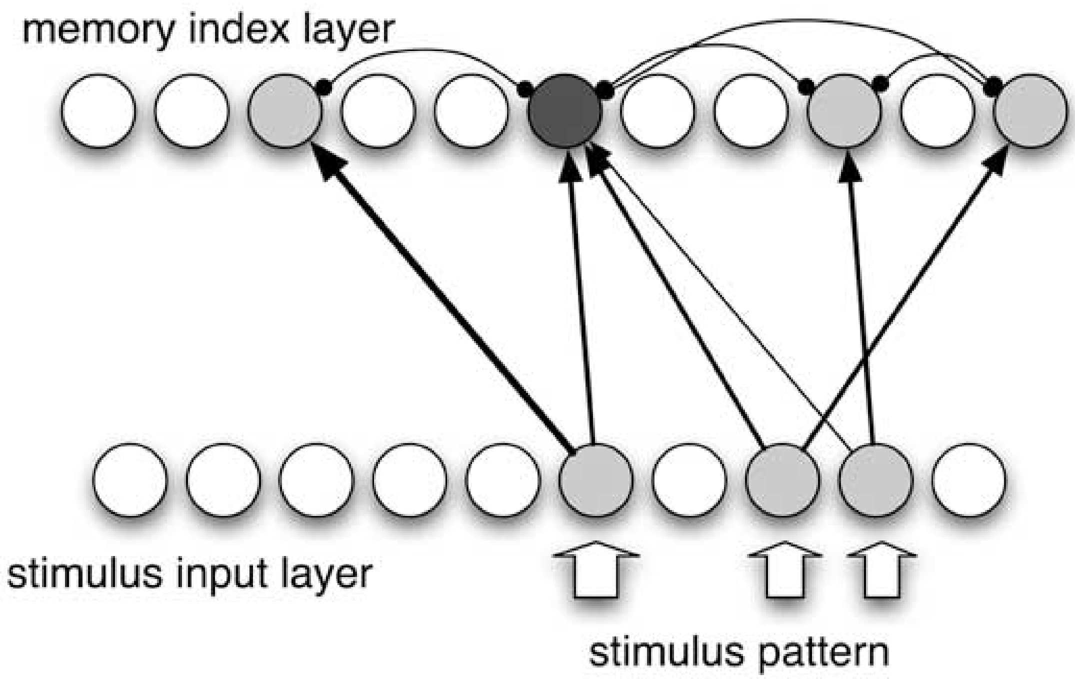

Figure 2. A connectionist network showing how a particular stimulus, combined with various excitatory and inhibitory connections, leads to activation in the memory layer. This activation is an initial hypothesis about the nature of the stimulus.

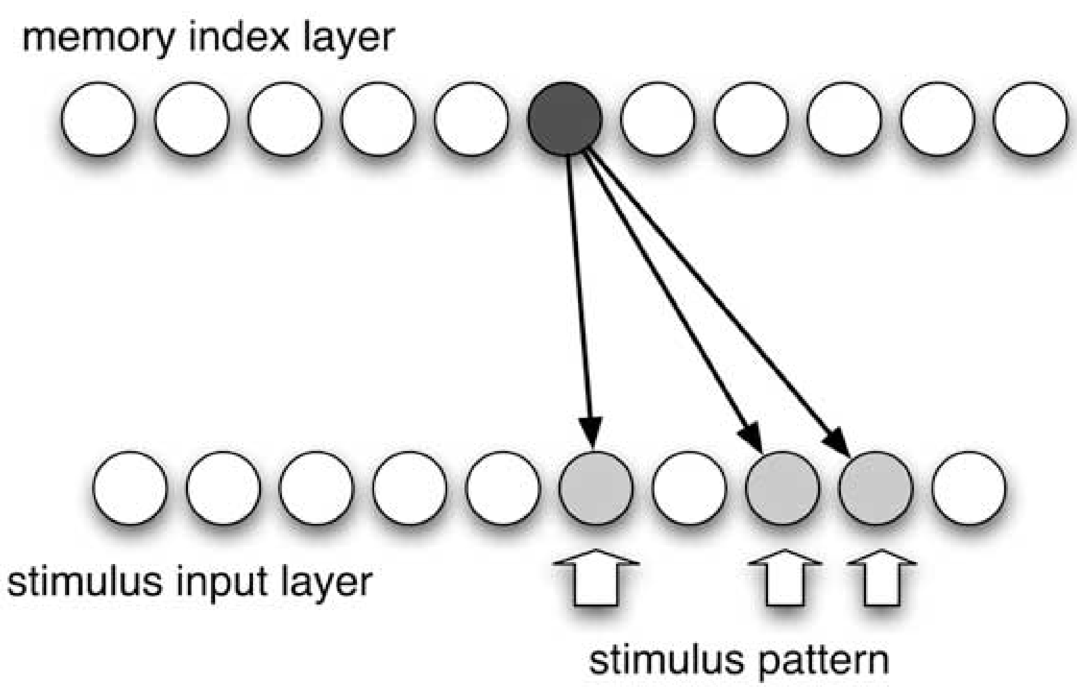

Figure 3. A connectionist network showing a clear winning hypothesis in the memory layer with excitatory signals now going from the memory layer back down to the stimulus input layer.

With the network dynamics in mind, we can return to the infidelities of perception exemplified in the scenarios, above. There are at least three things can lead to these kind of perceptual mistakes. The first, as in the coin example, occurs when the sensory data are sparse or degraded (in fact, I have bad eyes). The second occurs when the right expectancy does not exist. This happened with the Jaunes song. The third occurs when the context of memory recall is so strong that it literally overwhelms the sensory data and creates, in essence, a hallucination. My perception of Vietnamese words in a Peruvian market was driven by similarities in the transition from an outdoor area of bright sunlight to an indoor area of dim, incandescent light; from the smell of diesel exhaust the sound of two-stroke engines to the smell of fresh foods and the sound of people haggling in small markets.

Taken together, these things show that we are most accurate when we think of the world that we perceive as a settlement negotiated between our memory and our senses. For this reason, it sometimes said that perception is *theory-laden*: it contains as much information from the perceiver as it does from the perceived. It is this, more accurate conception of the process of perception, and its consequences, that we are able to explore with connectionist models.

Connectionism and second language perception

Having addressed some of the ways that the structure and dynamics of some connectionist networks relate to the structure and dynamics of perception, we are in a position to consider a connectionist approach to one of the most notorious problems in English language teaching: the Japanese R/L problem.

First, some acoustic phonetics (skip this if you know what a formant is): Human speech sounds, and especially vowels, are transmitted through the air as overlapping patterns of vibration. Each of these patterns has a distinctive hertz range (the distance from peak to peak in the wave). Some of these patterns have more energy than others, and when we perceive vowels and semi-vowels (like L and R), the wavelengths that have the most energy are the ones we use to discriminate these sounds. Typically, there are four formants. All languages use the first (F1) and second (F2) to discriminate between vowels. English is a rather unusual language in that it also uses the second (F2) and third (F3) formants together to distinguish between the sounds L and R.

Gautam Vallabha and James McClelland (2007) used a connectionist model much like the one we have outlined above to explore why learning the English L-R contrast is difficult for Japanese speakers. They also simulated the pedagogical interventions that are known to ameliorate the learning of the distinction. Figure 4 shows a network learning responding to the formants (F2 and F3) of the L sound and R sound in English. This network represents a native English speaker.

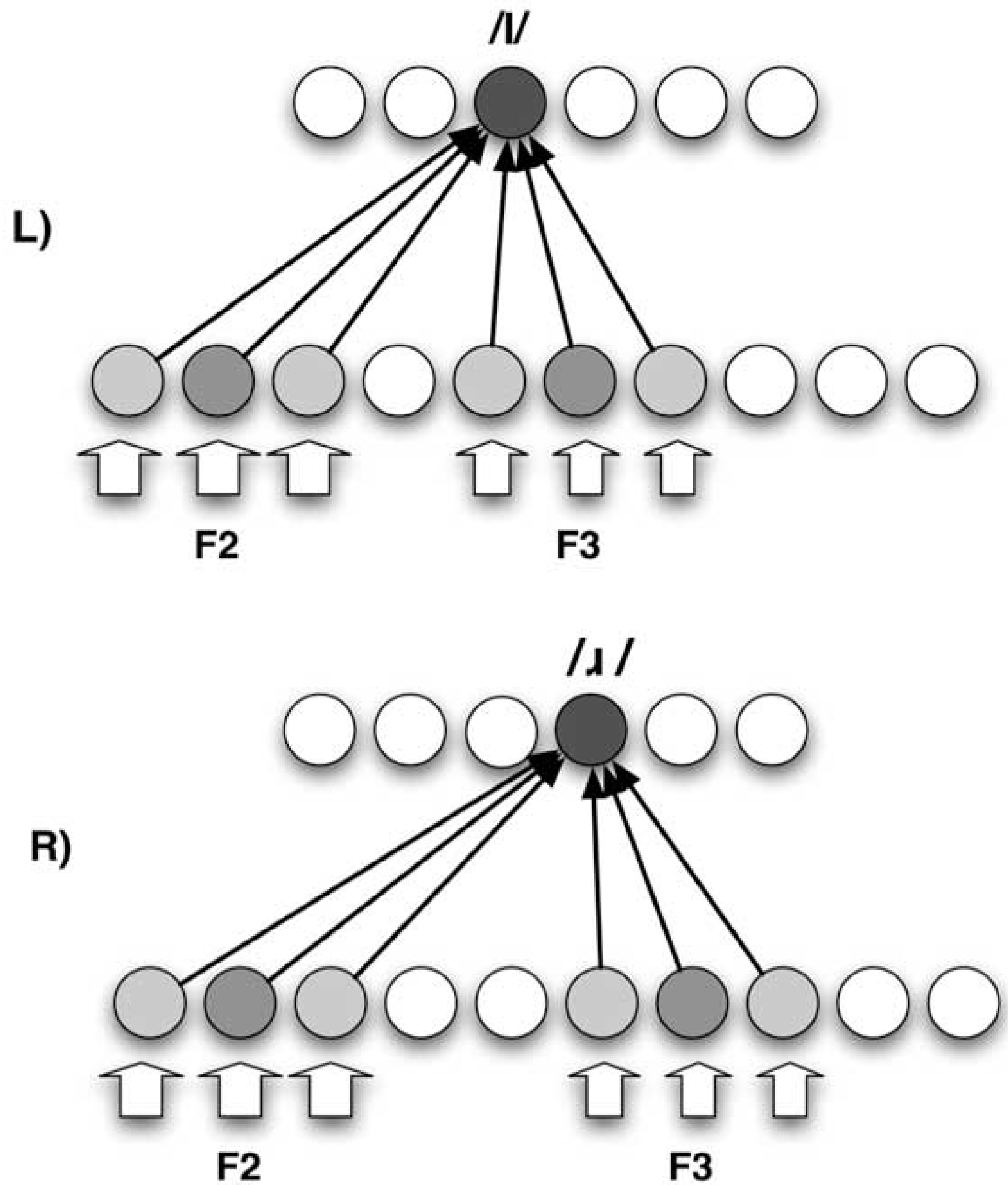

Figure 4. A connectionist network representing a native English speaker responding to the formants (F2 and F3) of the L sound and R sound in English.

In a part of our ear called the organ of Corti, we have sensory cells that respond to limited hertz ranges. Figure 4 shows how a connectionist version of these hair cells might respond to energy peaks in the second and third formants for L and R; English speakers distinguish L from R using mostly information from the differences between the F3 values for these sounds (Vallabha and McClelland realize this differently, using a grid of input units and turning the stimulus pattern into a joint probability distribution, but the idea is the same).

The network in figure 5 represents a native Japanese speaker. The most active memory cell in the top-layer indexes the memory for /ɾ /, the Japanese alveolar flap (which is the closest sound Japanese has to English L or R). Japanese does not use F3 to distinguish between any sounds, so Japanese speakers will respond to a broad range of F2 values as representing /ɾ/. With connectionist networks, and only with connectionist networks, we are able to explore how the lack of distinctive use of F3 in a first language interferes with the acquisition of such a use in a second language. The networks labeled "L" and "R" in figure 5 show what happens: the F3 data is essentially ignored by the network. This data is registered by input cells, and it is transmitted to the memory layer, but the strength of the excitement received by the cell that indexes the memory for the phoneme /ɾ/ leads to a very strong inhibition of the activation in the other memory-layer cells in the network generated by the F3 stimuli. Subjectively, the speaker hears only /ɾ/ for both R and L. Because of this inhibition, the top-down connections that need to be established (in order to automatically make the LR distinction) never get a chance to form.

Vallabha and McClelland explain their network's dynamics in the vocabulary of the dynamical systems theory, popularized in second language studies by Diane Larsen-Freeman and Lynn Cameron (2008). The underlying dynamics are the same, however. These networks are not limited modeling basic, perceptual phenomena. The fact that their memories are not only distributed throughout the network, but also often superposed over the same connections, leads to complicated interactions. I have

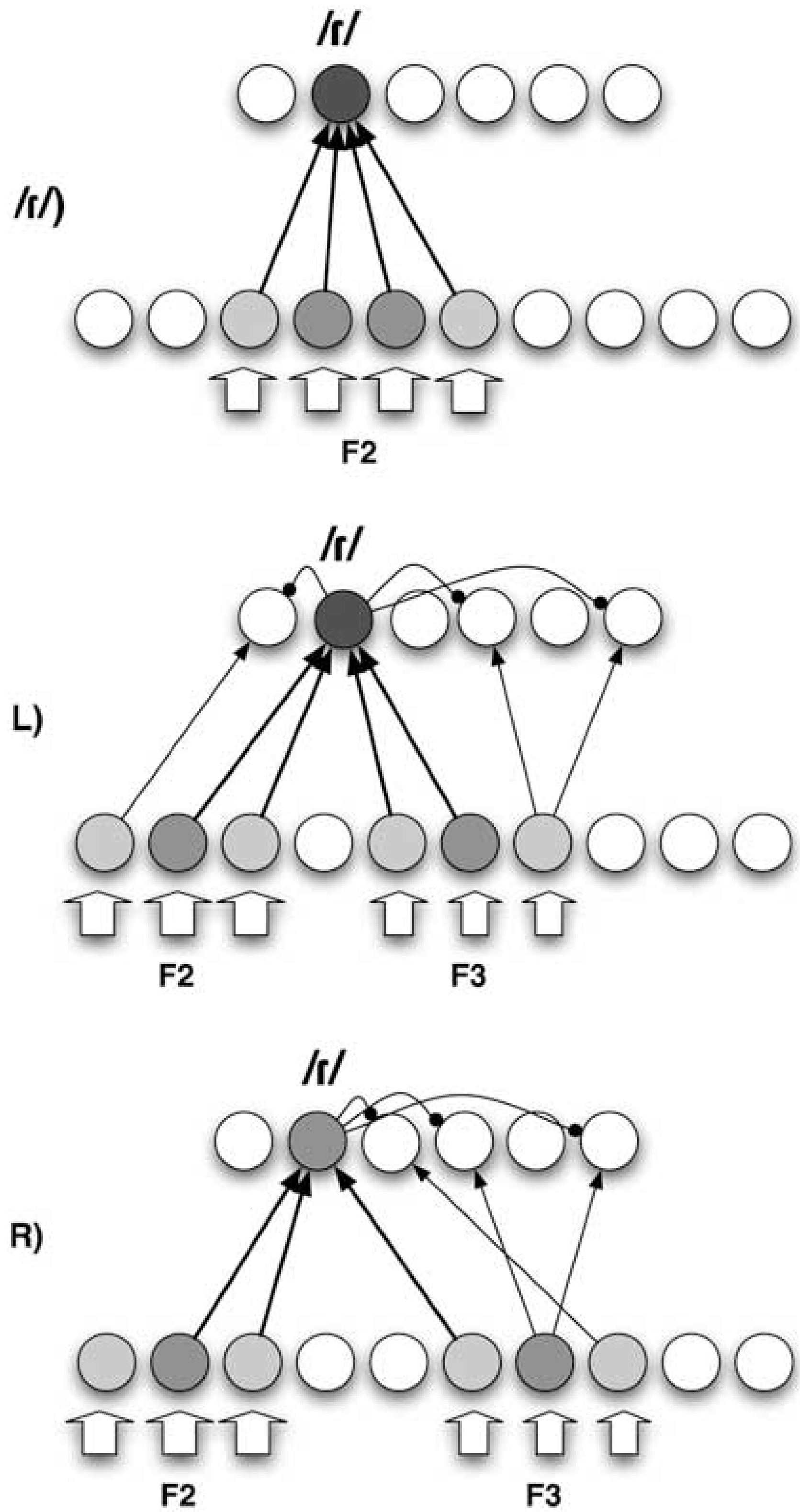

Figure 5. A connectionist network representing a native Japanese speaker responding to (/ /) the Japanese alveolar flap, and the formants (F2 and F3) of the L sound and R sound in English.

explored how some these interactions can produce some of the interesting interactions between the form and the meaning of a word in bilinguals (Nelson, 2013).

Importantly, the designers of these networks know that they are working in a small corner of the language learning system—a system that includes complicated variables ranging from learner motivation to the openness of the culture of the second language. Connectionism, however, need not be mute on these issues. Above, I noted that the way we interact with elements of the environment changes the sensory signals that we derive from them. Connectionist networks and other kinds of autonomous systems are well able to take this into account. The Vallabha and McClelland network, for example, showed how both positive and negative feedback, and stimulus variability, helped to improve Japanese speakers perception of the English L-R distinction (McClelland's research team confirmed this experimentally). Our growing understanding of how learning works at the micro-level indicates that our manipulations of the input can have a tremendous impact on learner achievement. These manipulations include activities like increasing the variability of the stimuli (using linguistic corpora in vocabulary teaching, exaggerated articulation of difficult sounds, etc.) and the gentle and immediate use of both positive and negative reinforcement, but there is room for more.

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FRAMING LGBT ISSUES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES: A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

By Amber Shaw, Alexander College

Whether it is ESL, EAP, LINC, or any other form of TESL, our job is a big one. We are language teachers, and with that comes culture. There is no way to separate the two. Our students need social and cultural survival skills in order to be successful. These sociocultural competencies vary as far and wide as English grammar does, and just like grammar, sometimes those rules need to be explicitly taught. Our students are not trying to be successful in a language, they are trying to be successful in a culture, in a career, in a country. Unfortunately, sociocultural competence is not as well laid out as linguistic competence. There are no Canadian Cultural Benchmarks to act as a guide.

This lack of structure about how to teach Canadian culture, coupled with the current Communicative Based methods, which focus on student centred discussions, debates and the like, have lead to some issues being framed outside of the acceptable Canadian norm. To bring this theoretical discussion to a practical end, let's focus on one "hot topic" currently used in classrooms: LGBT rights. LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) issues must be carefully framed by language instructors so students will understand the Canadian sociocultural boundaries surrounding this minority group.

Framing LGBT issues

The push for participatory learning has necessitated the use of discussion and debate activities in current language classrooms. The involvement of students in interesting current event discussions or socio-political debates, naturally invites a wide variety of language use but also opens opportunities for discrimination, including discrimination against the LGBT community. Adding to the classroom the influence and use of U.S. media in these types of participatory activities can lead to the improper framing of LGBT rights as something debatable which may have dangerous consequences.

This is not about having a socio-political agenda in the classroom but how essential it is to define for students the social boundaries of acceptability in Canada, put simply, what is up for debate in Canada and what is not. Nor is this about trying to change a student's personal beliefs, morals or values, but teachers do their students a service by describing the new playing field that they are in. To allow students to express homophobic views in the ESL classroom gives credibility to those views and allows students to assume such expression is permissible in our culture when it is not. Much of this confusion about the social acceptability of expression of anti-LGBT views can be prevented through proper framing.

Many lessons are learned by students, not in the actual content, but in how the lesson is framed. There are inherent assumptions made in the structure of a lesson plan. For example, a debate assumes that there are two or more sides to an issue. Debates also assume that both sides have valid arguments. For example, in English for Academic Purposes courses, students learn not only from the debate itself, but also from the topic given by the instructor. Students learn which topics make valid academic research theses by observing which topics are explored in class. If a student is allowed to debate LGBT rights in class, that student learns that this is an appropriate debate topic. The student also learns from the framing of the debate that both sides have valid arguments. This is a disservice to the student because those same views expressed openly in Canadian university classrooms would not be tolerated (Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d.). Those same views expressed in a Canadian workplace could even land the person in front of a Human Rights Commission (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2009).

This framing issue becomes particularly blurry when American culture and media are brought into the classroom. More and more often, ESL teachers of all types are engaging in Media Studies. Students are consumers of media (Internet, Film, Periodicals, Current Events, etc), and therefore it makes for more engaging classroom discussions. One problem encountered here is that the vast majority of the media that our students voraciously consume is produced in the U.S. While the debate over LGBT rights persists in the United States, students need to be made aware of Canadian norms. As the majority of my students are destined to live in a large urban area, it is important for me as an English instructor to explain the different norms between the countries. With a solid one-third of same sex couples being married in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2012), students should be clear that many of the views expressed in American media are not acceptable in a Canadian public environment.

In response to the potential problems caused by framing LGBT issues in either a debate or discussion format, the answer may be found in doing more direct cultural/social norms instruction. We should come to see culture as we do grammar. There are rules, most of them have exceptions, sometimes native speakers break those rules, but however confusing, they are what they are and our students will have to follow them to get through a job interview. It is our job to directly teach the students those cultural rules. In the same way that a grammar rule would not be framed as a discussion or a debate, cultural rules need also to be taught explicitly. A direct approach to teaching Canadian social norms needs to be included in lessons, and these should include LGBT rights along with other topics that are not openly debated in Canadian workplaces such as interracial marriage, abortion, and disabilities. Students are quite interested in cultural differences and can enjoy exploring them. LGBT rights need to be framed in this manner.

To this end, The Canadian Human Rights Act (1985) has worked well in my EAP courses. I have seen many other ESL teachers comfortably use the Canadian Human Rights Act to teach the boundaries of discrimination. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (2009) is another valuable resource. I would like to see issues faced by the LGBT community naturally included in this type of teaching of social norms. For example, with a group of business owners new to Canada, it is important to know what information can be included on a Canadian resume or elicited in an interview. This lesson can easily employ the The Canadian Human Rights Act, which states, "The prohibited grounds of discrimination are race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, *sexual orientation* [emphasis added], marital status, family status, disability…" (1985). While it is more difficult to teach invisible minority rights than visible minority rights, that is precisely why it is so important for our students.

From the lessons that I have seen take place in Canadian ESL classrooms, it is obvious that including invisible minority rights is much more difficult than the visible minority groups that we are accustomed to working with. Every ESL teacher can tell you how many students in the class are male and female, which countries they are from, and how old they are. All teachers need to remember that there are LGBT students in our classrooms as well. They may not be not visible, but they need to be protected and respected. In deciding if material is appropriate play the substitute game. Try to substitute a visible minority group for any LGBT materials covered in the class. Since LGBT rights are the same as any other protected group under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, when LGBT issues arise in the classroom, see if you are comfortable substituting in another minority group. If not, then the topic, question, or debate is not framed correctly.

These learning outcomes and framing issues are not trivial. They are, in fact, part of why Canadians have so much to be culturally proud of. This country has consistently set the benchmark for human rights and protection from discrimination. Many of our students are here for just that reason. We also know that social and cultural norms are not always obvious to our students. It is not fair to our students to try to make them guess where our cultural boundaries are; it is also disrespectful to the LGBT community for us to keep using outdated or imported materials that do not accurately reflect the society in which we hope each of our students will participate and be successful. If our lessons are framed correctly, and our learning outcomes are clear, then we should have fewer problems establishing clear sociocultural boundaries for our students and for ourselves.

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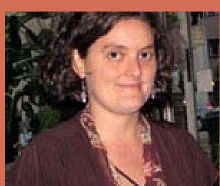

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ENGLISH TEACHING NEEDS TO "MODERNIZE" NOT "WESTERNIZE":

Insights into the Chinese learning experience

By Catrina Ascenuik, George Brown College and

Anthony Zanzonico, Centennial College

"What do you think about translating words into your own language? Is it useful or not?" This is one of the first questions that the teacher asks the international students in a college level course.

The teacher recasts the question. "Who believes that translating is better for learning English?" A few hands rise and, at the same time, expose their electronic dictionaries.

The teacher asks, "Why do you believe this?"

A courageous student says, "If we translate, we can understand the word in our own language and we have a better idea of what it means." A solid response.

"Who believes that explaining the word in English is a better way to understand new words?" The same number of hands rise slowly. We have a tie.

"And why do you think this is true?"

A student on the opposing side takes his stance. "It's true because we can learn how to use English better. We need this skill to speak to English speakers." Another solid response.

The class has reached an impasse. The teacher picks up a bottle of water and asks the translators in the group, "How do you say this in Mandarin?"

One student says "shui ping". A few other students repeat the word proudly.

"Good," the teacher says, "Now, how can you explain this to someone else who speaks English?"

"It's a container that you can put a drink in if you are thirsty."

The teacher nods and turns to the rest of the class. "Very good! You see, it is possible to translate something AND explain it. Actually, translating can help you in explaining, but you should try to do both to get a better understanding of new words and concepts."

The above situation underlines just one of the challenges that ESL teachers face in the classroom with students in foreign countries. Fortunately, there are ways to bridge the gap in the English language classroom. Awareness of students' cultural background and how it might show through in the classroom and cultures can help teachers adapt their teaching methods to suit students' needs. In some instances, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methods alone may be met with confusion and frustration from students. There are philosophical challenges to teaching Chinese students, but there are also small adjustments that can be made to create a learning atmosphere congruent to everyone's needs.

This article is based on our experiences in an Ontario college program. The program had partnerships with two colleges in Northern and Southern China. The aim for the program was to help the Chinese students prepare for the college's professional credit programs in Canada. After 3 years of English-language study in China, the students completed their final year of their postsecondary program in Canada. In this article, our intention is not to generalize for all Chinese students, nor is it to exclude any other groups of students. Our aim is to give readers insight into our experience with Chinese students in this particular program with some rationale provided in current literature.

CLT: a clash with Chinese learning culture

There is a strong clash between Western education, which is described as "Socratic" (Greenholtz, 2003; Holmes, 2004), and what is considered "Eastern" or "Confucianist" learning (Greenholtz, 2003; Hu, 2005). This clash of philosophies underpins many of the difficulties experienced by ESL/EFL teachers and students alike. In our case, for example, while we urged students to make mistakes and attempt to be successful, there was a lack of enthusiasm from classes to "get messy", a possible manifestation of an Eastern philosophy toward learning.

CLT holds that "effectiveness of communication is sought after rather than merely accuracy or fluency" (Hu, 2002, p. 95). This presents a common problem among our Chinese learners, who are more prone to seek mastery before creativity. A Chinese learner might possibly come into the classroom with the idea that they must first come to a complete understanding of something before they can be creative with it (Hu, 2002). This is in direct violation of the CLT code. This also accounts for a Chinese learner's worry about getting high grades and striving for perfection (Nilsson, Butler, Shouse & Joshi, 2008).

Also, there is the concept of using knowledge. Traditionally, Eastern culture has viewed education as a process of gathering knowledge for later application rather than one that has practical and immediate purposes (Hu, 2002). In contrast, CLT does not stress the importance of "accumulating" knowledge, but rather the importance of "constructing" it. This presents a dilemma for the Chinese student who, traditionally, seeks knowledge and collects it rather than one who creates it himself. This might also shed some light on why Chinese students are likely to translate rather than infer meaning: according to their culture, they may not think of inferring meaning as a viable way to obtain knowledge.

Finally, the ever-present fear of "losing face" is another obstacle in the way of success in a CLT-inspired classroom. This fear is deeply rooted in Confucianist culture (Wu Man-fat, 2012), and it affects the way that a Chinese learner chooses to learn a language. For example, a student who does not wish to lose face in the classroom will invest more energy and motivation into the receptive skills (listening and reading) and less energy on productive skills (speaking and writing).

These are just a few of the many inconsistencies that exist between CLT and Confucianist learning culture. It is important to note that bombarding a newly immigrated Chinese student with a pure form of CLT may cause some shock. Instead of using a pure form of any approach it is important for a skilled teacher to draw from a variety of methods to fit the many learning needs of students (Hu, 2005).

Tried and true methods

At the colleges in China, we used a variety of methods to facilitate language learning in the classrooms. Luckily, as Harvey (1985) suggested, traditional teaching and communicative teaching do not have to be mutually exclusive. He stressed that there is need for compromise and balance in the EFL classroom. During our teaching in China, we attempted to bridge the gap between how our students viewed education and what we understood would be the best teaching methods to get them to learn.

When we entered the classrooms, the methods we used varied. All methods tried were based on our own professional experiences as well as changing, adapting, and integrating to a culture that was unfamiliar to us and classes that did not mirror the ones we had taught in Canada. Though we had free rein in our classrooms, our goal was to prepare students for their year in Canada. Four techniques that we used were what we called 1) affirmative translation, 2) memorizational understanding, 3) the failure method, and 4) culture critiquing. It is important to note that, while these techniques were used to assist learning in the classroom, they developed over time. Teachers should also closely consider the class and students' needs, as the following techniques are merely suggestions to improve the classroom experience.

Affirmative translation

Traditionally, translation has been associated with the Grammar-Translation method (Sadeghi & Ketabi, 2010). Communicative language teaching holds that meaningful and authentic communication among learners will produce language ability. However, translation has been a learning strategy long favoured in Chinese education (Degen & Absalom, 1998). This has been further demonstrated in our classrooms, where translation was common. Often, weaker students who had difficulty understanding concepts would rely on translation by the more advanced students to understand what was happening in class. This process allowed the stronger students to re-affirm their knowledge of the subject matter while helping the weaker students get up to speed on what was happening in class. While this was not used every class, it was a good way to change the pace of the classroom and promote teamwork.

Auerbach (1993) made the case that having L1 and/or bilingual options in the classroom would be more effective. It gave students access to their own linguistic resources which could enhance language learning. The argument was that allowing the use of L1 in the classroom gave students who could not participate in tasks due to their level of language access to language learning.

Kern's (1994) study demonstrated that mental translation in reading was an important strategy for language learners because it helped students gain meaning of new words that may have been fragmented if only kept in the L2 form. To add to this, Kim (2011) points out that translation can be very useful to students in writing. One method that Kim used was to have students re-translate their English writing back into Korean. In doing so, students could then see in their own language the gaps and errors that existed in their style and content.

Memorizational understanding

Memorization is a common strategy used in education systems not only in China, but around the world. Traditionally, memorization with understanding has been a fundamental learning strategy that results in mastery (Hu, 2002). However, in second language acquisition, memorization falls under the umbrella of Grammar-Translation (Snow, 1992), which is seen as a more old-fashioned type of learning in western culture (Sadeghi & Ketabi, 2010). In our language classrooms in China, more focus was primarily placed on communicative methods of learning, which have the potential to cause difficulties for Chinese students (Hu, 2002; Rao, 2010).

One strategy we used to bridge this gap was to allow students to memorize while reinforcing other strategies that demonstrate more effective ways of learning. For instance, students would need to learn new vocabulary for their professional course. Students would memorize new words through repetition and note-taking. Later, we would ask for the definition of a word. Most of the students were able to give the definition. Then we would ask students to use it in a conversation, but few students were able to do so. We would then explain that knowing the meaning of the word is only partial understanding because unless the word could be re-produced in communication (either written or spoken), that vocabulary would most likely remain unused. Then the students were asked, in what type of situation a person would use this vocabulary. Students then offered different scenarios where this vocabulary would be appropriate. This technique allowed our students to use a strategy that they were familiar with (allowing them to memorize and understand new words) while using a situational approach to bridge the understanding between definition and meaning.

The failure method

The "failure" method was to allow students to fail in small doses. In Eastern pedagogy, learning is never complete until mastery is achieved (Hu, 2002). In our classrooms, students were reluctant to offer answers to open-ended questions and activities that did not have right or wrong answers. Scaffolding activities were used to help students overcome that fear of being wrong.

For example, one scaffolding activity that was given to students was building their own restaurant and executing several "services" a customer would experience if they were to go out and eat. In class, the students were taught the different kind of phrases, exchanges, and vocabulary used in a restaurant scenario. They practiced these exchanges in class. As a group, they had to decide the style of restaurant, design the menu for content and design, and who was going to act as servers and managers. They then re-enacted a restaurant service for a group of students who acted as their customers. This activity encouraged students to build their language skills because they were using occupation-specific language in a real-world situation, and we found that it required them to negotiate and problem-solve in English.

Culture Critiquing

Self-reflection was an integral part to student language development and adult education. We posed the question, "Is it better to be fluent or accurate?" This resulted in a discussion that divided the class 50/50. What was notable about this activity was that it: (1) introduced a model of "Western" education to Chinese students, and (2) compelled students to question their understanding of language and language learning. It also called for students to examine both their home culture and their "host" culture, to examine the differences and similarities. This brings to the forefront the notion that cultural differences are OK and add colour to the classroom. Furthermore, this is in line with one of the guiding principles of adult education, that "Adult education fosters critically reflective thinking, that is, learning which involves the examination and questioning of information, values, beliefs and experiences" (Curran, 2012).

Future Considerations

The rift between CLT philosophy and Eastern learning culture is one that many ESL and EFL teachers are aware of. Teachers who have taught Chinese students may come to understand their learning style, but is our understanding of how they were brought up in the education as extensive as it should be? Do we understand that students from China bring with them their own understanding of what is the right and wrong way to learn?

Teachers need to understand that cultural assumptions to learning cannot change overnight. While CLT brings a promise of communicative competency and can foster confidence and autonomy, this is not something that can be spoon fed to students. The shift from one learning paradigm to another should be gradual and accommodating.

Also, it should be noted that each brand of teaching philosophy comes with its own strengths and weaknesses. While we adopt the communicative philosophy (and use creative and student-based techniques in the classroom), it is important to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of both "Western" and "Eastern" philosophies. Teachers should also be aware that students may be critical of particular teaching methods. Chinese students may have trouble figuring out the rationale behind a communicative classroom and its materials, the trial and error nature of acquiring language, and the autonomy of the learner (Degen & Absalom, 1998; Holmes, 2004). Teachers should contemplate the advantages of each school of thought and how it can optimize learning for all English language learners.

Finally, and most importantly, more research is needed regarding Chinese students' views of teaching techniques in the Ontario college context. There has been research on student perceptions of the classroom in the EFL context, but more research is needed in the postsecondary sector here. Rao (2010) found that many of the Chinese university students surveyed about English classes in China failed to see the rationale behind many of the communicative techniques. For instance, students reported confusion and chaos for group activities and "mixer" activities. Students also expressed fear of making mistakes and speaking in public. The study itself provides insight as to how we should provide a rationale for our communicative techniques. Studies like these would be very effective for chairs and deans of international education in Ontario. Questions like these should be at the forefront, and they should guide Canadian Colleges' growth into the future.

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FLEXIBILITY AND CONSISTENCY IN ONTARIO ADULT NON-CREDIT LANGUAGE TRAINING:

What does it mean for teachers?

By Jessica King, York University

It might seem natural to speak of flexibility when responding to changing learners and learner needs, but what part does consistency play? In a recent conversation with Mourad Mardikian and Joseph Colonna of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI)'s Language Training Unit, talk of consistency weaves its way into the discussion of the flexibility needed to address the needs of Ontario's constantly changing and diverse groups of newcomers. With several large changes coming to the Provincial adult non-credit language programs in the 2014/2015 school year and the recent shifts in immigration policy at the federal level, teachers and administrators are already starting to see how these changes will impact (and have already impacted) the classroom. Mardikian and Colonna discuss their vision for a flexible yet consistent Provincial ESL program, and what this means for instructors.

When asked about how they see ESL learners and learner needs changing in Ontario, Mardikian highlights the importance of the internal survey conducted annually in the provincial ESL program. The survey allows local administrators and teachers to respond to the unique needs of the learners, as it gives them a fairly current picture of who their learners are and what they need in the way of language learning. From the most recent survey, Mardikian indicates that many of the most common source countries for learners (Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, among others) have English spoken as an additional language, indicating that there are likely to be fewer of these learners at the literacy level. In addition, more learners are coming to the program with higher levels of education. However, Mardikian cautions against the prediction that all lower level learners will disappear:

> I think it's important to stop and realize that the changes that are being made [to the Federal Skilled-Worker Program] would increase emphasis of language proficiency or English or French at a certain level, [and this] is usually to the principal applicant and not to the entire family. The target for the skilled or semi-skilled federal skilled workers is 5,000 compared to the 250,000 that are coming to Canada, so the numbers

> that we are dealing with would increase language proficiency even as based on the new federal requirements. [It] is not all the immigrants coming to Canada, but small, very clearly identified number.

The provincial ESL program is also undergoing changes, developing a new Curriculum Guideline Framework that is scheduled to be implemented in late 2014. Mardikian and Colonna envision that the curriculum guidelines will encourage "local level flexibility" through the use of online resources that will allow teachers to develop unique lessons, modules, units, and courses, and at the same time maintain a consistency of service across the province. When asked what the most important aspect of that consistency is, Mardikian replies that it is "making sure all courses are delivered aligned to the CLB." With the full implementation of the Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral System (CLARS), all learners will have their four skills assessed by certified assessors using the appropriate CLB-based assessment tools currently available. Based on the learner's identified needs, their program eligibility status, and their language assessment results, a list of "best fit" course options would be discussed with their assessor to help the learner select the appropriate course(s). In this way, Mardikian indicates that courses need to have benchmarks clearly identified to fit easily into the CLARS/CLB framework.

Colonna adds that this focus on benchmarks has implications for methodology, as the benchmarks are aligned with communicative language teaching and task-based learning. So, the new curriculum framework will allow teachers to develop lessons and courses that would be entered into a database (called HARTs). This database will be used by both the federal and provincial language training programs as well as CLARS assessors to provide the appropriate course options to learners and refer learners who have selected courses to language training providers delivering the courses with all courses CLB-based. Mardikian asserts that learners will have greater flexibility to transfer between programs and regions with the added consistency of all courses being CLB-based, many being catalogued in HARTs, and all language training providers using the same system to register learners into their courses.

In this way, Mardikian and Colonna are looking for a shift in second-language learner needs in Ontario and express an interest in seeing what types of classes emerge from instructors "on the ground" to respond to these changing needs. When asked whether there are any particular classes they want to see, Mardikian says there is nothing in particular, but that "we will be looking to the type of course content that will be developed once we launch these new tools." To illustrate the non-prescriptive nature of the provincial program, Mardikian points to existing courses that target the needs of specific populations, such as an ESL course for Tibetan farmers who were learning English while tending to their local community gardens in Toronto.

When asked what advice they have for both new and veteran teachers, given all the changes at both the federal and provincial level, Mardikian advises that all instructors stay current with the revised benchmarks which were rolled out last summer, register with tutela.ca, the new national community of practice for ESL and EFL teachers, and become familiar with the resources available on the Benchmark website. Mardikian also points out that tutela.ca contains information about and templates for Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA), the new CLB-based system of learner portfolios that will be implemented in all federal programs in 2014/2015. As the Ontario government is looking into implementing PBLA in its programs as well, he notes that instructors can familiarize themselves with this future initiative: "There will be training to support PBLA and resources will be provided, but nothing precludes an instructor from using the tools today, because they're readily available."

Colonna adds that he would advise instructors to become comfortable with Information Technology. He says the curriculum guidelines will be available as an "interactive online environment." He notes that:

> As opposed to a set of binders that's given to people, it's a space that instructors can go and explore and build courses and build units, build lessons and it'll be templated, but it'll exist in an online environment. As much as we're trying to make it as simple as possible, at the same time it does require a certain comfort in online learning.

When asked what advice they have specifically for established ESL teachers in the provincial programs, Colonna encourages instructors to apply their expertise, through the new tools being developed to support the new curriculum framework, by "using their own creativity to help their learners learn."

In their final thoughts of the interview, Mardikian and Colonna repeat that 2014/2015 will be a significant year for Ontario non-credit language training. With the changes to federal immigration policy, including those made to the Federal Skilled Worker Program and to the requirements for citizenship, as well as the overall shift in source countries for newcomers to Canada, MCI aims to allow instructors to respond to the changing needs of their learners within the common framework of the Canadian Language Benchmarks.

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READING AND RE-TELLING FOLKTALES:

A Doorway to Enriched Oral Communication in Adult EFL and ESL

By Marlene Toews Janzen, University of Ottawa

I have found the use of folktales both enjoyable and effective in promoting oral communication in adult EFL and ESL classes. In Part One of this paper I describe how and why I came to use folktales with adult learners in a read and re-tell approach. In Part Two I present examples of oral activities designed to accompany a specific pair of folktales.

Using folktales within a read and re-tell approach

In the spring of 2007, I accepted a six-week volunteer assignment in Cairo, teaching conversational English to young adults in the same institute where I had taught EFL in the early 1990s. A key motivation for this assignment, beyond a service orientation, was to update my understanding of EFL teaching. I was teaching foreign-trained EFL teachers and pre-service teachers planning to teach English abroad and wanted to see if my EFL teaching recommendations were actually workable. My director and the dean of the faculty graciously gave me permission to pursue this project.

That spring I had three evening conversation classes, ranging from high-beginner to high-intermediate, and each group met for 3 hours a week. While some of the participants were college or university students, most were poorly-paid young professionals—accountants, engineers, lawyers, and teachers—who needed better oral English skills to find a job, to advance in the one they had, or to get a better one. None of them had the means to attend English classes in more expensive institutions with well-qualified Egyptian and expatriate teachers. Our classroom had movable old-fashioned wooden desks, terrible acoustics, a noisy air-conditioner, a barely-usable white board, and no functioning audio-visual equipment. Good-quality photocopies were my responsibility.

Arriving in class after long hot days that included complicated public transportation arrangements, the 12–15 students in each group were eager to practice their spoken English but had little time or energy for advanced reading or other homework. I prepared a variety of oral activities that got them using the language actively in pairs and small groups, something which was already a change from a more teacher-fronted, "study-for-the-test" approach. Although they enjoyed this, it became clear that they also wanted, and needed, more vocabulary and more English reading material. The dilemma I faced is familiar to both EFL teachers abroad and ESL teachers of adult newcomers in Canada: how to provide what the learners need without imposing a lot of reading that almost no one has time to do.

I decided to try an activity I had sometimes used in my oral communication classes in Canada. Before the next class, each member of the class read one of two different short stories and then returned to re-tell the story to a classmate who had read the other one. The activity was such a hit that they asked for more stories. And each one wanted a copy of his or her partner's story as well. They were particularly interested in a couple of folktales I used for one class, spontaneously pointing out similarities to familiar Egyptian tales and eager to discuss the ideas in them. Unfortunately, I had only a few suitable folktales with me and limited Internet access to find more. When I returned to Canada, I decided to put together a number of folktale pairs—either two on a similar theme or different versions of the same tale—to use in Cairo the following year. Reading and re-telling these folktale pairs would, I believed, promote vocabulary development and act as a useful springboard for oral interaction.

The success of this approach the following year convinced me that there was a need for a "how-to" book on using carefully-chosen folktales to promote oral communication in adult EFL. I saw many good reasons to use folktales: they are short and accessible, ideal for language learners with limited reading time, but still interesting and enjoyable; they provide exposure to new vocabulary and grammatical structures within a familiar narrative form; they touch on universal themes but also provide glimpses into other cultures, both in terms of daily life and the cultural assumptions and values behind the stories. Further, unlike the textbooks my Egyptian students were using in their regular four-skills classes, these tales are not class- or culture-bound. They do not assume a lifestyle almost entirely out of my students' reach: expensive shopping trips, holidays abroad, Western dating patterns, or easy access to technology and other daily amenities. Instead, folktales highlight themes such as generosity and greed; corruption and injustice; power and suffering; love, marriage, and family relationships; friendship and loyalty; or human strengths and weaknesses, which they could easily relate to and discuss. Folktales are a kind of literary *lingua franca*, crossing cultural and geographical boundaries.

As I continued looking for appropriate folktales and related materials, I came upon Erik Taylor's excellent book, *Using Folktales* (Cambridge University Press, 2000). He had already noted many of 'my' ideas and suggested a variety of activities for use with folktales. This discovery changed the focus of my project but I decided to continue developing speaking and writing activities related to the folktale pairs I was collecting. I have continued to develop those activities within the framework of a read and re-tell approach, a type of information-gap activity which I believe has been a significant aspect of the successful use of folktales in my classes in Cairo.

Using folktales in this read and re-tell approach makes them an excellent vehicle for language study within the communicative language teaching framework. First, there is meaningful and accessible (comprehensible) input. The reader has a clear purpose for reading: to be able to recount a story to a classmate who has read another one. It is also a motivating technique since learners want to discover what their partners have read. I saw this motivation most clearly in my students' demand for copies of the other story in each pair.

Second, learners participate in meaningful tasks requiring oral and written expression. If those tasks are carefully designed, the use of folktales helps to develop cognitive and academic skills in English, as noted by numerous authors on learning language through literature (e.g., Collie & Slater, 1993; Lazar, 1993; Parkinson and Thomas, 2000; Taylor, 2000; Yopp & Yopp, 1992). For example, in order to summarize a folktale, learners need to understand the overall chronology or structure of the story and recognize and organize its main events and ideas. They need to identify and use logical connectors from the story, or from their own knowledge base, to relate that information. Re-telling a story is also an excellent way to practice narration; it involves summarizing past events in a somewhat more linguistically demanding context than a simple re-telling of personal experiences. Using two versions of the same folktale, or two tales on a similar theme, also lends itself well to comparison and contrast of the two stories and of the ideas and morals in them. This in turn prompts the use of logical connectors of comparison and contrast. All of these are essential language skills in both social and professional contexts, for example, in completing workplace tasks such as oral and written reports.

As mentioned above, another significant benefit of this use of folktales is that the linguistic input (reading one folktale and listening to a partner's re-telling of another) and the output (authentic language use in the re-telling and other activities) lead to the acquisition of new vocabulary and grammar structures. One study of the use of a read and re-tell protocol with younger students showed that such acquisition was "pervasive" and "enduring", with the new language items re-occurring in speech weeks and even months later (Brown & Cambourne, 1990, p. 10). Other studies have also shown that repetition of the re-telling task in different forms leads to acquisition of new structures and vocabulary (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Bygate, 2001; Fahim, Nourzadeh, & Fat'hi, 2011; Hawkes, 2012; Muranoi, 2007).

Finally, folktales are ideal for discussion of the themes they highlight. As Lazar points out, some reading materials are "so remote from students' experiences that they are unable to respond meaningfully," especially in another language (1993, p. 25). The familiarity of the form and subject matter of folktales, on the other hand, makes reading them easier and more enjoyable, and leads naturally to in-depth discussion of the themes (Alptekin, 1993; Cox & Batstone, 1997; Dong, 2004; Peacock, 1997). The concerns and issues raised in folktales were certainly relevant to the world my Egyptian students were dealing with every day. In the light of dramatic changes in their country, it was natural for them "to explore [those issues] and connect them to the struggle for a better society" (Lazar, 1993, p. 3). Discussions about poverty, injustice, and overcoming tyrants, for example, were not theoretical for them.

Apropos of such discussions, there is an important caveat: as teachers, and especially as Western teachers in a foreign context, our role is not to impose our own values and ideas on our students, but to encourage them to make their own connections between literary themes and their daily lives, through the use of English in peer interactions. Because meaningful themes can elicit strong responses, it is also important to maintain respectful, positive, relationships within a class. On one occasion, for example, the discussion of differences in how boys and girls are raised in Egypt provoked such strong reactions on the part of several young women in my class, and in turn, from several male students, that one young woman almost dropped the course. This was unusual, however. For the most part, the students enjoyed their discussions, which were certainly not all serious or controversial and often included laughter and pleasant interactions. Nevertheless, as many have pointed out, our teaching is never really neutral. Even if we do not express personal opinions about specific situations, the fact that we choose certain folktales, and not others, to serve as the basis for language learning and discussion already communicates a message about our values. Language teaching is never, nor should it be, only about improving vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and academic and cognitive skills. But teachers must remain sensitive to context.

Examples of speaking activities related to folktale pairs

Many of these activities build on the ideas of others and the activity types appear in a variety of published resources, some of which I list in the references. In order to give readers a better sense of what kinds of things I have tried with folktales in this context, I have chosen to highlight one folktale pair and examples of possible accompanying activities.

The folktale pair I have used most often in workshops consists of two versions of a tale about a stone mason, or stonecutter, who is unhappy with his lot in life. It is a story I had read with my children and Canadian students; it also appears in Taylor's book (2000). Like other well-known folktales, this tale, variously designated as being of either Chinese or Japanese origin, warns of the dangers of ambition and perpetual dissatisfaction. Through a series of wishes granted by a supernatural being, the stone mason goes from his ordinary life to become, among other things, a rich man, a prince, the sun, a mountain, and finally, a stone mason once again. He concludes that his original life was the best. It is a straightforward story, and the two versions have many similarities. However, there are also enough differences between them to make the re-telling interesting. The themes, vocabulary, and several repeated grammatical structures (e.g. "I wish I were..." and "... was more powerful than ...") lend themselves well to exploitation in various communicative activities.

As with other folktales I have used, I edited each of the two versions for length, about 750 words, and for reading level (approximately CLBM 5–6 for my high-intermediate students). A short glossary of 10 vocabulary items most essential for comprehension appears at the end of each story. The vocabulary that students will focus on in activities is chosen in a different way. For example, in these two versions of the same tale, there were a lot of adjectives; I focused all vocabulary activities on 12 of them (for example, contented, respected, frustrated, and envious). These were adjectives students might recognize and understand but could not always use.

I. Pre-Reading Activities

There are a number of activities one could use in class before students read the stonecutter stories, depending on the particular teaching context, including the goals of the course and the available time. Clearly, a teacher would use only some of these activities. In many cases, the activities which appear below could also be used post-reading, which was what usually happened in my classes in Cairo.

(For space reasons, some of the formatting in the activities has been changed.)

A. Anticipating themes in the stories (contentment, dreams and wishes, and jobs)

1.

Make lists for each category below:	
People who have an easy life	People who have a difficult life
Easy jobs	Difficult jobs
High-status jobs	Low-status jobs

2.

Discuss with a partner:

a. What do you like about your job?

b. What aspects would you like to change?

c. Describe your dream job or situation in life. Give some reasons for your choice.

3.

Read the following statements. Discuss your responses with a partner:

a. The more we have, the more we want.

b. If we cannot be content in our present situation, we probably wouldn't be happy in another situation either.

c. Our situation in life is meant to be as it is, so we should not try to change or improve it.

d. Wanting to be successful/being ambitious is a bad idea.

4.

A Ranking Activity

Choose the 5 factors you think are most important in a job and rank them in order of importance. Then compare your answers with a partner. Explain/justify your choices.

A good salary	Good co-workers
Benefits (health insurance, sick leave)	Possibilities for promotion
A good boss	Job security
Opportunities to travel	Enjoyable; makes you happy
Reasonable hours	Paid vacations
Interesting and challenging work	Working with people

B. Anticipating characters or storylines

1.

A Semantic Map (Yopp, 1992, p. 35 ff)

Characteristics feelings about

A high-ranking
government official

In stories/books experiences with

2.

Predicting a storyline (Lazar, 1993; Collie & Slater, 1987)

If the stories are read in class, students could predict what comes next in various ways:

Read one section and predict what will happen next (in pairs or groups).

Predict what happens next based on a list of possible choices; justify the choices.

Make predictions about the whole story based on the first paragraph or on 3–4 key words or phrases chosen from the story.

Imagine a possible storyline based on the beginning and the end of the story.

3.

Predicting a storyline based on pictures (Bourque & Jacques, 1995)

Students work in pairs; Partner 'A' looks at a picture and describes what they see to Partner B. Next, 'B' looks at another picture and describes what they see to Partner A. They cannot look at each other's pictures until they are completely finished. This sharing back and forth continues until all the pictures for a story have been seen and described. The partners try to predict what the story is going to be about and share predictions with another pair before reading the story.

(According to the authors, "trying to piece together the information… will stimulate a higher level of thinking, sequencing, and the use of specific clues, and will also promote good listening skills," p. 17.)

C. Anticipating and practicing recurring structures

Dreams and Wishes

Based on the examples on the board, create sentences that are true about you. Share them.

a. I wish I were ______________________________. If I were _______________________________, I could ____.

b. I wish I had ______________________________________. If I had ______________________________, I could ____.

D. Anticipating and using some of the vocabulary

1.

Matching vocabulary with synonyms or definitions:

contented	If you are ~, you feel that you cannot do what you want to do.
respected	If you are ~, you feel happy and everything is good.
frustrated	If you are ~, people think you are a good person and that you do good work.
etc.	

2.

Discussion using the vocabulary from the story (here, adjectives):

(whole class ; small groups; break into different pairs for each question)

a. What things are heavy? What kinds of work are heavy work? What other activities can fit in the blank: heavy ___?

b. When do people feel content(ed). What about you?

c. What kinds of things are people envious about?

d. What kinds of things make people feel frustrated? What about you?

etc.

II. Post-Reading Activities

<u>A. *Re-telling the story*:</u> Summarizing can be a complex task, with some students re-telling the story in painful detail and others in about four sentences. Sometimes the recounting is so disorganized that the listener really cannot understand the story at all. It is often helpful to use some kind of a scaffolding device to help learners with this task.

1. Comparison charts

The Two Stonecutter Stories: Re-tell and Comparison

You will re-tell your story to a partner who has read the other one, and in this way, discover the similarities and the differences between the two stories. To help you to do this, you will

a. first fill in the chart below with a partner who had the same story as you; and then

b. tell your story to a partner who read the other story, finding similarities and differences along the way. Try to use connecting words like first, then, next, after that, and finally to tell the story.

	A. The Stone Mason	B. The stonecutter
What was the man's job?		
What was his main problem?		
What did the man wish for? What was the result? 1. 2. etc.		
Who was the wish-granter?		
What character differences are there between the two men?		

2. Other graphic organizers

This would include any kind of visual presentation of the story, for example, a map, a timeline, or a chart which clarifies the plot of the story and identifies key events. (See, for example, Fagan, 1995, p. 115–24; Dong, 2004, p. 147–149.) These activities are best carried out in pairs or groups for maximum learner interaction. Some specific ideas include:

- placing the events in a flow chart, with arrows showing cause and effect relationships (Collie and Slater, 1987);
- identifying the classic elements of a folktale in the particular story and putting them in table form (e.g., main character(s); problem or challenge; magic helper/object; adventures in trying to solve the problem; resolution of the problem);
- identifying the elements of an oral narrative (e.g., Labov's orientation, complicating action, and resolution) in the folktale in chart form. (Parkinson & Thomas, 2000, p. 99)

3. A gapped summary using logical connectors. Students choose from a bank of expressions or from among several options for each blank space (as below).

The Stonecutter

Fill in the blanks in this summary with the best connecting word or expression:

(1)____________________there was a hardworking stonecutter, (2)____________________ had a lot of work and many happy customers. (3)___________________, he was happy and content with his life, (4)_______________________ he enjoyed creating beautiful things. (5)_________________, one day he was working in the home of a very wealthy man, and (6)____________ he saw how easy that man's life seemed, with his large house and many servants, he became envious. He wished that he could be a rich man. (Etc.)

List of choices

1. a. Then	b. Once upon a time	c. At that time
2. a. who	b. which	c. whoever
3. a. As usual	b. Although	c. Usually
4. a. so	b. then	c. and
5. a. Due to	b. However	c. Because
6. a. when	b. so	c. before

4. A gapped summary using the new focus vocabulary

The Stonecutter

Fill in each blank with an adjective that you think best completes the sentence. It does not have to be the same as in the story; it could be a synonym.

Once upon a time, there was a stonecutter who went every day to cut stones out of a great rock on the side of a mountain. He cut blocks of stone for gravestones or for __________ houses. He was a very _______________ workman, and had many _______________ customers. For a long time, he was quite happy and _______________, and did not ask for anything better than what he had.

One day, the stonecutter carried a gravestone to the house of a very rich man, where he saw many _______________things which he had never even dreamed of. Suddenly, his work seemed very hard and heavy, and he said to himself, "If only I were a rich man, and could sleep in a _______________ bed with silk curtains and _______________ pillows, how happy I would be!" And a voice answered him: "Your wish is heard! You will be a rich man!"

Partial list of choices (These choices could be the original words or synonyms.)

beautiful happy satisfied soft

contented hard silk wealthy

good huge small wonderful

**Alternatively, the teacher could provide a summary with some incorrect adjectives and ask the students to find and correct them, thereby demonstrating comprehension.

<u>B. *Personal Response and Extension Activities*</u>

1. Discussions

Good discussions help develop cognitive and academic skills. Students may be asked to identify themes and main ideas or to relate the folktale to their own situation, and see if there are any connections. They may be asked to suggest explanations or justifications for the actions of one or more of the characters, such as "Why do you think s/he did ...?", or "What would you do if...?"

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The Stonecutter Stories: Small Group Discussion

1. What do you think is the main idea of the two stories? You can choose one or more of the sentences below. Can you think of others with your partner?

   a. We can always find someone who is better off, who is in a better situation than we are.

   b. The more we have, the more we want.

   c. We need to find ways to be contented and satisfied in the situation we are in.

2. Do you think there are times when it is GOOD to be discontented or dissatisfied with a situation? If so, when?

3. Who do you think first told this story, a rich man or an ordinary worker? Why?

4. Read the following statements. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answers.

The stonecutter / stone mason should have...

   a. been satisfied when his first wish came true.

   b. thought more carefully about his wishes.

   c. thought of something that would have helped his friends too.

   d. your ideas

The stonecutter / stone mason shouldn't have

   a. been greedy.

   b. made any wishes at all.

   c. complained.

   d. your ideas

5. Finish this sentence: If I were the stone mason, I would have ...

2. Activities related to themes

Dreams and Wishes

Shopping List: A Ranking and Survey Activity

(Adapt from Ur, A Course in Language Teaching, 1996, p. 126–127)

Students imagine that there is a store that sells amazing "products" such as more free time, a job that includes travel, perfect health, a great marriage, or a lot of money. The store owner will stock any of these items if they know there will be four or more buyers. Students receive a chart with a list of possible choices. They choose the three items they would like the most (for example, a job with lots of travel or great co-workers). Then they try to find at least three other buyers for each of their three choices. When they find a buyer, they write the name of the person in the appropriate column. The goal is to get enough buyers for each of the items they have chosen so that the store will stock them. The items on the list would, of course, be adapted for the particular students you have. When students have finished their survey, find out as a class or in small groups which items will be stocked. This could be followed by small-group discussions in which participants explain/justify their choices. (This is an activity many teachers in workshops have enjoyed.)

Work/Jobs

Choosing and Developing a Career

a. In pairs: In three or four minutes, list as many jobs or professions as possible.

From the list, choose one job that you would really like to have.

Your choice: ______________________________

Explain to your partner why you chose this career.

b. Now ask at least four people for advice about skills and qualities you would need in this career and how you can best develop them. Use the chart below to record their advice.

Name of the advisor	Quality the advisor thinks you need to succeed in this career	How you could develop that quality

c. On your own: From the list of qualities you have gathered, choose two that you think are most important and how you could develop them. If you prefer, you can choose one of your own.

The quality I need most is ____.

I could develop it by ____.

d. In a small group: Share this information with one or two classmates. In addition, explain why these qualities are so important in the career you have chosen.

C. ***Imaginative activities: Role play***

a. Give advice from one character to another (use modals: should, should have, could).

b. Talk show or press conference: Reporters or a talk show host interviews the character(s) in the story. This can be done in small groups or as a class.

c. Speculation in pairs or small groups

1. Prepare and act out a prequel/background or a sequel to the story.
2. Prepare and act out an alternative ending to the story.

d. Give a short speech, for example, a speech the stonecutter gives to a group of his fellow stonecutters about what a wonderful life they have (comparing it to that of others).

D. *Writing activities: In-role-writing*

a. Write a diary entry or a letter describing how the stonecutter felt at some point in the story. (Dong, 2004, p. 188)

b. Write a resume and cover letter based on the stonecutter's various work experiences.

c. Write a postcard message of 50 words summarizing the stonecutter's experience (Collie and Slater 1987, p. 87).

Concluding Remarks

Folktales have tremendous potential for promoting oral and written communication in adult EFL and ESL. They can either be used occasionally for a change from the regular curriculum, as a stand-alone unit, or even as the basis for a whole course. Teacher participants in my workshops have been very creative in devising activities for other folktale pairs. I hope the examples here will also result in many new ideas and adaptations on your part. And may you teach happily ever after!

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MAKING THE MOST OF TED TALKS IN THE EAP CLASSROOM

By Ellen Servinis, University of Toronto

Like Toastmasters on steroids, TED, whose video lectures have garnered over a billion views, has raised public speaking to whole new level. TED talks are making people excited, inspired even, by algorithms and children and crowd-sourced solutions to food insecurity.

The TED phenomenon has also provided (through a very forgiving Creative Commons license) a wealth of new material for EAP instructors, especially those charged with the challenging task of "teaching listening."

When I first discovered TED talks, I was hesitant to use them in the classroom because of their advanced language level and speed. The majority of my students, though officially high intermediate or advanced ESL, reported that they didn't routinely watch or listen to anything in (unsubtitled) English outside of a classroom, with the exception of popular music. I suspected TED would be too difficult, and possibly frustrating for them. However, I experimented one semester, occasionally interspersing them among what I thought were more "appropriate" listening materials.

At the end of the semester I surveyed the students about which materials they thought were most useful for practicing listening. TED was at the top of the list – hands down. In discussion after, the students told me what they valued about TED: the authenticity of the language; the enthusiasm of the speakers; the wide variety of topics; the fact they were current; and the built-in comprehension supports they could use at home, like multi-lingual subtitles and transcripts. After the survey results, I decided to spend more time looking for ways to integrate TED into the classroom effectively. Here are a few of the lessons I've learned in my EAP class.

Ten Tips for Making the Most of TED

1. Don't worry that a talk isn't "academic enough." The skills we need teach our students can be practices on a wide range of materials. Many TED talks lend themselves to these skills, regardless of the topic.

> **Best non-academic video that lends itself to teaching EAP listening skills:** Ric Elias's "Three Things I Learned While My Plane Crashed". It's only 5 minutes long, but you can use it for: predicting content; listening for cues for background

information/main idea/organization; noticing repetition; taking notes; learning vocabulary (even has nine words from AWL); and paraphrasing ideas.

2. Download the VLC media player (http://www.videolan.org/vlc/). It's free, and you can use it to play all kinds of media, not just TED lectures. Most useful feature: you can easily slow down the playback speed of many videos – by as much at 10-20% – without losing sound quality. To play a TED talk on VLC player, you'll need to download the lecture first, rather than play it over the Internet. Fortunately, TED has provided an easy-to-use DOWNLOAD button for each video.

3. Engage students' critical thinking. Some of the best videos for this are the ones rated "persuasive" by users. (Click 'Rate' under any video to find this). Have students discuss whether they agree with the rating, and why: analyze the speaker's language, emotions, body language, PPT images, arguments, and evidence.

Recommended talks rated "persuasive": Sheryl Sandberg's "Why We Have Too Few Women Leaders", Kathryn Schulz's "Don't Regret Regret", Jamie Oliver's "Teach Every Child about Food", Graham Hill's "Why I'm a Weekday Vegetarian", and Dan Pink's "The Puzzle of Motivation".

4. Take your time. Most of the talks are quite rich in content and language. Pre-listening vocabulary work is important. Also, remember that the speakers have a strict time limit and aren't expecting anyone to be writing down their talk, so if students are taking notes, you should slow down the playback speed (see #2) and pause the video occasionally. Give students time afterward to answer comprehension questions and discuss the ideas in the lecture. Work on longer lectures (the longest is about 20 minutes) can sometimes be spread over two classes.

5. Take advantage of the transcripts. Read a lecture (or part of one) aloud for your students: no technology needed. And you can adjust the speed or vocabulary as you see fit, encouraging students to ask clarification questions. You can also create killer cloze exercises and vocabulary lists (The Compleat Lexical Tutor is great for this: http://www.lextutor.ca/). Or extend a listening lesson with a reading activity based on the transcript (and vice-versa).

6. Don't underestimate the value of a short talk. Click TALKS at the top of the homepage to search videos by length: you'll find plenty of interesting, discussion-generating talks that are under nine minutes. There is the added advantage that you can replay them once or twice without taking up your entire class time.

Recommended short talks: Graham Hill's "Less stuff, more happiness" (6 min), Marco Tempest's "The Magic of Truth and Lies (and iPods)" (5 min), Julian Treasure's,"Five Ways to Listen Better" (8 min), and Matt Cutts's "Try Something New for 30 Days" (3.5 min).

7. **Use TED to teach presentation skills.** This is especially useful for business or engineering students. Choose two videos and have students compare them in terms of:

- Introductions – length, effectiveness
- Delivery – speed, clarity, word stress
- Body language – is it dynamic, fidgety, non-expressive?
- PowerPoint – did it add to the presentation, or was it distracting?
- Transitions – were changes of topic clearly signaled?

Recommended talks to compare presentation skills: Tali Sharot's "The Optimism Bias" and Malcolm Gladwell's "The Strange Tale of the Norden Bombsight" make for an interesting contrast in style.

8. Focus on academic vocabulary. Many of us teach mixed classes of students bound for various disciplines. When it's difficult to find a topic that's relevant to everyone, a reasonable compromise is to choose a lecture with general appeal, and then focus on vocabulary from the Academic Word List. The AWL highlighter at http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/alzsh3/acvocab/awlhighlighter.htm allows you to copy and paste the transcript into a dialog box. It highlights all of the AWL words, breaking them down into their sublists.

9. Check out TED-Ed (http://ed.ted.com/). This is a recent addition to the TED site which takes short lessons by seasoned educators, and finds animators to create original artwork for them. You can customize quizzes based on the lectures for your own class, and track student results. Even if designing online quizzes is not your cup of tea, check out the site: its combination of creativity and brainpower is truly exceptional. Which brings me to my last tip...

10. Remember to occasionally turn off your teacher filter. Do you like creating teaching materials from authentic sources? Do you often approach print and electronic media thinking "what could my students get out of this?" If so, then you may be over-mediating the world through your "teacher filter." This habit is useful at times ("I just found the perfect lecture for the final exam!"), but ultimately draining. It's a little like the story of the man who found $20 on the street, and then spent his whole life with his head down, picking up dropped change while missing out on hundreds of sunsets, smiles and other random pleasures. So every once in awhile forget about your class, look up, and let yourself get carried away by an idea, not because your students would love it, but because *you* love it.

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THE JOYS OF MARKING

By Michael DiPetta, Humber College

Do you ever look at a stack of essays you need to mark and start trying to trick yourself in different ways to make it seem okay to mark them later? I can do some now, but I'd rather do them all at once. I could do them now, but I have this great new activity I want to plan for tomorrow. For example, I'm deciding to write this article right now, rather than mark.

Most teachers I've talked to dislike marking, marking essays in particular. This is what I and many teachers struggle with, which makes the entire process difficult. "The Ontario College of Teacher's annual 'State of the Teaching Profession' phone survey, which contacted more than one thousand teachers, found that 'only 78% are happy with the job they are doing'" (Ferguson, Frost, & Hall, 2012, p. 28). This is in no small way due to the marking demands on many teachers. The data from this survey clearly confirms, "That specific issues such as too much work, inadequate time for teaching and marking…are key predictors of depression among teachers" (p. 35). It's not just because it takes time, but there are several internal battles going on when one attempts to evaluate and put a number on an essay.

Excitement: Teaching vs. Marking

One of the reasons teaching English is my passion, my love, something I want to do for the rest of my life, is the excitement, the spontaneity, the interaction with the students. As an avid fisherman, I liken it to hooking your first ever fish with moments of elation that are indescribable. These sensations are, at best, dulled in the marking process. There is an inherent performance in teaching, we plan, we practice, and we put it on display for all our students. Students and teachers interact organically. A student in a high level writing class asked me a pronunciation question pertaining to *-ed* endings of verbs, it obviously wasn't in my lesson plan, but the class enjoyed the ten minute explanation and mini practice session we all did. Another time I asked students what they did that weekend at the beginning of a Monday class, and it turns out that five of them had seen the same movie that weekend in theatres! We had a great class discussion and were able to tie it into the sequence of events objective of that particular class. That is the component we cannot plan for, and the one that makes every class an adventure. "Teaching is a bit like being a comedian at a stand-up club. We perform for an often unruly and unreliable crowd. [The] class frequently laughs at things I never thought were funny and seem to prefer slapstick over cerebral wit…But comedians don't have to stay after the show and clear the tables and sweep the floors.

That's what marking is like for a teacher" (Bray, 2012). The show is the part of teaching that can become exhilarating and rewarding not only because the student might ask a valuable question, but because it asks us to answer it with immediacy and accuracy. We all bring an energy to the classroom, but that is absent when marking essays. Ultimately, there is a completely different feeling between being in the classroom versus sitting in the office assessing essays, and typically, we don't like it.

Fairness and Objectivity

After the lack of excitement has sunk in, we start to ask questions about our personal methods of marking. Can there be fairness across courses? Fairness among different teachers? Fairness within your own personal mood? As teachers we strive to be completely unbiased and fair with all of our evaluations. Many of us can remember when we were students and felt that the teacher was not being objective. We hated it, and so we duly try to mark everything equally without bias. These are the difficult questions the teacher fights with. I notice it when I compare writing samples or entry-level writing assignments with other teachers. We are never off by many levels, but sometimes one teacher thinks it's a strong level-four student, while I think the student should be placed in level five. I know that it is nearly impossible to have the exact same standards as the teachers sitting around me in the office, try as I might to have them be the same, but it bothers me.

And speaking of being bothered, what about mood and distractions? When I'm marking at home I could easily be distracted, even if it's only for a moment, to answer a question about the dishwasher, or whether we are going out that evening, or what we are cooking for dinner. If I am in the middle of marking an essay and have started off in a good mood, but have stopped marking briefly, only to return in a bad mood, what happens to the mark? All good teachers will be self aware and try to block everything out to make sure they evaluate the essays without taking into account any personal feelings surrounding them, but this is harder than it sounds, and makes marking something that is not fun.

Student Response to Feedback

We put all this time and effort into marking a stack of essays, and then the student merely gives it a cursory glance, looks at the mark, is satisfied, and never looks at the writing again. In Don Aker's book *Hitting the Mark: Assessment Tools for Teachers* he explains this, saying, "[We] see it demonstrated vividly, as students flip pages, ignore written comments, [and] race to find the value written in red at the end" (1995, p. 53). We want the student to take a look at the feedback and improve their writing. That's what this is all about! Not only to evaluate where the student is now, but to further their language learning in the future. In an ideal world they read all of the feedback, note all of the mistakes, and apply the corrections next time. Teachers can get around this attitude by forcing students to rewrite their essays, regardless of mark. This is particularly important for the students above the

75% line. Many are content with an 82% and won't spend the time to improve much further. This makes marking essays less rewarding than anything else we do as teachers. All of the time it takes me to mark an essay, being self reflective of the methods I use to mark and giving feedback in a carefully constructed rubric, and then the student takes 15 seconds to look at all that hard work? It makes the time spent on all of this marking feel wasted.

And we worry about the student's feelings too. Students identify with their mark personally. "Every percentage grade or letter grade we assign there's an invisible stamp that all students see clearly: 'This is what you are worth.' And as much as we might say, 'I am assessing your work, not you,' our students think differently" (Aker, 1995, p. 53). We don't want the student to feel discouraged or give up because of a bad mark, nor do we want them to feel like this is an evaluation of their person if they uncharacteristically do poorly on an essay.

Looking at our Own Failure

At the same time as we fret about our students taking it personally, it's hard not to beat up on ourselves. This reason is the toughest pill for me to swallow. Invariably, while marking essay after essay, I run into a student or a problem that I know I've taught, I know I've helped a student with one-on-one. The feeling of failing the students is the strongest negative feeling within this profession, and it unfortunately can be identified most of all within essays. You can be reassured by other students, other teachers, coordinators, and managers, but it won't make you feel any better.

It's Time Consuming

Taking all of these factors into consideration, it's clear that marking essays is a time consuming and laborious process. Trying to be fair, trying to identify corrections effectively, and giving the proper feedback that can be as helpful as possible to the student, takes a lot of time. A survey of the Ontario College of Teachers indicates that the third most common source of teacher anxiety and stress is lack of time to mark, behind too much work, and not enough time to do work (Ferguson, Frost, & Hall, 2012, p. 34). You can spread them out into manageable piles, you can do a set amount per day, you can dangle mini rewards like snacks in front of yourself for every ten essays you mark, but ultimately, it still takes a long time. No matter what strategy you try to employ, those mountains of essays are still there to welcome you every time you sit at your desk.

To distract from the tedium, I try to get students to write on a variety of great topics, but it seems I always end up with a vast majority of the class choosing the same topic. This in turn, means that I read the same essay topic over and over again, making the marking time feel like it's stretching out interminably.

Marking essays is without a doubt something that many teachers dread. There is a stark difference in energy and excitement between teaching and marking which makes the process something that is challenging. Couple that with the extensive time it takes and the extremely difficult questions on fairness and objectivity, and it's no wonder why teachers will sometimes do their best to procrastinate marking as long as possible. I'm staring at the pile of essays again now, I guess I've procrastinated enough, but before I start I'd better check my email again.

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THE SPEAKING SECTION OF THE TEST OF ENGLISH FOR INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION (TOEIC)

By Carrie Demmans Epp and Daniel Riccardi, University of Toronto

Measuring English language proficiency, particularly productive speaking and writing skills, has become increasingly important as Canadian organizations hire or enroll more and more international applicants who speak English as a second language. Tests such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) have been used widely in Ontario to ensure that international applicants have the English proficiency that is necessary to study at Canadian universities. At the same time, use of the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) has grown considerably worldwide (ETS, 2010c) and some initial use of the TOEIC test in Ontario has become apparent, with professional licensing organizations in Ontario accepting TOEIC scores (ETS Canada Inc., 2013). Ontario colleges are also using TOEIC scores to inform admissions decisions (Georgian College, 2013; The Willis Business College Limited, 2010). Given these changes, it is particularly important to ensure that these tests accurately and fairly assess examinees' speaking skills since one's productive abilities are of particular importance for working or studying in Canada.

The recently created speaking section of the TOEIC is one measure of productive language for the English that is used in business settings. It can be used alongside the writing section and the two sections dedicated to receptive language use (listening and reading) to assess an examinee's level of English proficiency. We provide an overview of the history and development of the TOEIC and its use for determining a person's communicative abilities in English. We discuss how the speaking section is being used and identify potential limitations with a focus on the test's content, how well it tests a person's speaking ability (construct validity), how reliably it measures this ability, and the limited reports of its effect on teaching (washback).

History and Development

Educational Testing Service (ETS) launched the TOEIC in 1979 at the request of the Japanese government (Stoynoff, 2008; Suzuki & Daza, 2004). At that time, it only tested examinees' listening and reading skills (Woodford, 1982). Since its introduction, people have attempted to link TOEIC scores to examinees' productive language abilities (Wilson, 1993).

According to ETS, the test assesses how effectively a person can communicate, through speech, in a workplace setting rather than the examinee's ability to communicate in academic settings (2010a). The recommended uses of the TOEIC speaking test include: placement, student and employee language proficiency monitoring, and gate keeping for job placement and promotion where English is a required skill (ETS, 2010a).

The TOEIC has received criticism for the lack of research that supports or refutes its claims (Chapman, 2003; Stoynoff, 2008) and its inability to assess productive language abilities (Powers, 2010). Much of this criticism was made before the introduction of the speaking section, which was created in response to feedback from score users (Hines, 2010) and the media (Powers, 2010). While the speaking section was evaluated prior to its release, few of the resulting reports had been made public, which may have contributed to criticism. However, the test has been commended for using an elaborate ten-step scoring process that improves the reliability of scores (Stoynoff, 2008).

The lessons learned during the development of the speaking section of the TOEFL iBT informed the development of the TOEIC speaking test (Hines, 2010). Using a process called evidence-centered design (Hines, 2010), information was elicited about the types of tasks that employees must perform in international business settings. This information came from TOEIC score users and helps ensure that test items reflect real-world tasks, which increases their authenticity. Additional details about the test content, its verification, and its assessment are below.

Content and Delivery

The TOEIC speaking section takes approximately twenty minutes to complete and is performed in conjunction with the writing section. It consists of eleven oral tasks of increasing complexity and difficulty; all tasks are recorded. The first two test items have examinees read a text out loud. Subsequent items ask examinees to listen to a recording and use the provided information or their life experiences to prepare a response to the question or problem that is posed in the recording. Test items provided in the sample test that is available online illustrate the typical structure and content of these questions (ETS, 2008). In questions 7 through 9 of the sample test, examinees are provided with a schedule for a conference about starting your own business. They are given thirty seconds to study the material and then asked 3 questions that are related to the times of particular speakers and the price of the conference.

While requiring examinees to listen to a recording and record their response may seem highly artificial, this type of communication can be representative of tasks that occur in the real world. For example, one of the sample test items has examinees listen to a phone message left by a bank client and propose a solution to that client's problem (ETS, 2008);

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this type of task commonly occurs in workplace environments. Using a computer to perform these tasks also avoids the problems associated with interviewer variation, which can affect test-taker performance (Brown, 2003). Brown demonstrates that the same test-taker performed differently and received different scores when interviewed by two different examiners even though both examiners had received similar training. This suggests that variation in interviewer style may affect an examinee's ability to demonstrate their full speaking ability.

The inclusion of problem solving in tasks tests more than just the examinee's speaking abilities. It also tests problem-solving skills and may test domain knowledge that has been acquired through previous work experience. This dependence on knowledge from prior work experience is problematic because test difficulty is influenced by an examinee's ability to activate relevant knowledge that has been gained through personal experience (Mislevy & Yin, 2009). If a test-taker has not worked in a bank setting, he or she may not know how to respond to the problem that is being posed by the message left by his or her fictional client. Furthermore, the large increase in the number of young university students who take the test and may lack work experience (Chiba University, 2011) highlights this problem since it is unlikely that these students would have had the opportunity to develop their problem-solving skills in the workplace and, thus, may have difficulty proposing solutions to test items characterized by customer service and client interactions. The lack of work experience problem could be avoided if the test item required examinees to play the client role since this would likely be familiar to them.

At present, it is unclear how cultural variation and pragmatic ability affects test scores or if pragmatics are even assessed. Most would agree that using formal language appropriately in certain contexts, such as a business conference, is an extremely important aspect of language proficiency. Knowing how to use language informally in more casual contexts, such as at an impromptu lunch with colleagues, can be equally important. An examinee's culture can affect the level of formality that he or she uses in dialogue and is one aspect of the examinee's personal experience that can affect task difficulty (Fulcher & Reiter, 2003). For example, an examinee may use words that are considered to be too formal or provide a minimal response because his or her culture requires this type of response. Since people need to be able to negotiate the misunderstandings that result from these differences, their negotiation skills and pragmatic abilities (e.g., use of the correct level of formality) should be assessed (Canagarajah, 2006).

Assessing the Test

Several evaluations have been performed on the speaking section of the TOEIC. Initial evaluations were performed prior to its use. These were followed by evaluations of test results and of the relationship between examinee self-perceptions of speaking proficiency and their scores.

In 2006, ETS conducted a pilot study of the TOEIC speaking test (Liao & Wei, 2010). This pilot aimed to determine the consistency of those scoring the test (inter-rater reliability), the overall score's reliability, the ability of the test to measure speaking independently of other language skills, and the difficulty of different test forms (Liao & Wei, 2010). Examinees from France, Korea, and Japan participated. However, little information about the sampling procedure is given and no argument for how closely this sample represents the actual test-taking population is made.

This pilot resulted in ETS modifying the scoring guide and changing rater training to increase inter-rater agreement, which was above 0.8. The results showed that the speaking test was assessing speaking independently of writing, reading, and listening; this was further supported by later evaluations of examinee scores (Liao, Qu, & Morgan, 2010). The pilot study showed that the test items were consistent (above 0.8) for both versions of the test. While test-retest reliability was not measured for the speaking section during this study, it was later found to be reasonably reliable (above 0.7) using a sample from the population of all examinees (Liao & Qu, 2010). Further to these investigations, data from testing between 2006 and 2009 established that the standard error of measurement is approximately 7% (ETS, 2010a).

An investigation of examinee self-perceptions of their English speaking proficiency was also performed in Korea and Japan (Powers, Kim, Yu, Weng, & vanWinkle, 2009). This evaluation showed a positive correlation (0.54) between the examinees' self-reports and their TOEIC speaking scores. While examinee jobs varied, there is no indication of how well the sample's characteristics match those of the testing population. Furthermore, the relationship of test scores to workplace communicative performance has not been shown.

Test Uses and External Reporting

ETS meets professional expectations, as laid out in the code of ethics of the International Language Testing Association (2001) and the American Psychological Association's Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education (1988), by clearly detailing the intended assessment purposes and acceptable uses of the TOEIC speaking test in its various reports and handbooks. These handbooks describe the meaning behind examinee scores in easy to understand language (ETS, 2009, 2010a). ETS also provides consulting services in order to help ensure that people use the test results appropriately (2010a).

Appropriate industry use of TOEIC scores has grown considerably, with 10,000 organizations using TOEIC to influence hiring and promotional decisions (ETS, 2010c). Universities and colleges are increasingly using TOEIC scores and encouraging their students to take the tests (*TOEIC's popularity on the rise*, 2012). However, their use of these scores is not always aligned with the stated purposes of the TOEIC. Universities have used scores appropriately when placing students within programs or when encouraging them to take the TOEIC speaking and writing tests to provide students, especially those in business schools, with evidence that they can communicate in English (ETS, 2012). However, additional support for TOEIC score use in admission decisions, as a requirement for graduation, or for grading purposes (Anaheim University, 2012; Ito, 2010; Maeda, 2010; University of California, San Diego, 2012) is needed.

Washback

While the introduction of this test section has the potential to reduce the neglect of speaking skills in language classrooms (Stoynoff, 2008), little exploration of its washback effects has been published. Only positive stories have appeared: one from industry (ETS, 2010b) and one from a post-secondary institution (ETS, 2012). With that said, it may be too early for serious investigations into the effects that this test section has had on instruction to have appeared.

Conclusion

While the addition of the speaking section to the TOEIC helps better assess communicative ability within a workplace context, it needs to be used in conjunction with measures of other productive and receptive language proficiency since it does not appear to test communication as a whole. Important aspects of communication, such as pragmatic ability, appear to be missing from the TOEIC speaking test. The computer-based delivery ensures consistency but constrains the test's usefulness as a measure of an examinee's ability to co-construct dialog. It is unclear if studies of the TOEIC speaking test have been performed on representative populations. We, therefore, do not know if its use is fair for people from all cultures or work environments. Furthermore, its effect on classroom and industry practices requires additional study. These strengths and limitations should be taken into account as use of the TOEIC increases within Ontario and Canada.

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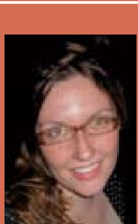
Author Bio



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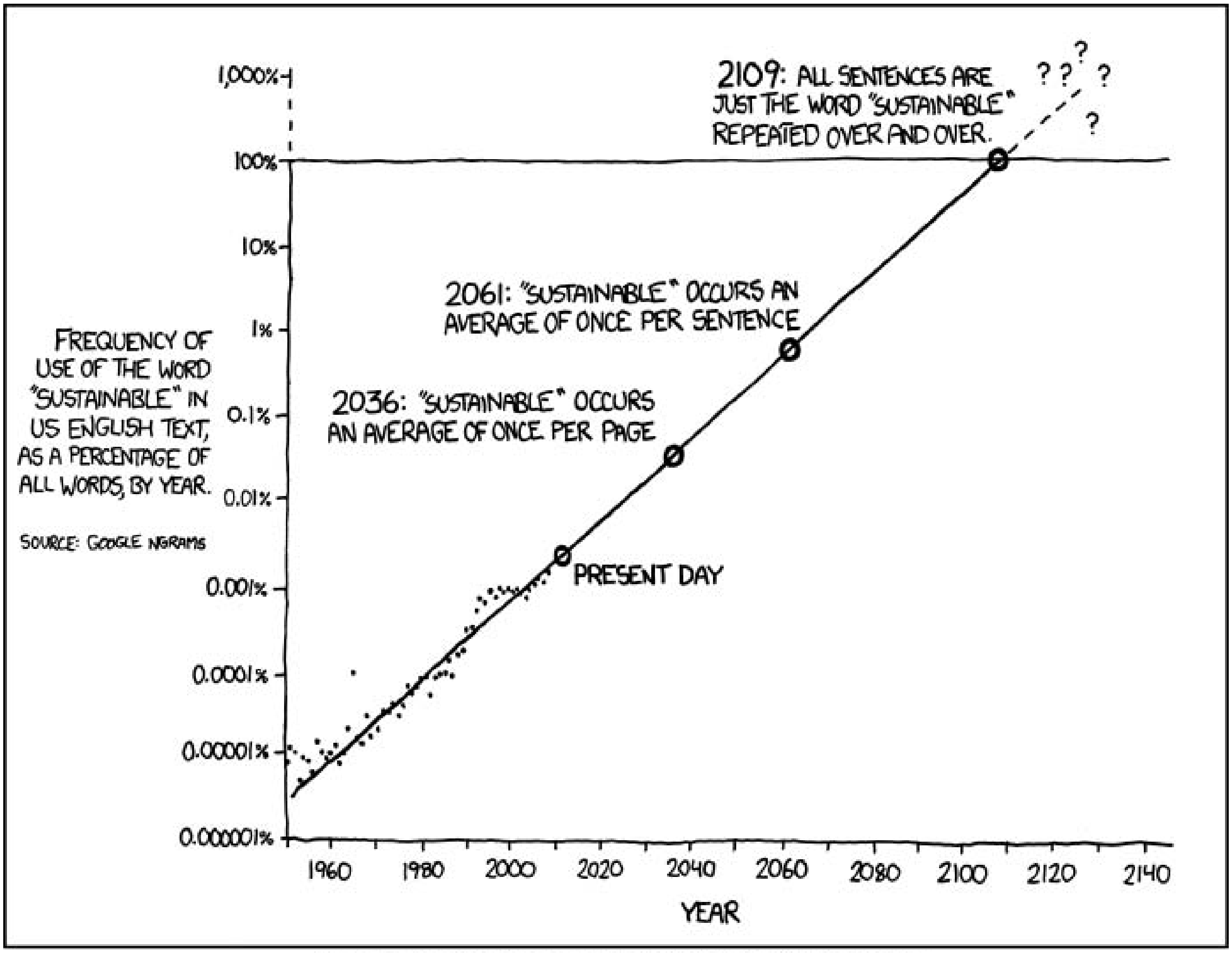
XKCD, by Randall Munroe



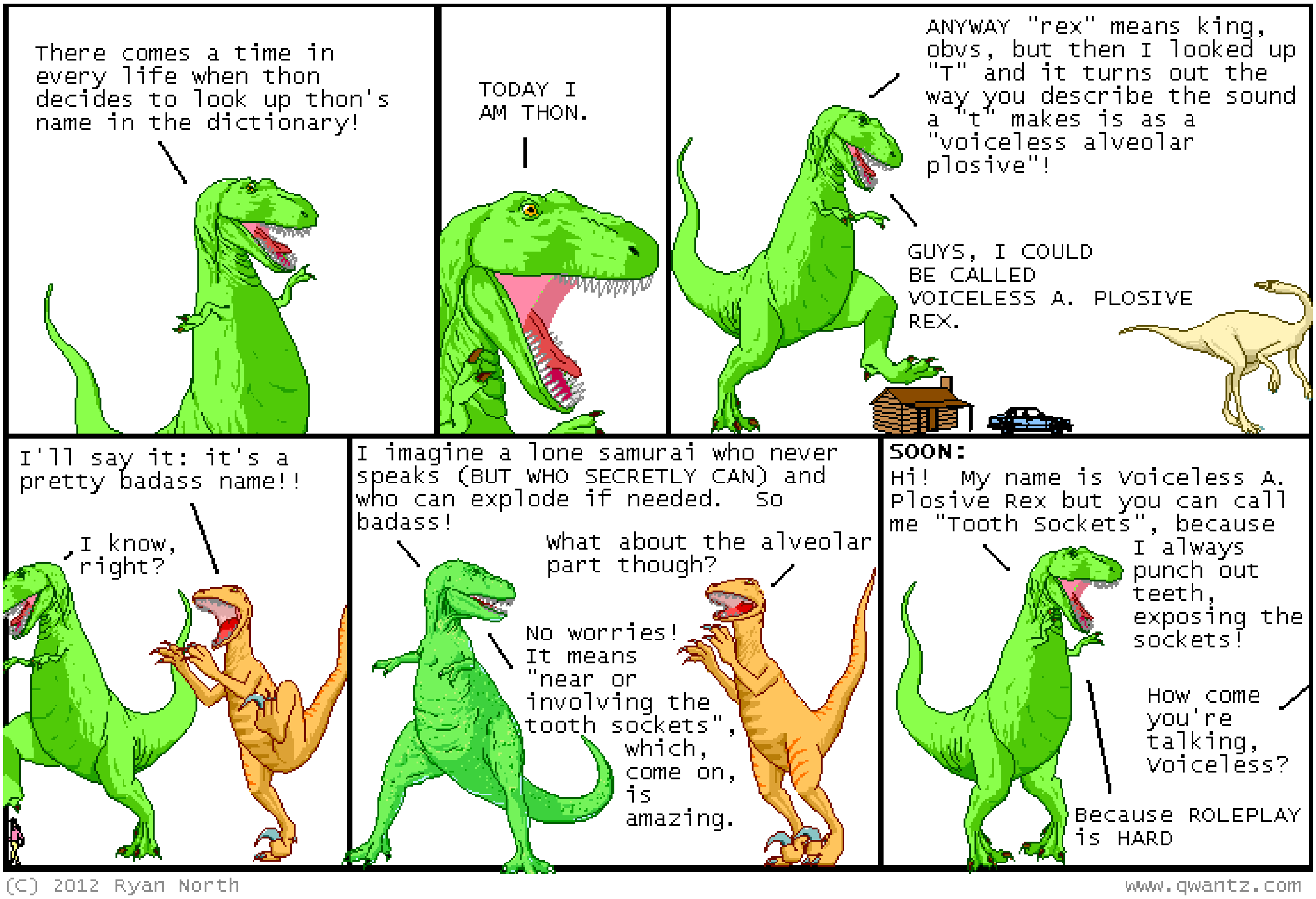
THE WORD "SUSTAINABLE" IS UNSUSTAINABLE.

Though 100 years is longer than a lot of our resources.

source:http://xkcd.com/1007/

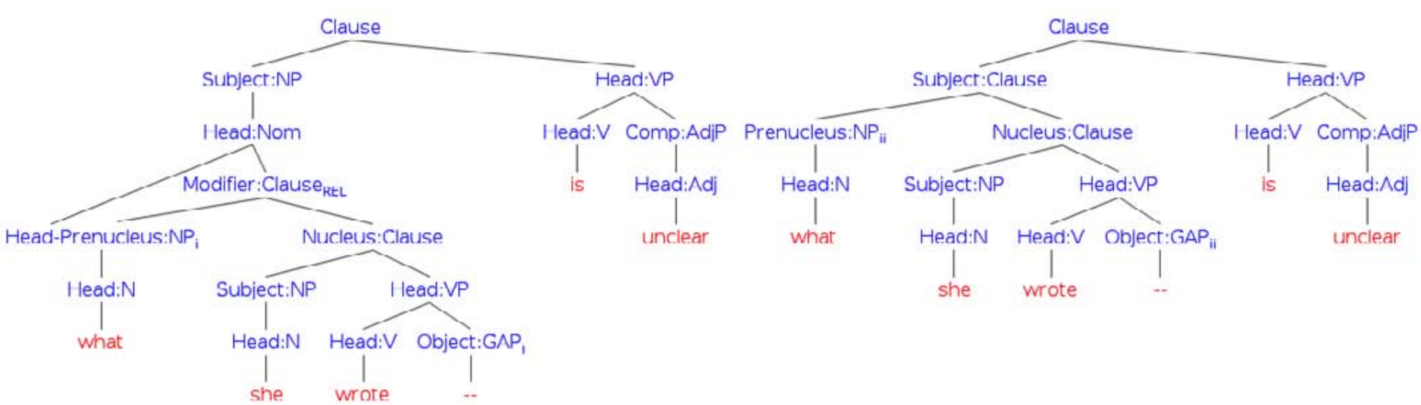
Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Dinosaur Comics



http://www.qwantz.com/index.php?comic=2138

Syntax Tree



Puzzle

Grammar Rules!

One way for computers to understand language is by parsing sentences to figure out the role of each word. A context free grammar (CFG) (also called phrase structure grammar) is a set of rules for forming sentences. Only sentences that can be generated using such a set of rules are then deemed grammatically correct and "well-formed". Computer scientists and linguists use CFGs to define and parse languages, where a "language" is defined as any and all sentences that a given CFG can generate. S is the starting symbol for each sentence.

The following rules make up a simple CFG:

S → N V   N → *children*   N → *squirrels*   V → *sing*   V → *eat*

Each rule says that the element to the left of the arrow can be expanded into the elements to the right of the arrow. By repeatedly replacing symbols, this CFG can expand the symbol S into "squirrels sing", "children sing", "squirrels eat", and "children eat". It cannot, however, generate "children eat squirrels" or "squirrels eat children" or just "children" – you can see that there is no possible sequence of replacements that turns S into any of these.

The following is another simple CFG. The rules have been numbered for your convenience, but the numbers are not part of the rules.

1. S → NP VP	2. VP → VP PP	3. PP → P
4. IV → *runs*	5. NP → N	6. VP → VP CONJ VP
7. PP → P NP	8. C → *that*	9. NP → D N
10. N → *squirrel*	11. TV → *chases*	12. P → *in*
13. NP → NP CONJ NP	14. N → *he*	15. TV → *eats*
16. P → *away*	17. VP → IV	18. N → *John*
19. TV → *catches*	20. CONJ → *and*	21. VP → IV PP
22. N → *Mary*	23. TV → *tells*	24. D → *the*
25. VP → TV NP	26. N → *dog*	27. TV → *sees*
28. VP → TV C S	29. N → *tree*	30. IV → *sits*

Here is a simple story. Several of the following sentences are, according to the above CFG, not well formed, meaning they cannot be derived from S by repeated substitution of symbols. Circle the sentences that the CFG above can; ignore the periods.

John sees the dog and Mary sees the dog.
The dog sees John and Mary.
The dog sees a squirrel.
The squirrel sits in the tree.
That squirrel sees the dog.
The squirrel was seen by the dog.
The dog runs.
The squirrel in the tree runs.
The dog chases the squirrel and eats the squirrel.
The dog eats.
John sees that the dog eats the squirrel.
John tells Mary that the dog eats the squirrel.
The dog sees that John sees that he eats the squirrel.
And the dog runs away.
Mary and John chase the dog.
John chases and catches the dog.
John eats dog.

Source: http://www.naclo.cs.cmu.edu/2013/NACLO2013ROUND1.pdf

Saturday Morning Breakfast Cereal, by Zach Weiner

Source: http://www.smbc-comics.com/comics/20121123.gif

TESL ONTARIO 41ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Merging and Emerging Pathways through Language

October 24-26, 2013
Allstream Centre – Exhibition Place

Message from the Conference Chair:

The excitement is building as the conference team launches into the work of planning our 41st annual conference. The theme "Merging and Emerging Pathways through Language" aptly reflects what's happening in our profession and also our move to a new venue.

Integration is something we often hear about from both our federal and provincial funders, and often within our own organizations. If you've worked in the field of English as a Second Language for any length of time, you've witnessed changes in trends and philosophies, and will continue to do so. For some learners and clients, the pathway to achieving their goals is fairly direct, but for others it can involve many stops along the way. And of course, it's language that is what we are about and the common element found throughout the pathway.

'Pathways' also relates to the move of our conference to the striking Allstream Centre located at Exhibition Place in Toronto. This beautifully refurbished art deco building will provide a bright and spacious environment where delegates will enjoy ample networking space, centrally located and easily accessible exhibitors' displays, comfortable breakout rooms, and state of the art technology including free WIFI throughout the building! Follow the link to see more: http://www.allstreamcentre.com/

Sheraton Centre Toronto continues to be our host hotel for accommodations and our Friday night gala and you'll be pleased to know that a morning and afternoon coffee break, a light lunch, as well as the Welcome Reception and Friday Gala are all included in the registration fee.

Mark your calendars and stay tuned for ongoing updates.

Barb Krukowski
Conference Chair

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs) -- ASK US!:

We know that change isn't always easy to deal with, and we anticipate there will be some questions regarding our move to the new venue.

With that in mind we invite you to "Ask Us". Send your questions to info@teslontario.org. Your frequently asked questions will be posted anonymously and responded to on the website (http://www.teslontario.net/conference/frequently-asked-questions) and in the Conference Communiqué. Here are a few of the FAQs, that you can find answers to, online:

Q: I was just starting to feel comfortable finding my way around the Sheraton Centre. Why are we moving again?

Q: How do I get to the Allstream Centre?

Q: Can I catch the free shuttle bus from Sheraton Centre to the Allstream Centre even if I am not staying at the hotel?

Q: Are the rooms at the Allstream bigger than they were at the Sheraton? I can't always get into the sessions that I want to attend.

Q: Which Mirvish Performances are available for TESL Ontario 2013 Conference Attendees?

Q: What food is included in the registration fee this year?

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TESL Ontario's Annual Conference is widely anticipated as the place to learn about the latest research in the field, attend informative workshops and of course, network. Your product or service will be centre stage - with an audience of over 1500 ESL professionals from across Canada, all of whom are interested in discovering and purchasing new materials to increase their effectiveness.

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Registration brochure posted online first week of September

Online Registration open September 24 to October 15

http://www.teslontario.org/conference

TESL Ontario 2013
Program Flow

	Thursday, October 24				Friday, October 25					Saturday, October 26		
7:00												
20												
40												
8:00	REGISTRATION OPEN				REGISTRATION OPEN					REGISTRATION OPEN		
20												
40												
9:00		EXHIBITS/POSTERS OPEN		Concurrent Sessions		EXHIBITS/POSTERS OPEN			Concurrent Sessions		EXHIBITS/POSTERS OPEN	Concurrent Sessions
20							**RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM:** Task-based Language Learning					
40								PANEL				
10:00				Coffee Break					Coffee Break			Coffee Break
20												
40				Annual General Meeting					Concurrent Sessions			Concurrent Sessions / Featured Speaker
11:00												
20												
40				Lunch/Exhibits					Lunch/Exhibits			Lunch/Exhibits
12:00												
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1:00			Keynote Speaker	Concurrent Sessions			Keynote Speaker		Concurrent Sessions			Concurrent Sessions
20												
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2:00				Coffee Break					Coffee Break			
20			**RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM:** Blended/Hybrid Learning and Teaching				**RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM:** Canadian Language Benchmarks and Assessment					Concurrent Sessions
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5:00				Welcome Reception					Free Time			
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7:00									Gala Dinner and Entertainment			
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8:00				*(Optional)* Theatre Performances *I Love Lucy* *Les Miserables*								
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24-Aug-13

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario