

CATESOL NEWSLETTER

SERVING TEACHERS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE



Letter from the CATESOL President

Hello CATESOL community! This is my last message to you as the CATESOL President. My two-year term will officially end at the CATESOL 2023 State Conference which will take place October 26 to 28 at the College of Alameda. At that time, we will make the transition to a new President, Song Hong, and I'm super excited that Song will take on the CATESOL presidency and continue moving our organization forward.



Everyone's path in CATESOL is different, and mine began 15 years ago in the spring of 2008 when I attended a CATESOL event at Laney College in Oakland (a few short miles from our State Conference this year!). It was a small Saturday workshop, and it piqued my interest in wanting to get involved in this organization. That spring led to fall and my joining the Bay Area Chapter leadership for an over five-year stint. I was lucky to serve as the Chapter Coordinator for over a year at the end of my time in the Chapter. I was elected to the CATESOL Board from the Chapter and have served in a number of roles on the Board since, culminating with my presidency.

In our work, personal, and volunteer lives, we don't always stick with an organization for 15 years, so there must be something that has kept me with CATESOL. For me, it's been the opportunity to learn about leadership and be a leader, meeting so many incredible people at all teaching levels across California, and the chance to be of service (Cont.)

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Integrate Tech

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to my colleagues across the state. I've been so fortunate to work on numerous events and initiatives with talented and dedicated people and be able to make a small difference in people's lives. It truly has been a blessing.

CATESOL needs people at the beginning, in the middle, and near the end of their busy, professional lives who can spend some time helping to make this amazing organization even better. Volunteering your time is a personal decision that can have such a beneficial impact in the lives of others, and if you are so inclined, CATESOL welcomes you with open arms to the work of our organization! Reach out to me if you have questions or are thinking about joining CATESOL in a volunteer role at catesol@catesol.org

It has been an honor to serve as the CATESOL President to the best of my ability. I hope you will consider being a part of this diverse and incredible community that can make a difference in the personal and professional lives of our fellow practitioners. I hope your volunteer journey includes

Words from the Editor

Kara Mac Donald

In this issue, as always we start with words from the CATESOL President, Anthony Burk, providing his final message to members as he will be transitioning to Past-President after the 2023 Annual Conference in October. Song Hong will be the incoming President. The Feature Article is offered by the two conference chairs, Talley Caruso and Sedique Popal, providing insights to the conference line of key sessions. Next we have a new column that is starting, CATESOL Member Focus, that will feature members that are doing extraordinary things possibly behind the scenes to highlight their contributions. The first column features Amy Sleep, the new co-editor the CATESOL Newsletter. We have the third submission of the Feature Focus column on uses of ChatGPT in the classroom. Marsha Chan offers a Special Column describing an event she held, Chinese Banquet Benefits CATESOL. Brett Pierces offers another article in the Special Column Series Submission II: Digital Storytelling, TESOL, and ...a Future of Omnipresent Change. We have three Member Submission articles, with the first by Kristi Reyes, Build Confidence, Generate Joy, Integrate Tech: Assignments for Creative Expression. The other two Member Submission articles address using podcasts in the classroom and scenario-based learning. Marsha Chan announces the new CATESOL Youtube channel to members in this issue. We have a Guest Author column discussing her negotiation of identity as an EFL and FL teacher. There is the fourth article in the Publication Series column by Melissa Salek, Publishing as a Graduate Student: The Journey to a Narrow and Focused Topic. There are several other articles provided in this issue that are contributed by members, guest authors and students. I encourage you to share something that you are doing in your classroom or invite a friend or student to do so.

The CATESOL NEWSLETTER accepts member and non-member submissions on topics related to ELT and related issues. The newsletter is published quarterly. There is no submissions deadline. Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis. Submissions received by the 30th of the month prior to a publication month (March, June, September & December) will be included in the coming issue.

Have an idea, email newsletter@catesol.org



Feature Article – 2023 CATESOL State Conference: Breaking New Ground

Talley Caruso and Sedique Popal

College of Alameda | 555 Atlantic Avenue, Alameda, CA | October 26 - 28

Come join us this October at College of Alameda (located near Oakland) to Break New Ground at the first ever CATESOL State conference to be hosted at an academic institution!

We will be taking advantage of College of Alameda's brand new facilities to venture unexplored paths together, gaining knowledge and practice while expanding our community of peers and mentors.

On-site check-in begins at 4:00 pm on Thursday, October 26th and sessions continue through 7:00 pm on Saturday, October 28th.

Please spread the word about our conference and our refreshed rates with friends, colleagues, and others through social media, message boards, and email distribution lists! Include our conference hashtag [#catesol23](#).

Why Attend CATESOL?

Since its establishment in 1969, CATESOL has been supporting educators, administrators, students, staff, and others concerned with the teaching of English as a second or foreign language, standard English as a second dialect, or bilingual education.

Attending a CATESOL conference is an unmatched opportunity to maintain currency in our field. You will get up-to-date information about statewide concerns, issues, and teaching methods.

With workshops provided by experts and professionals in this field, you will get usable and practical ideas for supporting students. Learn today and use tomorrow.

You will have the opportunity to complete multiple hours of professional development by attending plenaries, workshops, educational materials expositions, and networking sessions.

You can share what you learn with others. When you return from the conference, you and your colleagues will be able to collaborate and exchange ideas based on what you discover at the conference. This benefits you, your department, and your students.

Support your colleagues and profession by attending workshops and submitting a proposal to present at the conference. This increases your visibility and credibility in the field.

Connect with a CATESOL interest group at the conference. Joining an interest group meeting is a step in establishing a community of practice focused on your needs and interests.

We're partnering with College of Alameda to host this year's state conference, allowing us to offer the same high level of professional development experiences as we always have, while passing the savings on to you!

Support CATESOL through your participation and attendance. This has been a few difficult years and organizations like CATESOL appreciate your support to keep providing valuable information and training to the field.

(Cont.)

Feature Article – Cont.

What We Have Arranged for You!

Classroom ideas, networking, and inspiration – all at an affordable price!

We're partnering with College of Alameda to host this year's state conference, allowing us to offer the same high level of professional development experiences as we always have, while passing the savings on to you!

CATESOL Members \$ 170

Student CATESOL Members \$ 70

Non-Members pay only an additional \$30 – which includes a 1-year membership to CATESOL

Here is a sneak peak at the 2023 offerings:

Three Plenary Speakers

- Erin Vong Limoges | Say It Forward: How Oral History Amplifies Unheard Voices
- Dr. John Baugh | Prejudicial Barriers to Successful TESOL Education
- Dr. Debra Suarez | Leading from Where We Stand: Leadership Practices to Effect Educational Change in the Classroom, and Beyond

Six Featured Sessions

- Carol Lethaby | Evidence-based English Language Teaching: Connecting Theory and Practice
- Karim Mikhail | Paper Airplanes: Advancing English & Tech Education for Conflict-Affected Communities
- Erin Vong Limoges and Jessica Fagen | Say It Forward: Oral History as Pedagogy for Building Community and Communication
- Michael Berman | Old Ground, New Ground: Student Motivation in the 2020s
- Priscila Bordon | ELFing Your Class: Inclusive Practices to Empower Learners and Teachers
- Fernanda Bueno | Asylum-Seekers: Shifting from Victim to Warrior (title tbc by 8/29)

Additional Networking Opportunities
Interest Group Gatherings

Educational Level and Novice Instructor Rap Sessions

Thursday President's Reception

Friday Night Social Event

Graduate Student Mixer

Over 150 Interactive Workshops, Presentations, Poster Presentations and Lightning Talks

Numerous Exhibitors & Local Vendors

A Job Fair ~~ NEW IN 2023 ~~

Authentic cuisines / Food trucks, included with registration ~~ NEW IN 2023 ~~

Come with friends and colleagues – and meet new ones – at #CATESOL23!

For more information, please contact Talley Caruso at catesol2023@gmail.com or Sedique Popal at



Check out more information about the conference, lodging, restaurants and local tourist sites
[HERE](#)

dr.popal92@gmail.com

Have you checked out **CATESOL's** **YouTube** **Channel** yet?

As we gear up for the **2023 CATESOL State Conference**, be sure to visit our channel for conference content, including a [sneak peek](#) of the conference sessions!



Go to...

https://www.youtube.com/@catesol_youtube



Subscribed

and **SUBSCRIBE** to the channel to stay up to date with the release of new content and videos.



Check out our other social media accounts:

@officialcatesol

@CA_TESOL

facebook.com/CATESOL

CATESOL Member Focus – Welcoming the New Assistant Editor⁷ of the CATESOL Newsletter

Amy Sleep, Interview with Editor

The CATESOL Newsletter has been successful due to member contributions, the CATESOL Publications Chair, Marsha Chan, and the senior leadership and membership involvement and support.

As of this issue, the CATESOL Newsletter has brought on board, Amy Sleep, based on her interest and previous involvement in copy layout and editing. Amy is an experienced English language instructor and writing tutor with a demonstrated history of working with adult learners, adolescents, and international graduate students. Skilled in Spanish (C1 certified level), Teaching English as a Second Language, Intercultural Communication, English as a Second Language (ESL), and Writing. She possesses a strong educational and professional background with a Master of Arts focused in TESOL from American University, and Bachelor's degree in Spanish and English from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

CATESOL Newsletter Quarterly Member Focus

Announcing Amy Sleep's onboarding to the CATESOL Newsletter, not only seemed logical, but it got the editor thinking that with membership numbers up and chapters rejuvenating their activity, and with a string of years of virtual conferences, maybe we collectively don't know each other.

Each issue a CATESOL member doing the work we do, but maybe less visible, will be highlighted in the newsletter. Who is eligible? Anyone. How do they get nominated? A member, any member, sends an email to newsletter@catesol.org. The nominated individual responds to three questions via email that are published in the series column articles.

Inaugural Member Focus Interview – Amy Sleep

Editor: Can you share information about your background?

You did a pretty good job summarizing my background above. What else can I say? I'll start at the beginning: Originally born in Johannesburg, South Africa, my family immigrated to the US when I was 6 years old. I grew up in Libertyville, a northern suburb of Chicago. My favorite subjects in school were always English and Spanish – shocker!

Some of my most formative moments include being a Language & Cultural Assistant in Móstoles, Madrid, Spain. I embarked on this journey after receiving my BA in English and Spanish from UW-Madison. I was there for three years working in the same high school before deciding to get my MA in TESOL. This decision was fueled by a love for teaching English and working with my Spanish learners and a desire to fill the gaps in my knowledge/skillsets that I became aware of while working in Madrid.

After grad school and several years teaching, I am now a full-time Curriculum Developer for a workforce development non-profit called the Worker Education & Resource Center (WERC) in Los Angeles and part-time Instructor for the Noncredit ESL Department of Glendale Community College's ESL Learning Café.

I have a dog named Irving (after John Irving) and a cat named Nantucket (Nan for short). I love reading, writing, learning new things, and satisfying my Aries nature by playing sports and enjoying the outdoors.

Editor: How did you come to work in language teaching?

I've always loved all things language and words and writing. My first love was English (Cont.)

Literature — that was my initial major when I started at UW-Madison for my undergraduate degree. One of the required courses for this major was “Structure of English.” This changed everything! I fell in love — particularly with those syntax trees — and ended up switching to English Language and Linguistics. Once I was on that track, I was introduced to TESOL and enrolled in more TESOL courses to receive a certificate in TESOL. The rest is history!

Editor: Why CATESOL?

After completing my MATESOL from AU in DC, I moved to Los Angeles. I’ve been here for just over two years now. I joined CATESOL early on in my time here but didn’t become an active participant until recently. A year ago, I transitioned from teaching ESL full-time to a Curriculum Developer role with a local non-profit. I was no longer enshrouded in the TESOL world — my peers weren’t language instructors, and my learners weren’t exclusively language learners. Even before that, I was teaching online for a school in D.C. and constantly longed for the community of TESOLers I had over there.



During a period of reflection and evaluation, I made it a mission of mine to really get into CATESOL and meet my people on this side of the country. I reached out to CATESOL people to get more involved and now I am co-editor of the Newsletter. I am excited to take part in all CATESOL has to offer and make TESOL a big part of my life again!

Welcome on Board Amy!

New Column Series

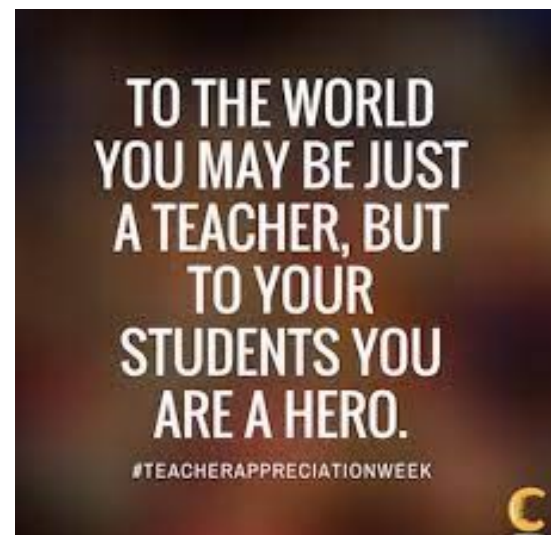
CATESOL Member Focus is a new column series to highlight the work and engagement of members across the association.

Have a Chapter, Level, IG or Board member that is doing phenomenal work?

Email nomination for the CATESOL Member Focus

column by emailing: newsletter@catesol.org

We want to highlight the work of strong CATESOL Members for all membership to know about and value their work.



Focus Feature –ESL Meets AI: How We Can Make Our⁹ Lives Easier with ChatGPT – Segment III

Kristi Reyes and Ryan Detwiler

ChatGPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer), a form of Artificial Intelligence, was launched on November 30, and in no time, many high school and college teachers panicked. LinkedIn posts and newspapers all decried the impact of the tool on original writing, the inability of plagiarism checkers like Turnitin to contend with student cheating, even the death of the college essay! In short order, a college professor reported nationally that a student had used ChatGPT to submit a class assignment.

In Issue 56-1 and 56-2, we shared ten of twenty ways we have identified to utilize ChatGPT in a constructive manner for students' English language learning. In each issue of Volume 56 in 2023, we are offering five additional suggestions on how to use ChatGPT in the ESL classroom. In this issue, we offer five more suggestions on how to leverage the AI tool.


5 (i.e., #11-15) of 20 Ways ESL Teachers Can Use ChatGPT

Ask students what they're interested in or what workplace English they want to learn and then use ChatGPT to quickly create individualized material

Conversation 1

RY

Write a short conversation between a house cleaner and her client. Include three things that the house cleaner should do, and three things that the house cleaner should not do. Write for a beginning level ESL audience.





House cleaner: "Good morning, ma'am. How can I help you today?"

Client: "Good morning. I need you to clean my house today. Can you do that?"

House cleaner: "Yes, I can do that. What do you need me to do?"

Client: "I need you to clean the living room, the kitchen, and the bedrooms. Can you do that?"

House cleaner: "Yes, I can do that. Is there anything else that you need me to do?"




(response continues)

Conversation 2

RY

Write a short conversation between a two landscapers about the plans for a backyard remodel. Write for a beginning level ESL audience.

(Cont.)



Landscaper 1: "Good morning, how can I help you?"

Landscaper 2: "Good morning, I have a new project for a backyard remodel. Can we discuss the plans?"

Landscaper 1: "Sure, what are the details of the project?"

Landscaper 2: "The client wants to add a new patio and a pond in the backyard. They also want to add a new flower bed and some new trees."

Landscaper 1: "That sounds like a great project. What kind of patio do they want?"

(response continues)

Conversation 3

RY Write a short conversation between hotel staff and guest. The guest is asking for dinner recommendations. Also, the guest tells the hotel staff about a problem and asks for help. The hotel staff is able to help solve the problem. Write for a beginning level ESL audience.



Hotel Staff: "Good evening, how can I help you?"

Guest: "Good evening, I was wondering if you could recommend a good restaurant for dinner tonight?"


Hotel Staff: "Sure, there are many great restaurants nearby. If you like Italian food, I recommend Trattoria. If you prefer seafood, I suggest The Seafood Kitchen. And if you want something casual, you can try The Burger Joint. Which one would you prefer?"

Guest: "I think I'll try The Seafood Kitchen. Thank you for the suggestion."

(response continues)

Generate sentences, paragraphs, and stories for vocabulary and grammar introduction, practice exercises, and quizzes.

 make 5 present and past passive verb conjugation sentences about wonders of the world



1. The Great Pyramid of Giza is considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
(present passive)

(Cont.)

2. The Colossus of Rhodes was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world before it was destroyed by an earthquake. (past passive)
3. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon are believed to have been built by King Nebuchadnezzar II for his wife. (present passive)
4. The Lighthouse of Alexandria was once used to guide ships safely into the harbor. (past passive)
5. The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus was constructed as a tomb for King Mausolus and his wife. (past passive)

(response continues)

Here's another example.

RY

Act as an ESL teacher. Write 10 comparative sentences comparing the 10 largest cities in the world with one another. Write for a beginning level ESL audience. Use these adjectives: crowded, large, expensive, safe, dangerous, popular, charming, hot, beautiful, polluted



1. Tokyo is more crowded than Moscow.
2. New York City is more expensive than Mumbai.
3. Beijing is more polluted than Istanbul.
4. Shanghai is more crowded than Karachi.
5. Mumbai is more dangerous than Moscow.
6. Mexico City is larger than Istanbul.
7. Manila is more crowded than Moscow.
8. Cairo is more polluted than Istanbul.
9. Karachi is more dangerous than Istanbul.



Generate a text for students to introduce new grammar forms, modify (sentence combining and adding transitions), change verb tense, demonstrate how to summarize/paraphrase, and rewrite with more formal, academic language.



Create a paragraph with simple sentences on the topic of the role of cell phones in our lives.



Cell phones play a significant role in our lives. They allow us to communicate with others, access the internet, and stay connected at all times. We can use them to send text messages,

(Cont.)

Focus Feature cont.

make phone calls, and even video chat with people across the globe. Cell phones also provide us with a wealth of information and entertainment, from news and social media to games and music. Overall, cell phones have become an essential part of daily life for many people.



Rewrite in shorter more simple sentences.



Cell phones are important to us. We use them to talk to people, get on the internet, and stay in touch. We can text, call, and video chat with them. They also give us lots of information and fun things like games and music. Cell phones are a big part of our daily lives.

(response continues)

Define vocabulary and idioms and give examples.



"Take the bull by the horns" is an idiom that means to confront a difficult or challenging situation directly and with determination. It is often used to encourage someone to face their problems head-on, rather than avoiding them or trying to find a way around them.

The origin of this idiom is thought to be related to bullfighting, a traditional spectacle in which a bullfighter, or torero, faces off against a bull in a arena. In bullfighting, the torero must be brave and take the bull by the horns in order to subdue it. This phrase has been used figuratively to describe tackling difficult problems since at least the early 1800s.

Here is an example of the idiom being used in a short dialog:

Person 1: "I don't know how I'm going to pay off all these debts. It's so overwhelming."

Person 2: "You have to take the bull by the horns and tackle this head-on. Start by making a budget and seeing what expenses you can cut back on."

(response continues)

Compare register (formal v. informal forms).

(Cont.)



Rewrite in a more formal register.



Boss: Good morning, how may I assist you?

Employee: Good morning, sir. I was hoping to request a day of leave for tomorrow.

Boss: Have you checked your current allotment of vacation days?

Employee: Yes, sir. I still have a few days remaining.

Boss: Very well. Might I inquire as to the reason for your requested absence?

Employee: I have a medical appointment in the morning and it is expected to take the

(response continues)

Answer hard questions about vocabulary, grammar, or other topics you may not be prepared to answer on the fly.



Explain a simile versus an analogy with examples.



A simile is a figure of speech that uses a comparison to describe something by saying that it is like something else. The comparison is usually made using the words "like" or "as." For example:

"The room was as quiet as a library."

"She runs like a cheetah."

An analogy is a comparison made between two things that are similar in some way, in order to explain or clarify something. An analogy is often used to help explain a concept or idea by making a comparison to something that is more familiar. For example:

(response continues)

Another example of this use continues on the next page.

(Cont.)



Explain past perfect verb tense with examples.



The past perfect verb tense is used to describe an action that was completed before a specific point in the past. It is used to describe an action that happened before another action in the past, and is often used with the past simple tense.

Here are some examples of the past perfect verb tense:

- "I had finished my homework before I went to bed." (In this sentence, "had finished" is the past perfect verb tense and "went" is the past simple verb tense. The action of finishing the homework happened before the action of going to bed.)
- "She had already eaten lunch when I arrived." (In this sentence, "had already eaten" is the

(response continues)

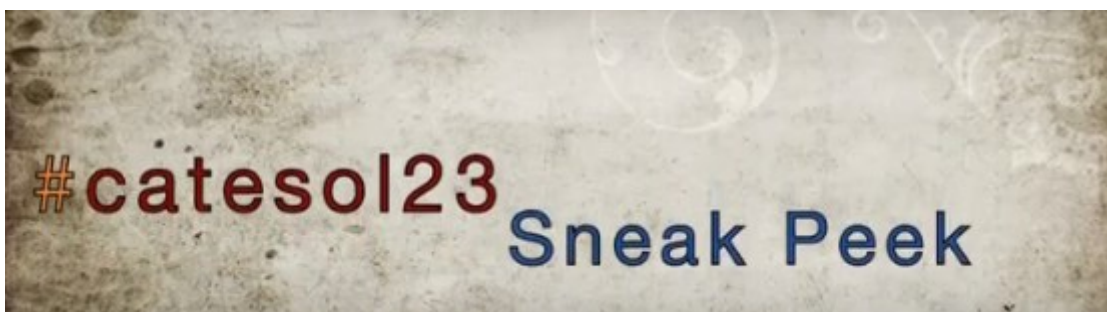
Segment Two Wrap Up

AI chatbots are a reality we as ESL teachers will need not contend with, but rather leverage them for our students' learning. The five suggestions (i.e., #11-16) presented and compliment by the first ten (i.e., #1-10) are shared in the previous [issues](#). There will be two more segments on how to utilize ChatGPT in a constructive manner for students' English language learning. If you are eager to understand how to leverage the tool, you can check out all twenty suggestions now [here](#). Even if you read all twenty suggestions now, the subsequent articles in the series can serve as refreshers, as twenty suggestions may be a lot to keep in mind. We hope you and your students benefit from our suggestions on how to leverage ChatGPT, when popular sources are focusing on the problems and challenges it poses.

Sneak Peak of the Upcoming 2023 CATESOL Conference

Curious a bout what is slated for the upcoming 2023 CATESOL Conference.

Take a look at a Sneak Peak video! (Click image below)



Marsha Chan

At the 2022 CATESOL State Conference in Pasadena, Marsha Chan and her husband, Terry Yang, donated a **Chinese Banquet for Six** to the auction held by the CATESOL Education Foundation, which benefits the CATESOL organization.

The winner of the auction, Marc Levy, invited five other epicures, Susan Gaer, Margi Wald, Elsa Walker, and Jim Walker, to join Marsha and Terry for a sumptuous meal at their home in Sunnyvale. All of the participants graciously donated time, expertise, and/or funds to support CATESOL programs.

At the banquet, mutually scheduled to take place in March 2023, they enjoyed a delectable ten-course meal, with a variety of wines carefully selected to complement the dishes. The intimate dining and cultural experience was appreciated not only for the food, company, and atmosphere, but was further enhanced by the fact that this event created a significant benefit for CATESOL.

Now it's your turn! Consider donating to the CATESOL Educational Foundation to support the work of the CATESOL organization. Your donation can subsidize CATESOL memberships, fund awards open to CATESOL members, and help ensure a strong conference. See <https://www.catesoleducationfoundation.org/donate> for more information.



*Special Column Series Submission II: Digital Storytelling,*¹⁶ **TESOL, and ...a Future of Omnipresent Change**

Brett Pierce

This is my second of four blogs for the CATESOL community. In these articles, I am trying to gradually edge you toward seriously considering integrating digital storytelling into your teaching. In my last blog, I focused on the process of 'world building' and 'knowledge creation' through digital storytelling. In this blog, I want to get more micro.

But before I do that, let's go LARGE again. Just for a beat.

On August 23rd of this year, the New York Times published an article entitled, "Young Activists Take on Climate Change Fight." In this article, there is a passage about the anger, amongst youth, about a drilling project in Alaska called Willow.

"Chief among the frustrations ...was the (Biden) administration's decision to approve Willow, a huge drilling project in Alaska. Early this year, TikTok erupted with calls for the White House to deny approvals for the project, thrusting the issue into the mainstream and giving thousands of young people a common cause. Creators juxtaposed images of Mr. Biden with collapsing glaciers, recorded tearful selfie videos and mashed up songs from "Encanto" with slide shows of cute animals. The effort failed ...but the #StopWillow campaign, which garnered more than 500 million views on TikTok, showed that impassioned youth could shape the national debate."

In this case, digital storytelling essentially gave 'thousands of young people a common cause.' Stories like that increase the urgency to make digital storytelling a normative part of the teaching of literacy. Inside of that digital universe – the medium of the century – is the substantive evolution of student voice. Student voice, in a second language world, I would imagine would be doubly important to curate and build. Digital storytelling can help.

"Tearful selfie videos"? The students can do better than that!

But we need to teach them.

And know that you can teach them, without knowing a thing about media production. Seriously. They know the media production stuff. And if they don't, they'll figure it out...with gusto and joy. What they don't know – can't know – is how to effectively tell a story that is designed to carry educational content or create an impact or start a dialogue. They don't know how to explore a new language – English - in ways that doesn't hint at denying their identity, but enhances it. Digital storytelling can assist because this form of communication doesn't rely solely on words, but can certainly be about them.

That's my macro. Here's my micro.

Below please find a short survey that I encourage you to give to your students as this new school year is getting under way. It's a simple exercise (I'd give them 15 minutes to complete) that is designed to elicit from your students which basic 21st century skills – I will henceforth call them Human Skills – they embrace and which they fear. As educators, we are all well aware of the value of these skills in today's post-secondary marketplace. As educators, we are also aware of how hard it is to explicitly teach toward these skills while focusing on curricular content. And, as TESOL educators, you know that these skills may hold extra value for your students that don't have native language fluency as one of the tools in their toolkit. That makes skills like creativity, problem solving and presentational skills more essential for their future success.

(Cont.)

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Prioritize this list of Human Skills by numbering your top five skills in the order of importance to you. Then add one of your own, if you notice that something is missing.

Resiliency	Collaboration	Digital Literacy
Creativity	Empathy	Problem Solving
Critical Thinking	Flexibility/ Adaptability	Independent Initiative
Presentational Skills/ Public Speaking	Perseverance/ Grit	Leadership
Effective Communication	Intellectual Curiosity	Decision Making

[Add Your Own]

Please write two to four sentences explaining your first two choices: why do you believe those skills are the most important for your current and future self?

Which of the above Human Skills do you think are the hardest, for you, to master and why? Please answer in two to four sentences.

The idea isn't to come up with a definitive list. The debate of whether 'resiliency' is more important than 'empathy' is, in my view, a pointless one. They are both super important. I tend to believe that Creativity is the number one Human Skill. Forbes Magazine published a widely circulated list of 'The Skills You Need to Succeed in 2020' and it begins with Complex Problem Solving, goes through People Management and bottoms out at Service Management (Beckford 2019).

Everyone has their priorities.

What you want to know is which Human Skills do your students think are the most important and which are the hardest. This will tell you two things: what they want from you in terms of projects and processes throughout the year, and what they perceive are the hardest skills to master: what they'd like to avoid, but realize that they need.

Reflect for a beat all that you would learn from this survey. You would learn who fears presenting and who craves creativity; who wants to be challenged with problem solving and who would do anything to avoid working on a team. It's like being delivered a personalized learning grid in fifteen minutes (at no cost!). And it would bring a greater awareness of these terms--these essential skills--to the students. The students would learn something about themselves--their needs and fears within the classroom setting--and, working with you, intentionally seek to improve upon these stated strengths and weaknesses.

It's a win-win. But so much more than that. Why? Because the job of teachers has had to be recalibrated away from the traditional workplace trajectory and toward a future that made (Cont.)

exponentially more complex by having to learn English on top of it all.

Margaret Heffernan, CEO, author of five books, radio dramatist, and entrepreneur, gave a TED talk in 2019 titled, “The Human Skills We Need in an Unpredictable World.” In that talk she remarked:

Preparedness, coalition building, imagination, experiments, bravery: in an unpredictable age these are tremendous sources of resilience and strength. They aren’t efficient. But they give us limitless capacity for adaptation, variation, and invention. And the less we know about the future, the more we are going to need these tremendous sources of human, messy, unpredictable skills.

Human Skills are the traits that students need to enter a workplace that is in constant motion. Human Skills are about training the mind to take calculated risks, look for patterns, and transpose failure into opportunity. They are about listening, delegating, empathizing, and imagining. You can draw up this list any way you want, setting priorities based on your community and your personal values system. But either way, the explicit work on these skill sets begins in the classroom.

You know what delivers Human Skills in spades while still able to shoulder your full-on TESOL curriculum? You all saw this coming ...Digital storytelling. The process of communicating curricular content using text, imagery, sound, and music delivers human skills in practical and profound ways, while increasing students’ confidence to participate meaningfully in the digitally literate universe: an essential skill if there ever was one!

Specifically, here’s how it works:

⇒ Digital stories are team-based efforts. Therefore, they are collaborative, which includes practicing skills such as people management, delegation, leadership, and coordinating with others.

⇒ Digital stories are scripted and often character-driven. Therefore, they require creativity and imagination.

⇒ Digital stories are composed of many small decisions about research, narrative structure, look, and sound. Therefore, they invite problem solving, decision-making, and critical thinking.

⇒ Digital stories require students to research content and tell their own story about that content. Therefore, they require evidence-based reasoning and are empowering.

⇒ Digital stories are designed to be shared with an audience of more than just one (you, the teacher). Therefore, they invite presentational skills.

These are all essential Human Skills that allow students to engage authentically with curricular content.

Let’s pull all these narrative threads together. First, digital storytelling is the communicative literacy of today’s students. No three-page paper has ever gotten 500 million views or shaped a national debate. Second, no matter your digital expertise, you can teach it in your classroom: just stick to what you know so well: TESOL content. Third, digital storytelling yields so much more educational value for your students with its organic synthesis of Human Skills, digital literacy skills and TESOL content: a necessary trifecta to prepare for a world of omnipresent change.

Let’s help the student move past “tearful selfie videos.” We can do that. And thank you for taking some of your time to hang with these ideas.

(Cont.)

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Bio

Brett is the founder and Executive Director of *Meridian Stories*, a Digital Storytelling nonprofit for middle and high schoolers that challenges students to create digital narratives around core curricular goals. He authored, *Expanding Literacy: Bringing Digital Storytelling into Your Classroom*. He spent much of his professional life at Sesame Workshop—New York City, serving as a Co-Executive Producer on projects about literacy, math, science, and conflict-resolution for youth around the world. Most recently, Brett led the development and production of a radio drama, *Sawa Shabab*, targeting youth in the Kakuma Refugee Camp about gender equity issues, life skills and co-existence. He can be reached at brett@meridianstories.org

Meridian Stories is a non-profit organization that offers an expansive catalogue of creative Digital Storytelling Projects, with over 140 Projects on offer in its library that engage students research, creation, development, and production of digital stories aligned with the curriculum. Explore [Here](#).



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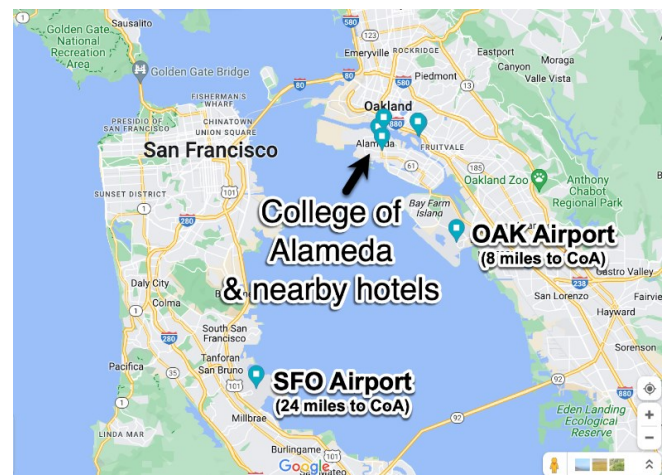
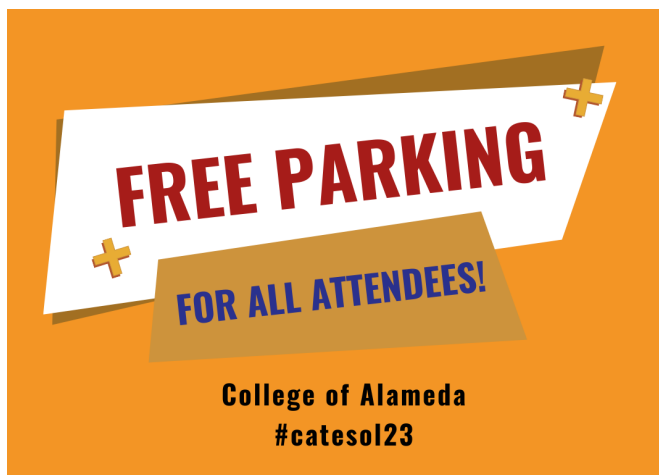
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Member Submission I – Build Confidence, Generate Joy, Integrate Tech: Assignments for Creative Expression

20

Kristi Reyes

Have you ever witnessed a quiet student undergo a remarkable transformation, evolving from a reserved, even anxious English language learner into a confident language user? It is truly a heartening experience, and one key to unlocking this potential can lie in the integration of arts and technology. Research indicates that when students are given opportunities to express themselves creatively, it leads to more effective and enduring learning outcomes, as well as increased student motivation. At the school where I teach, we hold an annual Diversity Day in which students play music, dance, make presentations, share art and handicrafts of their home cultures, and we publish and celebrate students' submissions of stories, poetry, and artwork in a magazine. It is always a thrill to see what our ESL students can produce and how well they perform when given the occasion.

In the past when I would notice an otherwise fidgety student become focused and engaged in a flow moment once we moved into the computer lab or a student who seemed to be a million miles away while creating an impressive doodle on a class handout, I chalked these behaviors up to learning styles: students being more right-brained or left-brained, having decreased attention spans, or other now-debunked myths about learning (Whitman & Kelleher, 2016). I have found over the



years that students need more opportunities to express themselves freely and creatively with less intense focus on accuracy. These occasions increase confidence and decrease inhibitions, as students are allowed the uninterrupted opportunity to show their myriad of skills and wide-ranging knowledge. As grammarians, we ESL teachers often fall into the same trap that students do – thinking that “good English” is “correct English,” when the real purpose of learning a language is to communicate, not to have perfect grammar or pronunciation.

In our rapidly evolving world, characterized by constant technological innovation and development, it is more important than ever to challenge students to think creatively (Kreuger, 2022). Moreover, students should be equipped with the skills to effectively use and create with not only apps, but now also Artificial Intelligence tools for idea generation. AI prompting is rapidly becoming an essential technology skill, as fundamental as knowing how to search online. As AI increasingly becomes a part of our daily lives, automating numerous tasks, including those in education, the ability to think creatively will become an even more highly valued soft skill (Kreuger, 2022).

When technology is integrated into meaningful communicative activities, students not only exercise traditional literacy skills but can also develop digital, visual, data, information, and tool literacies (Shrock, 2015). Assignments that involve students utilizing AI and other technology tools to generate ideas and create initial drafts for creative expression help foster these multiple literacies and 21st Century technology skills.

(Cont.)

Beyond the advantages of technology integration in language instruction, there are numerous benefits to be gained from arts integration as well. Providing students with opportunities to transfer their knowledge through visual and performing arts enhances their learning experience by activating knowledge transfer as they synthesize and rearrange ideas. This process is strongly linked to long-term memory consolidation and student engagement (Whitman & Kelleher, 2016). Assignments that encourage students to develop and express themselves artistically create a stress-free and enjoyable language learning atmosphere (Dulksnienė & Mačianskienė, 2020). However, it is important to note that such projects, regardless of size, should incorporate scaffolded instruction and instructor feedback to support students effectively (Egbert & Shahrokni, nd).

In addition, in planning student assignments that adhere to the principles of Universal Design for Learning (see cast.org if you are unfamiliar with UDL), we can specifically offer students chances for multiple means of expression, allowing for divergent thinking and aligning with evidence-based andragogical best practices, including student choice. Research indicates that student choice serves as a major motivator for adult learners because they have higher levels of control in the learning environment, which fosters student persistence (Knowles, 2011).

“Students need opportunities to transfer their knowledge through the visual and performing arts, so integrate art into the core content of non-arts subjects to enhance learning. Arts integration creates knowledge transfer by forcing students to synthesize and rearrange ideas and is linked to long-term memory consolidation and engagement.”

Whitman & Kelleher, 2016, p. 91

The following [link](#) details assignments and projects, some with accompanying lesson plans authored by me, can be modified for use in a variety of classes and for different language proficiency levels and serve to give some ideas to get started, as needed, and include sample end products. Of course, however, students’ needs, interests, and goals should inform decisions on planning level-appropriate, creativity-invoking assignments and projects. Also provided are some low-tech/no-tech alternatives for classes in which students lack access to technology or lower levels of tech skills. Note, too, at the time of writing this in Fall 2023, we are in the Wild West of AI tools, with hundreds in development and being released each week, and one tool that you try out today for students to use may be gone tomorrow, so always have a Plan B.

Click below to access link:

[Assignments & Projects for Creative Expression](#)



How will you incorporate tasks, assignments, or projects to unlock the potential of arts and technology integration in language learning, empowering our students to become confident language users with exceptional creativity and technological proficiency?

(Cont.)

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Bio

Kristi Reyes, MA TESL, is a tenured faculty member in the noncredit ESL program at MiraCosta College, California, with more than two decades of experience teaching adults. She has taught online for a decade with online teaching credentials from @ONE and TESOL International. Kristi is also a subject matter expert for OTAN and trainer for CALPRO.

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Guest Author- Teachers as Compassionate Intercultural Leaders²³

Jocelyn Wright

When you choose which path to take, take the one with heart.

~ Yaqui Indian prover

Aerial Map

Having previously tutored and taught English in Quebec, the Dominican Republic, and France, I have dedicated myself to teaching mostly undergraduate and graduate students at a national university in the Land of the Morning Calm (i.e., the Korean Peninsula) over the past 15 years.

My current position at a rural South Korean university is somewhat exceptional as I have a lot of liberty to propose, design, teach, and assess my courses. However, as with freedom comes responsibility, I usually try to consider learners' interests and needs and make my courses as practical and useful as possible. Aiming each time for English+ (i.e., teaching beyond language and skills), I have variously emphasized computer skills, creativity, social issues, reflective practice, research, etc. in my courses.

Developing courses is also an opportunity for me to improve myself, and I would be dishonest if I didn't admit that I often choose topics that I want to explore in more depth or breadth. I think this is win-win as it keeps me excited about teaching, and my students, thereby, feel my enthusiasm.

Charting Authenticity

A course I opened three years ago, which I want to talk about as I illustrate ongoing efforts at being authentic, is titled *Intercultural Leadership*. Looking back on it, I would have preferred to call it *Compassionate Intercultural Leadership*. Of course, there are countless ways to be leaders, compassionate being only one, but this is an orientation I find particularly positive.

Forays into Leadership

Although not particularly ambitious, I remember being appointed to, rising into, or assuming leadership positions from a young age. As a child, I was a leader for much of Girl Guides (known as the Girl Scouts in the U.S. and some other countries) and quickly rose through ranks as a sea cadet. Later, I was on the student council of my undergraduate linguistics program and, although a foreigner, became the class representative of my Master's in Education program in France when I showed initiative during a school strike. At work, in South Korea, I coordinated a team of foreign teachers and staff in the English Zone (i.e., a free space where students who wanted to practice their English could gather together, mingle, and participate in extra-curricular classes, activities, and events) we opened. I was also involved in Korea TESOL (KOTESOL), facilitating a local reflective practice branch for teachers over almost a decade and founded the national Social Justice (Critical Educators in Korea) Special Interest Group (SIG). From these leadership roles at increasingly broader levels, I gradually gained leadership experience by doing. Nevertheless, I felt a desire to know more about leadership theory, so I thought I could study it with my students. There's no better way to learn than by teaching, is there

Intercultural Exploration

Some co-workers might have considered it strange to open a leadership course in a Department of English Language and Literature, so I decided to emphasize the intercultural aspect. Many students who enroll initially assume we will focus on interacting with people of different nationalities. That's certainly part of it, and I try to model this behavior on- and off-campus.

As one of few foreign faculty members at my university, and the most senior, I have been a prominent face of promotional diversity. I also embody my role. Besides teaching English and my third language, Spanish, when my schedule permits, I take Korean language classes. Generally, I enjoy setting up and participating in cultural programs, and in 2014, I created an international association for graduate school students to advocate for the special needs of this group and attempt to overcome the (Cont.)

Guest Author- (Cont.)

multicultural divides. In addition to being an international member of badminton and tennis clubs, I facilitate a Spanish conversation group for South Korean seniors, and I helped launch a Latin Dance club in 2020. As a result of my activities, I'm able to mix with people of different genders and ages from other countries, cultures, first languages, and religions, and my students can often see me engaging with them. They can also see and meet my Nepali husband and me regularly on/around the campus where we first became a couple and eventually got married!

My purpose for employing the term 'intercultural', of course, was to encompass many aspects of sociocultural identity (age, class, gender, ethnicity, language, race, nationality, [religion,] and physical/mental ability) expanding on Jackson (2014). When we discuss this, learners start to see the word and their worlds more widely. As they reflect on their leadership roles and intercultural encounters, they find more examples from their own lives and seek out new ones.

A Path with Heart

I happen to be the eldest of 5 children. On occasion, some of my siblings referred to me as the 'bossy older sister,' an indication that I may have taken my leadership position too seriously. I believe I have since made progress!

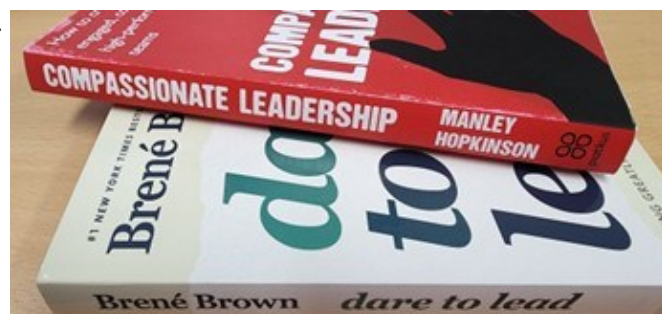
After my Master's, I began to read more about critical approaches to linguistics and pedagogy. This was very eye-opening, and I benefitted from sharing texts with graduate students and colleagues in my profession. After some time, though, I noticed myself feeling unbalanced and pessimistic. Some of this work was radical (even referred to as 'militant').

Although the texts were meant to be empowering and transformative, I found myself seeking nurturance in the literature of love and care (e.g., hooks, 2000; King, 2010; Noddings, 2013). Fortunately, I was introduced to Marshall B. Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication, and learning about this philosophy, while engaging in practice, led me to discover peace linguistics, "an interdisciplinary field guided by the goal of promoting peace and peacebuilding through systematic study, deliberate teaching, and conscious use of languages spoken, written, and signed" (Wright, 2021), especially through the humanizing work of Francisco Gomes de Matos. Intensive and extensive reading on these more hopeful topics over the past several years have given me insight into my teaching, leadership, and the compassion therein.

I really like Manley Hopkinson's (2014) definition of the outcome of compassionate leadership: "To secure the best for, and the best out of, your people, your organization, your stakeholders and yourself" (p. 33). Over time, I have transitioned from skills-based, to content-based, and more relational teaching. Seeing myself as a classroom leader (rather than, say, a manager), I consider more carefully how I can cultivate a warm and inclusive classroom dynamic even though there is a relative grading system. I try to include broad questions which allow for the sharing of multiple points of views and experiences. When I plan my tasks and projects, I negotiate how far I can push my students to acquire new knowledge, skills, and attitudes and how much encouragement and scaffolding to provide. I tend to focus on effort and task completion when assessing. While giving feedback, I aim to convey it such that there will be thoughtful uptake, following 'THICK' (truthful, helpful, I-centered, clear, and kind) guidelines (Wright, 2023). In these ways, I think, I'm walking my talk.

Jungles and Plains

Being authentic is not always easy! Despite (Cont.)



numerous hands-on experiences as a leader in different contexts and at various levels, as I was teaching my Intercultural Leadership course for the first time, I was also questioning my own ability to lead. By then, I was becoming very certain about the value of and need for peace linguistics and increasingly disappointed that a field that began emerging in the late 1980s (Gomes de Matos, 1987) and was formally defined twenty years ago (Crystal, 1999) was not well-known. Although I immensely longed to connect and learn from/with other scholars and practitioners, I wondered whether I was qualified and had the energy to initiate another group. I certainly didn't feel like an expert myself, so I hummed and hawed over this for a while, before an inspiring talk by Willy A. Renandya at the National Institute of Education, Singapore on enhancing our teaching, research, and service impact, motivated me to finally launch the international Peace Linguistics Facebook group and grow in unexpected ways.



Peace Linguistics

Image 2. Peace Linguistics Facebook group cover photo.

Deciding to “dare to lead” (Brown, 2018), allowed me to speak to my students with much more conviction and self-confidence. This act also gave me the courage to intentionally start transforming more courses in the direction of peace. This year, I am teaching my second round of English for Peacebuilding Purposes writing courses. Testing and orchestrating this has been enjoyable so far, and I have also gotten some kind returns:

I love you, Jocelyn! Your lecture really soothed my heart. and helped me to love myself 😊 I hope your life is happy! Thanks for everything 😊

Figure 3. Feedback from a student.

Relevance and Insights

Although my described experience in a rather more homogenous setting and EFL context may be quite different from yours in a longstanding multicultural society and ESL one, I hope some part of this journey has served to guide or inspire! The terrain of TESOL, being diverse and far-reaching, is always changing and with that our understandings and practices in ELT. I would be deeply satisfied if here you have discovered a new concept, idea, activity, practice, , orientation, or reference to expand your scope and explore further.

(Cont.)

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The Author

Jocelyn Wright is Associate Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at Mokpo National University, South Korea where she has served for over 15 years. She is a member of KOTESOL and provides leadership support for the Social Justice (Critical Educators in Korea) SIG. Currently, her main areas of academic interest are peace linguistics, peace language education, and peace literature.



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Member Submission II- Leveraging Podcasting in Honing Speaking Skills²⁷

Hiba Al Gabra and Sana Jabara

With the rise in popularity of audiobooks and podcasts, language learners are increasingly relying on these resources to enhance their learning experience. Podcasting began in the early 2000's and today there are over 5 million podcasts across the globe with hundreds of millions of listeners worldwide according to statistics from Spotify.

Podcasts featuring native speakers are particularly useful to language learners as they offer an excellent tool to help students not only improve their listening skills, but also hone their speaking skills while gaining deeper cultural knowledge. Incorporating podcasts in lesson design is advantageous and creative and offers language teachers an additional tool in their toolkit

Although currently Arabic language instructors working together on a teaching team for adult learners, we feel our experiences are also applicable to the field of English Language Learners (ELLs) and ELL educators. We have observed a deficiency in our students' oral production skills and looked for ways to improve their speaking skills while maintaining an engaging classroom and encouraging learner autonomy and agency. After some research and many discussions, we landed on podcasts and our "Together on the Air" (a catchy rhyming title in Arabic) initiative was born. Maybe something catchy like Radio Air Square or something that rhymes could be developed for the ELL classroom. Our findings highlighted the many benefits of Podcasts for honing speaking skills, and we proceeded to implement our podcast-based project with our students. As a warm-up to the project, students were directed and encouraged to listen to podcasts in the target language as part of their weekly assignments. They evaluated and discussed the content as a class. Links to podcasts provided to students included ones to various major news sites.

Implementing the Podcast Project

An overall topic is selected for each bi-weekly round of podcasts. Students are then assigned partners on a rotational basis as well as a mentor from the teaching team.

To get started, students brainstorm the preferred structure they wish to adopt for their podcast, which could include formats like Q&A sessions, narrations, interviews, discussions, commentaries, and more. As a next step, students draft the script for their podcast, if applicable, or at minimum write out a mind map of their intended end product. Then, they seek feedback from their mentors and incorporate any necessary revisions into their script. After that, they hold rehearsal sessions to practice pronunciation, pace, and delivery of their podcasts. Once the students are fully prepared, they create their final recordings, add any necessary sound effects, and submit their final product to their mentor for uploading onto the selected school platform (i.e., MS). All these outlined stages take place within the span of two weeks.

Upon completion of each round, all students, along with the entire teaching staff, convene to collectively listen to the podcasts generated and hold a peer review session. Subsequently, every student is encouraged to supply constructive feedback to their peers. This entire process is reiterated in the subsequent round, wherein students are regrouped and embark on the process anew, including the selection of a fresh topic and a corresponding format for their next podcast endeavor.

***"Utilizing Real-Life Platforms for Language Learning
and Production of Tangible Outcomes."***



Student Podcast Project Image. Source: [Here](#)



Student Topic Specific Podcast Images. Source: Above

Results and impact of Podcasting on Oral Proficiency Development

After several months of implementing our project, our observations coupled with student results reflected several advantages and improvements to our students' speaking skills on multiple levels. Specifically, the outcome of the efforts that were exerted by the students on creating their podcasts manifested itself in the students' final speaking test results. We saw increased scores of 2+ and 2 on the ILR scale, B1 on the CEFR or Intermediate High (HI) in the ACTFL scale, and student confidence in speaking improved significantly. (Cont.)

Benefits of Podcasts in speaking development

Improved articulation skills

When students create a podcast, it is important that they ensure that their speech is meaningful and understandable, especially since they can only rely on their verbal skills rather than any visual aids that could support their speech. As such, students must pay extra attention to the way in which they articulate their ideas and present their opinions. Over time, and with repeated practice, students improve their articulation and speaking skills in various topics.

Enhanced spontaneity

Podcasts are usually recorded without a script and speakers often rely on spontaneous speech and monologues to create their podcasts. At first, it might be challenging for students to formulate coherent responses and think on their feet when creating their podcasts. However, their delivery improves with practice and the process becomes easier with each subsequent session.

Increased confidence

Giving a talk or delivering a speech to a wide group of people can be very intimidating. The speaker must keep in mind the audience, the topic, the length, and the content when delivering an idea, expressing an opinion, or even narrating a story to a specific audience. By putting more practice into learning how to give a talk or engage in a discussion in an effective way, students learn important skills that will markedly improve their speaking and communicative skills and boost their confidence.

Improved storytelling abilities

Podcasting often involves sharing stories and anecdotes, which hones storytelling skills. Improving this important narration skill helps students develop their conversational abilities in both formal and informal settings.

Increased active listening and responses

Participating in conversations and interviews for a podcast or even co-hosting discussions requires active listening to understand and respond effectively and in a timely manner. Acquiring this skill fosters meaningful conversations as students must listen carefully and respond in a sensible manner to engage listeners and create an interesting, informative product.

Effective use of tone and ease of delivery

In real-life conversations, tone, pitch, and pace influence the way in which people communicate with each other and influence how listeners react to what is being said. Since podcasters rely mainly on verbal communication rather than visual cues, speakers must pay attention to how they voice their reactions and convey their opinions. They must also focus on maintaining a steady pace while conversing to keep listeners engaged and help them follow their train of thought.

Develop vocabulary learning

Creating content for podcasts pushes students to expand their vocabulary knowledge. Podcasts are frequently topic-centric and focused. As such, students must come up with new words and expressions to keep the listeners engaged. This in turn improves students' overall speaking proficiency.

Overcoming speaking anxiety

Public speaking induces anxiety for most speakers. When conducted in a foreign language, it presents strong speaking skills as there is no direct audience and even greater challenge. Podcasting offers an ideal environment for practicing and developing strong speaking skills as there is no (Cont.

direct audience watching the speaker. With time and repetition, students gradually build the indispensable confidence to become competent public speakers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the utilization of podcasts as a tool for enhancing speaking skills offers a valuable approach to personal and academic development. The process of planning, scripting, delivering content, and expressing ideas in a coherent and meaningful manner, provides students with opportunities to improve their speaking skills and their overall language proficiency as well as helps them overcome obstacles they might encounter while speaking in a foreign language. When creating podcasts, students must only rely on their verbal skills to engage their audience in the topic being discussed as the listeners have no visual cues. Additionally, discussing a variety of topics on podcasts exposes students to wider vocabulary and more diverse concepts. All these skills that can be acquired through podcasting empower and assist students to become better speakers in different topics and contexts. Learning and regular practice contribute to students' language development that goes beyond mere memorization of certain dialogues and discussions. Rather, students became more effective interlocutors in the target language.

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Student Voices Column Series Submission V- Summer Interview Series; Swapping Up the Traditional Tutoring Structure³¹

Aiden Garcia

Introduction by Editor

Tutoring, unlike the conventional classroom, can put a high cognitive demand on the student as the focus is on his/her performance the entire length of the lesson. In a classroom setting, the verbal and written output of the student is shifted from active production and passive reception of content. Additionally, weekly tutoring sessions at the same time and in the same location in the home (i.e., dining room or kitchen table) can create a lackluster setting over a semester or the school year, despite the use of technology and multimedia to diversify instruction.

It can also be demanding for the tutor to keep the learner engaged over time, so depending on the nature of the tutoring focus and the student's needs, when available during the academic school year and over the summer, it is enjoyable and beneficial to switch up the manner of instruction. Visiting local places of interest examples (e.g., restaurant, museum) as a *field trip* to expand on learning (i.e., Mexican restaurant for Spanish language practice, John Steinbeck Center to complement reading and academic writing practice) have previously been well-received.

This summer's tutoring *swap up* for a middle school student working on improving his academic writing to be better positioned for high school was situated around an Interview Webinar Series, where synchronous online or record interviews with professionals in the community and beyond were used weekly as a springboard from which to build lesson content and the topic on which the student would draft an essay from June to August.

The idea was in part inspired by elementary-high school experiences as a student and as a teacher, where members of the community (i.e., fireman, classmates' parents, educators, etc.) were invited in the classroom to share what they do. Therefore, interviews with professionals in the local community and beyond were to not only have content from which the student would write weekly essays, but also to expose him to various professional fields and learn how government, non-profits, business, agriculture, science, etc. operate and impact his local and wider communities.

Summer Interview Series by Aiden Garcia

My tutor reached out to people in the community and beyond to ask if they would be interested in doing a 15-20-minute interview recording in Zoom, or a synchronous online session, where she asked questions for me to learn about the topic and then, I used the information for my weekly summer writing assignments. My tutor emailed my mom the schedule for the people and topics she would use each week and my mom showed me the topics. They seemed alright and as we got started, I shared some of the topics with my older sister, who is a teacher but teaches different stuff.

Individuals who were invited and participated in the Summer Interview Series were:

A City Council Member. Topic: What does a council member's job entail?

A Professional Astronomer. Topic: History of that research center and basics of an astronomer's job.

An Agricultural Production Manager. Topic: What does it take to get the product from the field to consumer?

A Small Business Entrepreneur. Topic: What does it take to start and run a business?

A Teacher's View of AI. Topic: Benefits and drawbacks of ChatGPT.

A North Korean Refugee Book Author. Topic: Her account as a North Korean Refugee. (Cont.)

An Amateur Competitive Athlete. Topic: Managing school, training, and lifestyle.

Two Teacher Book Authors. Topic: Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFEs)

My Experience and Learning

Out of all the interviews, the ones that interested me the most are the AI and ChatGPT and the North Korean refugee Book Author ones.

ChatGPT is an AI generator that can solve math problems or write a five-paragraph essay for you in under 5 minutes. But there are some drawbacks when using ChatGPT. In my school, my teachers can tell when someone uses ChatGPT because they know how an 8th grader writes their paragraphs, and so if they get some sort of college-like paragraph, they could tell right way the students are using ChatGPT. Another subject is math, where if the math teacher can see his students using some advanced high school or college techniques that early high schoolers don't know yet, then they are caught cheating but they also cheating themselves. There are some pros when using ChatGPT. You can use ChatGPT to help you find information about research that you are going to write about. ChatGPT can find an infinite amount of information about any subject that you give it a request for. So, it can help students get information they need to write their essays.

Another interview that was interesting to me was by a North Korean refugee that wrote a book. Since I was already interested in North Korea, I wrote an essay on how I don't understand many things about North Korean, especially the so called "reeducation" camps. North Korea has built 15 to 25 concentration camps, I found out from a google search, not ChatGPT. They say these so called "reeducation" camps help North Korean people to focus on loyalty to their leader, build self-discipline, and endure hard labor to learn the right ways. How these people get themselves into these concentration camps is by showing disloyalty or committing a crime by North Korea standards. This is my opinion, but I imagine most North Korean people would want may want to leave North Korea or have a better life in North Korea.

Conclusion

Throughout the interview series, I found them all interesting because I learned things that I didn't known before. Also, it is easier to listen to a *live* person talking about what they know than reading a book or a newspaper article. Since the topics where interesting, it was easier to write the related essay for the week's lesson.



Image 1: Learning through people in their jobs

I'm a math and science kid.

*I didn't really know what an astronomer
does and I didn't know there was a research
center in my area.*

I know now.

The topics of the interviews seemed weird at first, but I found out how they related to me. For example, the interview with the city council member for my neighborhood showed me democracy is not just in history books or in Washington D.C., but also in my town.

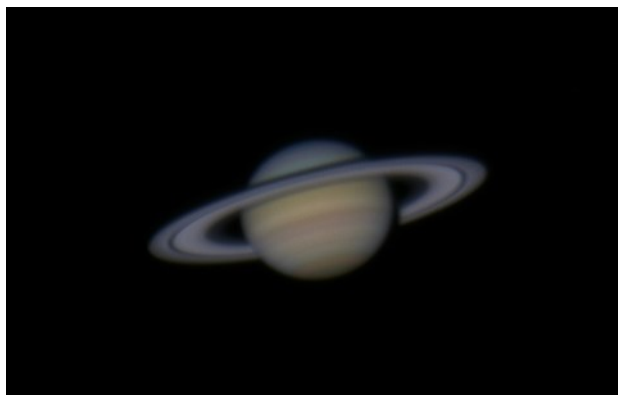


Image 2: Seeing new things through people

Being able to speak in Zoom with a professional astronomer from the Institute for Research in Astronomy (MIRA) prompted my family to join the local research center and now I will get to go and see the center and go to an event to look at the planets. And as an athlete wrestler, it was great to learn from another amateur athlete.

Call For Student Author Submissions

If you have a learner that would like to contribute by sharing a personal experience, reflection, positive learning activity or anything else related to his/her journey, I encourage you to encourage him/her and contact me at newsletter@catesol.org



Learners have stories and experiences to share.

The CATESOL Newsletter

Student Voices Column Series has offered an ongoing venue for language learners and students to share their stories through published articles.

Sumbal Ayaz and Jon Phillips

Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFC)

Classroom assessment techniques (CATs) serve as invaluable and efficient formative assessment tools, enabling instructors to promptly gauge students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and preparedness in real time. Classroom assessments aim to provide instructors with information on what, how much, and how well students are learning. These simple, non-graded, and usually anonymous in-class activities offer both instructors and students valuable feedback, fostering continuous improvement in the learning experience. Classroom assessment techniques may be used in any type of class, including foreign language classes.

Currently, the most comprehensive compilation of classroom assessment techniques is available in the book "Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers" written by Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross. This valuable resource, published by Jossey-Bass in 1993 (Second Edition), remains an authoritative guide for teachers seeking effective assessment strategies in the classroom. The authors' expertise and insights make this book an essential reference for educators aiming to enhance their teaching practices and promote meaningful student learning. In this article, I will share my experience writing a collaborative book review for publication by converting a graduate class assignment, my journey to writing the collaborative book review, and how my personal and professional experiences helped shape my ideas about publishing.

The authors write: "Our aim in presenting the fifty different Classroom Assessment Techniques described in Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine is to provide college teachers – from various disciplines, specialties, and backgrounds – with a compendium of good ideas developed by their colleagues for assessing and improving student learning. These chapters are, in many ways, the heart of this handbook. On one level, they resemble a tool chest containing fifty different "feedback devices," from which teachers can select the right assessment tool to fit the particular assessment job at hand; on another level, these chapters can be regarded as a collection of favorite recipes, or a "how-to" book, a vehicle for sharing tried-and-true approaches among practitioners. We urge readers to view and use these CATs as starting points, and ideas to be adapted and improved upon. And we hope these fifty will serve as models and inspiration for many new CATs yet to be invented." [p. 105]

The advantages of utilizing Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) are as follows:

1. **Formative Assessment:** CATs offer formative assessments, which means they provide instructors with feedback on student learning while the teaching/learning/course is ongoing. This real-time feedback allows instructors to make timely adjustments to improve student learning outcomes.
2. **Efficiency:** CATs are remarkably time efficient. Typically taking just a few minutes of classroom time, they efficiently gather valuable insights into student progress and understanding.
3. **Customizability:** CATs can be tailored to address the specific concerns and objectives of the instructor. This adaptability allows instructors to focus on the particular aspects of learning that require attention.
4. **Anonymous Feedback Option:** CATs can be designed to offer anonymity to students when requesting feedback. By ensuring anonymity, instructors may receive more candid responses from students, enhancing the usefulness of the feedback.

(Cont.)

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) offer instructors several valuable benefits:

1. Immediate Applicability: CATs provide feedback that can be instantly applied. This real-time information empowers instructors to make timely adjustments to their teaching methods, ensuring students receive the best possible learning experience.
2. Insight into Student Learning: By employing CATs, instructors gain useful insights into what students have learned and understood. These assessments shed light on areas where students may be excelling or facing challenges, aiding instructors in tailoring their instructional approach accordingly.
3. Timely interventions: CATs enable instructors to promptly address any gaps in student understanding. Identifying and addressing students' lack of comprehension promptly can prevent misconceptions from deepening and support their academic progress.
4. Strengthened Student-Instructor Relationships: Utilizing CATs demonstrates that the instructor values and cares about student feedback to enhance the learning experience. This fosters positive and productive working relationships between instructors and students, creating an environment where open communication and continuous improvement are encouraged.

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) offer significant benefits to students:

1. Self-Assessment and Management Skills: CATs help students develop essential self-assessment and management skills. By engaging in these assessments, students learn to reflect on their learning progress, identify areas for improvement, and take ownership of their academic journey.
2. Enhanced Critical Thinking Abilities: Through CATs, students can hone their critical thinking skills concerning the learning content and teaching methods. Analyzing their performance and understanding fosters a deeper grasp of the subject matter and encourages active engagement in the learning process.
3. Instructor Support and Interest: CATs demonstrate the instructor's genuine interest and support for students' success in the classroom. Students feel valued and understood when instructors use CATs to gather feedback, which creates a more positive and encouraging learning environment.
4. Reduction of Student Isolation: CATs can help reduce feelings of student isolation by encouraging regular interaction and communication between students and instructors. Knowing that their feedback is heard and considered fosters a sense of belonging and support within the learning community.

Selection of Techniques for Assessing Course Related Knowledge and Skills:

1. Assessing Prior Knowledge, Recall, and Understanding
2. Assessing Skill in Analysis and Critical Thinking
3. Assessing Skill in Synthesis and Creative Thinking
4. Assessing Skill in Problem Solving
5. Assessing Skill in Application and Performance

Angelo and Cross suggest that new users of Classroom Assessment Techniques [CATs] will be most successful if teachers:

- Start with techniques that are quick and easy to use in a classroom setting where the teacher and students are comfortable.
- Only use CATs that they have previously tried out themselves.
- Allow more time to complete the activity the first time than might seem necessary.
- Report back to students what they have learned from student feedback and how that information can be used to improve student learning.

(Cont.)

The ten techniques described below represent a sampling of ideas that provide teachers with information on what, how much, and how well students are learning in the foreign language classroom. Each sample technique provides 1) the name of the technique from Angelo and Cross's book, 2) procedures for using, 3) and a brief classroom example of how to use it.

Ten Examples of CATs for Assessing Course Related Knowledge and Skills Adapted from Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross

1. Techniques Which Assess Prior Knowledge, Recall, and Understanding

The assessment methods within this category are suggested for evaluating declarative learning, which pertains to the content knowledge of a specific subject.

A. The One-Minute Paper

The One-Minute Paper is a quick way to assess students' prior cultural knowledge, recall of cultural contexts, and understanding of cultural nuances in the language lesson through a brief written reflection.

Allocate a few minutes at the end of the class for students to complete the One-Minute Paper individually. Provide a question or statement related to cultural contexts. For instance: "Describe a cultural celebration or festival you learned about in today's lesson." The task asks students to evaluate information and to engage in recall. This technique can also be used to ask more general questions: "What was the most important thing you learned during class today?" "What are you still confused about?" The instructor learns what students perceive to be their own learning problems and can use this information to clarify as needed in the next lesson.

B. The Muddiest Point

The instructor asks students to write down a quick response to the following question: "What was the muddiest point in [a specific activity, the reading, listening, video clip, lecture, etc.]?" For example, the Muddiest Point can be used to assess students' understanding of language rules and pinpoint areas of confusion or uncertainty through a concise written reflection.

Allocate a few minutes at the end of the class for students to complete the Muddiest Point exercise individually. Instruct students to write down one aspect of the language rules covered in the class that they found most unclear, confusing, or "muddy." For instance:

1. "Identify a grammar rule or concept that you still have questions about."
2. "Write down a sentence structure that you are uncertain about."
3. "If there's any aspect of today's language lesson that you are not clear on, write it down."

Allow students a couple of minutes to think and write their response. Collect the written responses at the end of the exercise. Review the responses to identify common points of confusion. Use these points as starting points for clarifications or further discussions in the next class.

2. Techniques Which Assess Skill in Analysis and Critical Thinking

The assessment techniques in this group focus on analysis – the breaking down of information, questions, or problems to facilitate understanding and problem solving.

A. Categorizing Grids

Categorizing Grids can be a useful assessment technique in a second language classroom to evaluate students' understanding and organization of vocabulary within specific language topics.

(Cont.)

Example Grid Topics:

Topic: Travel

Concepts:

1. *Modes of Transportation*
 - a. *Air travel*
 - b. *Train travel*
 - c. *Car travel*
 - d. *Bus travel*
 - e. *Bicycle travel*
 - f. *Walking/hiking*
2. *Travel Destinations*
 - a. *Beach destinations*
 - b. *Historical sites*
 - c. *Urban cities*
 - d. *Mountainous regions*
 - e. *Countryside/village areas*
 - f. *Wildlife reserves/national parks*

In this example, the categorizing grid assesses students' understanding of vocabulary related to modes of transportation and travel destinations. The teacher provides the overarching concepts of "Modes of Transportation" and "Travel Destinations" and asks the students to complete the grid with appropriate subordinate elements associated with each concept. By completing this categorizing grid, students demonstrate their knowledge of vocabulary related to travel, as well as their ability to categorize words based on common themes. This technique not only assesses their language proficiency but also encourages critical thinking and organization skills.

Teachers can use the students' responses to gauge their understanding of travel-related vocabulary and identify areas where further instruction or vocabulary expansion is needed. Additionally, this assessment activity can be followed by class discussions or writing exercises to further reinforce the vocabulary and stimulate meaningful conversations about different modes of transportation and travel destinations.

B. Pro and Con Grid

This technique is a valuable tool that empowers students to analyze complex issues, develop their critical thinking skills, and articulate balanced perspectives.

With this technique, students are asked to jot down a quick list of pros and cons on a particular topic or issue. For example, the teacher can present the issue of "Using Technology in Education" and ask the students to list the pros and cons associated with this topic.

Students fill in the pros/advantages/benefits section by identifying positive aspects of using technology in education, such as enhanced engagement, access to information, personalized learning, collaboration and communication opportunities, and real-world application.

In the cons/disadvantages/costs section, students identify potential drawbacks or challenges related to using technology in education, including technological dependence, distractions, inequitable access, privacy and security concerns, and the need for teacher training and support.

(Cont.)

Completing this Pro and Con Grid allows students to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of technology in education, consider different perspectives, and develop their critical thinking skills. Teachers can use the grid to assess students' understanding of the topic, facilitate class discussions or debates, and guide further exploration of the issue.

3. Techniques Which Assess Skill in Synthesis and Creative Thinking

The assessment strategies within this category are centered on evaluating synthesis, which involves the process of combining different elements to create a cohesive whole. These techniques aim to gauge students' ability to integrate information, ideas, or concepts from various sources or aspects of a subject.

A. One-Sentence Summary

The teacher asks students to answer the questions about a given topic: “Who does what to whom, when, where, how, and why?” (WDWWWWHW). Then the students are asked to write their responses into a single, grammatical sentence. This technique gauges the extent to which students can summarize a large amount of information concisely using correct sentence construction.

This technique works well when there is information that can be summarized in a sentence, e.g. a news report event, the plots of stories, different types of processes.

B. Concept Maps

Students draw or diagram the mental connections they make between a major concept the teacher focuses on and other concepts they have learned.

For example, to prompt students to make a Concept Maps, the teacher might ask them to brainstorm and draw the important features around such concepts as democracy, racism, art, transportation, a cultural aspect, family, etc. This technique helps the teacher understand the patterns of association students make in relation to a given focal concept or topic.

4. Techniques Which Assess Problem Solving Skills

The assessment techniques in this group focus on problem solving skills of various kinds – recognition of types of problems, determining principles and techniques to solve, perceiving similarities of problem features and ability to reflect and then alter solution strategies.

A. Documented Problem Solutions

In this technique, students track in a written format the steps they take to solve problems.

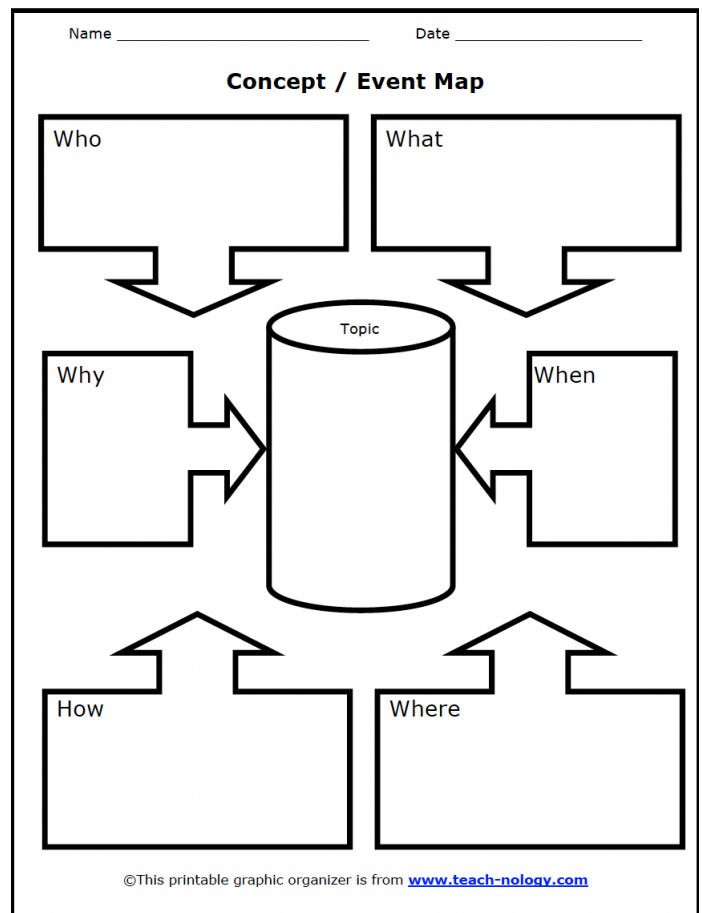


Figure 1. Concept Map.

(Cont.)

Example Problem: Renting an Apartment

Step 1: Identify the Problem

Understand the need to find an apartment for rent.

Step 2: Research and Planning

Conduct research on rental listings, prices, and neighborhoods.

Consider personal preferences, budget, and desired amenities.

Step 3: Contacting Rental Agencies or Landlords

Gather necessary contact information for rental agencies or landlords. Write an introductory email or make a phone call to inquire about available apartments.

Step 4: Viewing Apartments

Schedule appointments to visit potential apartments. Prepare a list of questions and requirements to discuss with the landlord or agent during the visit.

Step 5: Evaluating Options

Assess each apartment based on factors like location, size, condition, and rental terms. Compare pros and cons to make an informed decision.

Step 6: Negotiation and Lease Agreement

Engage in negotiation with the landlord or agent regarding rental terms, lease duration, and possible adjustments. Carefully review the lease agreement, seeking clarification on any unclear terms or conditions.

Step 7: Moving in and Settling

Coordinate logistics such as moving dates, utility connections, and necessary paperwork. Ensure a smooth transition into the new apartment.

Step 8: Reflection and Feedback

Reflect on the process of renting an apartment, identifying challenges faced and lessons learned. Share personal experiences and insights with classmates, encouraging discussion and exchanging tips.

By documenting their problem-solving process when renting an apartment, students practice language skills related to communication, negotiation, and decision-making. This activity helps students develop their language proficiency in practical, real-life contexts and increases their cultural awareness of rental practices in the target language community. Additionally, sharing experiences and providing feedback allows students to learn from one another and enhance their problem-solving and critical thinking abilities.

B. What's the Principle?

In this technique, students track in a written format the steps they take to solve problems.

Teachers can use the “What’s the principle?” assessment technique to evaluate students' ability to identify and state the underlying principle that best applies to each problem. The technique assesses students’ ability to associate specific problems with the general principles use to solve them.

(Cont.)

Present students with a series of scenarios or problems from different contexts addressed in class. For each scenario, instruct students to identify and articulate the principle or guiding concept that should be applied to effectively address the problem. The examples of scenarios and principles are below:

Scenario	Principle
A group project involves dividing tasks based on individual strengths. Identify the principle from teamwork that justifies this approach.	Principle of Specialization: Assigning tasks based on each member's expertise for efficient collaboration.
A society values freedom of speech as a fundamental right, even if it involves unpopular opinions. Identify the principle from political science that supports this perspective.	Principle of Free Expression: Upholding the right to voice diverse opinions without censorship.
A recipe for baking a cake specifies the accurate measurement of ingredients to ensure consistent results. Identify the principle from culinary arts that emphasizes precision.	Principle of Measurement Accuracy: Ensuring precise ingredient quantities for reliable culinary outcomes.
A legal case involves the application of previous court decisions to guide current rulings. Identify the principle from law that involves referencing past cases.	Principle of Precedent: Using previous legal decisions to guide current judgment.

5. Techniques Which Assess Skill in Application and Performance

The assessments in this category emphasize students' skills in applying crucial knowledge, often referred to as contextual understanding. This involves understanding when and where to utilize what they have learned and can do.

A. Application Cards

Application Cards for Language Use is a great way to assess students' ability to apply language-related concepts in various contexts, such as grammar rules, idiomatic expressions, or language functions. The instructor can prepare a set of application cards, each containing a language-related concept on one side and a description of a real-world scenario on the other side. In pairs or small groups, students read the scenario on their card and discuss how they would apply the language concept to communicate effectively in that situation. Some examples are below:

Concept - Giving Instructions

Scenario: *You are explaining to a classmate how to cook your favorite recipe. Write step-by-step instructions, making sure they are clear and easy to follow.*

Concept - Formal vs. Informal Language

Scenario: *Write an email to your teacher requesting an extension for an assignment. Then write a text message to a friend describing the same situation. Use appropriate levels of formality for each communication.*

(Cont.)

Concept - Expressing Hypothetical Situations

Scenario: You are advising a friend who wants to improve their time management. Write a paragraph explaining what they could do differently if they had more free time.

Concept - Descriptive Language

Scenario: You are participating in a group activity where everyone brings in an object and describes it to the group. Write a description of your object using adjectives and sensory details.

Concept - Polite Requests and Offers

Scenario: You are invited to a party by a target language speaker that you cannot attend. How would you decline the offer politely?

B. Student-Generated Test Questions

Students are asked to prepare two or three potential test questions and accompanying correct responses. Teachers can see what their students consider the most important information, how well they can answer the questions they have prepared, and then provide feedback to students based on their responses. Students can assess how well they know the material. Here are some examples for using this technique:

For lower-level students:

Divide the class into pairs. In each pair, assign a set of vocabulary words or phrases related to a specific topic (e.g., travel, technology, food). Have each pair create two test questions that require the use of their assigned vocabulary words. They should provide model answers as well. Have pairs exchange their questions with another pair. The receiving pair should answer the questions and evaluate the appropriateness of the vocabulary usage. Each pair presents their questions and model answers to the class, discussing the topic and how the vocabulary words fit into the context.

For higher-level students:

Divide the class into small discussion groups. Assign a thought-provoking topic to each group, such as "technology and privacy," or "education reform." In each group students take turns generating a discussion question related to the assigned topic. They should also prepare their own model answers. Each group engages in a discussion using the questions they generated. Students should take turns asking and answering the questions, fostering a meaningful conversation. After the discussion, each group reflects on the quality of the questions, the depth of the conversation, and the variety of viewpoints expressed.

Conclusion

The sample CATs mentioned here are intended as starting points, ideas to be adapted and improved upon. The techniques are not new, and effective teachers have been using variations of these activities for years to measure both student learning and teaching. You may want to try out one of the techniques that appeals to you and fits your teaching context.

Reference

Angelo, Thomas A. and Cross, K. Patricia (1993). Classroom Assessment Techniques. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Language Teacher Identity Negotiation I – The Non-Native Na-⁴² tive Speaker, How Past Experiences Shaped Me

Anna Chang

Editor Prologue

The October issue of the CATESOL Blog Book Review column is slated to post a review of *Language Teacher Identity in TESOL: Teacher Education and Practice as Identity Work* (2020) by Bedrettin Yazan and Kristen Lindahl, which prompted the idea to run a four-part series on language teacher identity negotiation. Teacher identity is constructed from an individual's personal and professional experiences and the interplay of the multiple facets of past, present, and future experiences. The first article in the series is *The Non-Native Speaker, How Past Experiences Shaped Me*. If you would like to contribute by sharing a reflection on your teacher identity negotiation in a future issue, I encourage you to contact me at newsletter@catesol.org.

Introduction

Norton (2000, 2001) and Pavlenko (2000, 2001, 2004) are possibly the most often cited researchers in the foundational literature regarding Non-Native English Speakers (NNES) identity. They show that the NNES's past history, gender, age and positions in the community and family impact how an individual understands his/her relationship to the L1 English speaking community and how they create, respond to, and resist opportunities to be part of the L1 community. Their approach to exploring NNES learning, use and identity emphasises that an additional language (AL) is not simply a skill acquired through persistence and practise. AL learning and use involves complex social interaction and power differentials that engage the identities of NNESs that have previously received little attention.

From that work also came a lens through which to explore and understand teacher identity. Scholars also describe teacher identity as dynamic, multi-faceted and evolving (Leigh, 2019; Golzar, 2020), but others have examined teacher identity in terms of beliefs, emotions, and instructional practices (Akkerman and Meijar, 2011). I understand, with regard to the account that is shared, Norton and Pavlenko's individual subjectivity as non-unitary, "diverse, contradictory, dynamic and changing over historical time and social space" (Norton 2001, p.125). Such identities constructed over time and space not only influence how an individual understands his/her present identity but also future opportunities.

My Background

On a surprisingly hot summer day in an otherwise rather rainy English summer season, I walked along the narrow-antiquated pavements all around the town of Cambridge for an hour to find the office of a linguistics professor that I had not previously met. With the University of Cambridge being made up of 31 different constituent colleges and me being a newbie who only got lucky enough to be there for the summer term after a lengthy, competitive process, finding anyone or anywhere was a difficult feat. However, I found the announcement for a six-pound reward just to complete a short study on how I use the English language too wonderful of a prize to pass up. By the time I reached my destination and targeted point of contact, I was already feeling dizzy from my hour-long wandering, but still excited that my hard work of walking would soon be paid off. After a simple exchange of greetings, the professor looked at me silently for a moment, and then asked the question I have been asked all my life: "Where are you from?"

I took a deep breath and voluntarily proceeded to provide a short narration of my birthplace, my childhood home, places I have lived, and current residences, thinking that I was being help- (Cont.)

-ful towards the professor for his study.

However, the professor promptly shook his head and proceeded to gesture me towards the door, with a short, impatient “Thank you for your time.”

Puzzled, I requested an explanation, adding that it was my excitement for the opportunity to participate in an English language study that had motivated me to walk under the midday summer sun for an hour.

“Thank you for coming all this way, but I’m sorry. You are simply not the test subject we are looking for. In our study, we will be looking at differences in certain language expressions between native speakers and non-native speakers of English, and well, I don’t think you SOUND like a native speaker.”

“OK...perhaps I can be a non-native speaker in your study!” I suggested with a hopeful spirit.

“But you see, based on what you have just told me, you’re not a non-native speaker in our sense of the word either. Your birthplace is in the States after all, and you have been and will still be going to school there after your summer here, so it is likely that you would have been exposed to naturally spoken English through a significant part of your youth that regular non-native speakers could only hope for, so...best of luck! Thank you for your interest and for your time.”

I was really looking forward to the six pounds, and for what it represents — a luxurious sandwich I thought too expensive to buy, the freedom to shop for food outside the dining halls, possibly the only chance to earn real money during the study abroad program, etc. But with no British Pounds in my hands, no lunch, just another hour walking all the way back to my dormitory in Pembroke College, and the thundering realization that after trying to fit in all my life in different language cultures, I am, and perhaps will always be, an outlier when it comes to all things language, and perhaps even identity.

Determined to prove that I could still “make it” as a native English speaker, that very same year I applied successfully to teach English in Japan for the next year’s spring and summer terms. As part of the preparations before arriving in Japan, I completed a course in Japanese teaching procedures, a course on increasing intercultural competence in the target culture, and training English demo lessons. At the same time, I was also asked to edit and digitalize authentic English language materials as textbooks for the upcoming program in Japan as among my first responsibilities of the “job.” It was only later that I learned that all along I was considered a “volunteer” for the textbook-creation project while some of my fellow classmates and colleagues were paid employees because of their status as “native speakers” and therefore more likely to “catch editing needs more intuitively.” By the time I finally made my way to Japan and met the students on the first day, I could hear the observing parents started whispering in Japanese “I wonder how good her English is?” or “Could she really speak English?” before I even uttered a word. Perhaps my physical appearance, what with my petite stature, black hair, and dark eyes, were not quite what they were expecting an English teacher to be, but still I comforted myself, because as the saying goes, “If you can’t win against them, join them!” I had high hopes that I would immerse into Japanese society quite well and therefore connect to the students and parents well.

Although colonial rule under Japan was a long time ago for Taiwan, the time period did leave some Japanese language and cultural legacies in Taiwan. Because of this piece of history, my grandparents were educated completely in Japanese when they were going to school, and many older members of my family received at least a partial Japanese education before the educational system was shifted to an all-Mandarin instruction. As a result, I grew up with random Japanese words (Cont.)

sprawled around my household in Taiwan for as long as I can remember. However, my exposure to the Japanese language and culture at home did not actually help me connect to the Japanese people, and I often came across as “rude” due to lack of linguistic cultural competence in the target culture. I could also hardly blame the students’ parents for being skeptical, for after all, my own English learning journey was indeed quite different from that of a regular native speaker of English.

Having been born in the U.S., my parents always tried to expose me to the English language, even after I moved to Taiwan in early childhood, but with a lack of need to speak English in my public elementary school setting in Taiwan, I resorted to only uttering “I’m fine, thank you” as a response to my teacher’s “How are you?” in English classes at school when needed. Therefore, upon returning to the U.S., I was unavoidably placed in the public school’s “ESL program,” which consisted of sitting in a small dark closet that was in between two regular classrooms for the complete duration of the course. From time to time though, I did get to have the entertainment of pasting my ears to the door to try and guess what my English-speaking classmates were doing in a normal classroom. I also struggled with my other classes due to lack of English language ability. To catch up, I had little sleep every single evening with textbooks and a English-Mandarin dictionary by my side until dawn. Even though by the end of the term, I had become the “success story” in my school with the top grades, I did not want to go to school, so I completed my secondary education as a home-schooled student, with the help of my parents. This gave me plenty of opportunities to stay home and watch English language television as much as I wanted. After imitating television personalities for years, I thought that I could finally have the confidence of a fluent, native-sounding person, but whilst in Japan I felt like a non-native speaker trying to teach English under the guise of a native speaker.

Feeling defeated after the program, I decided that teaching was not for me, and no English teaching for me ever again! However, as fate would have it, upon returning home and preparing for the next school year, I received an email with a job announcement for a Mandarin teaching assistant, with “pedagogical experience preferred.” Coincidentally, the professor that was hiring was also the professor who authored the pedagogical text that I used during my previous Japanese teaching procedures class. Due to having no internet at home, I had my video interview at McDonalds and could hardly hear anything beyond the sizzling sounds of French fries being made, but the professor was somehow impressed and hired me! I did not know then that this student part-time job would eventually open several doors for me, such as ending up with a master’s degree in second language teaching with an emphasis in Chinese teaching (the “teaching is not for me” phase of my life disappeared apparently)!

Growing up in both the United States and Taiwan has always led me to feel deeply connected to both the American identity and my Taiwanese heritage, and I thought that now I would finally have the best of both worlds.

Recent Experiences Prompted Reflection

Nevertheless, being a Mandarin instructor brought upon even more complicated identity issues. Although formerly an English Language Learner (ELL) teacher, I recently took position as a Chinese teacher. This context has prompted me to consider my identity, as the new work interactions/relationships were constructed over time and space before we ever met. These larger socio-political, socio-economic, and socio-cultural relationships I, we, inherited, not only influence how I understand my present identity but also how I negotiate my current identity.

A few weeks ago, I was placed in a training group at work with other fellow new Mandarin instructors. We were tasked with creating an authentic demo language task for a Mandarin lesson (Cont.)

and after we have completed the activity, colleagues teaching other languages would read over our task and give us feedback. Upon patiently reading over our task carefully, our colleagues felt that the specific situation we had made up for the task would have been more realistic if we had placed the situation somewhere in Taiwan (we had set up the situation to be in Beijing). Without thinking of the political sensitivities of my Chinese colleagues, I simply crossed off the location for our language task and replaced it with Taiwan, thinking that it was an easy fix to having an effective language task for our Mandarin classroom. Yet, that prompted comments and questions from my Chinese colleagues – “How could that just be easily changed just because someone told us to? Have we become people without principles?” Trying to make peace but feeling hopeless, I quietly crossed off “Taiwan.” However, at this point, I was unsure that I should take the initiative to do any further changes. Yet, being the physically closest person to our group board, I could not but help make a final contributing change – a question mark in the middle of the sentence where the location word for our language task has now been crossed off twice. I liked to think that I handled the situation as a mature, professional adult who attempted to not let political ideologies affect work in any way, but by the time our training regrouped and we were asked to provide reflections upon the activity, I could not stop my tears from flowing out.

Of all the reasons to cry about my Mandarin teaching job, I did not think this was it. I thought it would be the fact that I never felt confident in my job because I felt like I am not a truly educated Mandarin native speaker. I started out as six-year-old girl who had never been to any type of school (no preschool, no kindergarten, etc.) and only spoke Taiwanese fluently, even though my parents did try to throw in some English, Japanese, and French phrases and sentences at home. The first thing I took home from school was my first ever Mandarin test paper, which had a big, red “0” score on the corner. While other kids had to obey curfew rules and go to bed at 9 pm at the latest, I got to stay up until the wee hours of the night studying to try and catch up so as to not be the only person that nobody wanted to play with at recess again. Perseverance paid off at that age, for by the second test, my score was 30, and by the third test the third week of school, it was a 100! But even then, I still to date only have five years of formal Mandarin education under my belt, and this is apparent whenever my co-workers are coming up with paragraph-length discourse within a matter of seconds and I am still rearranging words in my head for my first sentence utterance in response. Still, never have I fathomed that I would have an identity crisis moment right in the middle of a workday. In the end, however, I simply proved that I still have room to grow in terms of professional maturity, for after clarification my fellow Mandarin colleagues did not mean what they said the way I thought they did, and my kind trainer spoke to me individually and reaffirmed that I should not let what everyone else says affect my own self-identity. I know who I am and I should not need to feel like a question mark. There are always ways to avoid uncomfortable political topics at work without compromising my own identity and co-exist with fellow faculty members from various regions if we share the common goal of enriching students with what each individual instructor brings to the table – varying accents, word usage, even different writing systems (for Mandarin)!

Implications for Teaching ELLs

So, what does this mean for the English Language Learners (ELLs) in our classrooms? I think that when teachers reflect on their language learning experiences, even if a monolingual English speaker, the journeys give us insight into possibly deeper overlooked aspects of ourselves as learners and how that influences us as teachers and our instructional practice. I think that insight into our language learning experiences and identity(ies) position us to see our students differently and therefore, possibly better equipped to meet their language learning needs and provide open (Cont.)

space for the negotiation of their own identities.

Conclusion

I know that shaping my identity as a language teacher will help me shape the future of my students. Words of affirmation that I would utter to myself is simply to be strong and be courageous! Although a speaker of five languages, I have never had the experience of truly starting a language learning journey from scratch in a classroom setting, but I share with my students the same pain of feeling lost and confused, the



same perception of being considered a non-native speaker (in all of the languages I speak, even Taiwanese!), as well as the same joy of that pivotal moment when I finally understand what everyone else is saying around me. I know that all the languages I grew up in the home with, and in the environments that I lived, all shaped who I am today. As my identity solidifies, I know that I will experience happiness, greater abilities, and inner peace. For dear readers, may your efforts be seen and appreciated. I know that what you do matters and makes a significant difference in the world.

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*Member Submission III: Enhancing Second Language Teaching Through Scenario-Based Learning (SBL)*⁴⁷

Ragaa Shenouda

Scenario-based learning is a pedagogical approach that engages learners in authentic, real-life situations to enhance their language acquisition and usage skills (Seren Smith et al., 2018). This methodology is beyond traditional teaching methods since it emphasizes the practical application of language skills in specific settings rather than just rote recall of vocabulary and grammar rules. In second language teaching, scenario-based Learning offers a dynamic and immersive way to connect language Learning with practical contexts, enabling students to develop linguistic competence, cultural awareness, and critical thinking abilities (Yang, 2011). Furthermore, this method teaches students essential skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, communication, critical thinking, cooperation, and teamwork.



The Theoretical Framework of SBL

The theoretical framework for scenario-based Learning was primarily derived from the situated learning theory established by Lave and Wenger (1991), which contends that Learning occurs best in authentic situations in which it is applied (Fox, 1997). In other words, students must act and practice in settings that allow them to build experience and competence. Scenario-based Learning is analogous to the theory of Situated Cognition (Kindley, 2002). Situated cognition is also revealed that knowledge is best gained and fully understood when it is placed within its context (Cobb & Bowers, 1999). Scenario-based Learning bridges the gap between the classroom and the real world by presenting learners with scenarios that mirror their future responsibilities, experiences, and work requirements.



JEAN LAVE & ETIENNE WENGER

Types of Scenario-Based Learning

Scenario-based learning involves various forms and methodologies tailored to specific educational objectives. The aim is to engage learners in communication tasks that require them to apply their language skills to achieve a particular goal. Educators should consider learning objectives, learners' proficiency level, available resources, and desired level of immersion when selecting a scenario-based learning method. Adapting the scenario to these characteristics can lead to effective and engaging language learning experiences (Yang, 2011). Scenario-based Learning is flexible and can be used in a variety of educational settings, such as Simulation-based scenarios, role-playing scenarios, and problem-solving issues and decision-making scenarios to create interactive language activities as follows:

1. Simulation-based Scenarios

They require learners to understand situations and how to act accordingly. They assist students in applying theoretical knowledge in practical situations, making decisions, and understanding the outcomes of their actions. It helps them to learn and practice essential phrases and vocabulary needed during tactical situations or negotiations. In addition, these experiences can (Cont.)

improve critical thinking, problem-solving skills and overall proficiency in various areas allow learners to engage in a risk-free environment. For instance, scenarios in medical or emergency contexts encompass tasks like emergency calls and accident descriptions, catering to medical professionals who can practice roles ranging from doctors to nurses. Similarly, military personnel use simulations to enhance tactical skills, strategic planning, and negotiation prowess.

Examples:

Sales Role-Play: create role-play scenarios to practice sales pitches, handling objections or complications, and closing deals. Different team members take on the roles of salespeople and potential customers.

Job Interview Role-Play: create role-play scenarios to simulate job interviews, with some acting as interviewers and others as job applicants. This helps participants practice their interviewing skills, including answering questions, demonstrating professionalism, and showcasing their qualifications.

Health Clinic Role-Play: Set up a health clinic scenario where students play the roles of patients and doctor. They can practice describing symptoms, discussing health concerns, and following medical advice.



2. Problem-Solving Scenarios

They require learners to engage in intricate problems, challenging situations, and complex tasks to act accordingly. This method encourages their creativity and problem-solving abilities. It facilitates the acquisition of cross-cultural communication skills and comprehension of political nuances within the target language (TL) while simultaneously honing the language skills required to navigate and respond to such circumstances (Elliott-Kingston et al., 2014). For instance, scenarios can revolve around political issues within the TL's context, prompting students to analyze, recommend solutions, and formulate strategies for resolution. Moreover, scenarios related to shopping, like addressing product defects and seeking assistance for exchanges or refunds, provide practical exposure. Problem-solving scenarios, such as mediating a heated disagreement between two team members, cultivate conflict management and negotiation skills. Through these scenario-based experiences, learners gain language and real-world problem-solving proficiency.

Examples

You let your friend borrow your favorite book. When they gave back to you, some of the pages are ripped, what do you do?

You got a bad grades on your test, and you are afraid you will be in trouble. How do you tell your parents?

Advantages of using scenario-based Learning

Scenario-Based Learning (SBL) is a powerful instructional approach that can effectively teach languages by providing learners with a more immersive, contextual, and meaningful experience (Ünal & Yelken, 2020). It encourages learners to actively engage with the language and apply their knowledge in realistic settings, improving language proficiency and confidence. Integrating scenario-based Learning in language instruction enriches the learning process significantly, encouraging comprehensive language development and empowering learners to apply their language (Cont.)

skills proficiently and confidently in real-life scenarios. This method has many advantages for language learners because of its dynamic and immersive environment.

Additionally, collaboration, critical thinking, self-confidence, cultural acumen, engagement, and knowledge transfer are the key benefits of this learning approach (Elliott-Kingston et al., 2014). Scenarios reflecting real-life situations foster comprehension of the target language's culture, customs, and social norms, while practical language usage in meaningful contexts enhance knowledge retention and transfer (Elliott-Kingston et al., 2014). In addition, learners experience practical language usage in meaningful contexts, bridging the chasm between classroom learning and authentic language application.

Conclusion

Scenario-based Learning (SBL) is an educational strategy that immerses students in simulated real-world settings to help them better understand, apply, and master various skills and knowledge. In SBL, learners engage in realistic situations that closely mimic authentic contexts, enabling them to actively participate, solve problems, make decisions, and collaborate as they would in actual circumstances. This method focuses on experiential learning, critical thinking, and practical skill development. It is beneficial for enabling students to confidently handle real-life problems in their chosen fields of study or vocations.

To create scenario-based activities for teaching languages, teachers should identify the activity's learning objectives and specify the language skills and content to be practiced. Next, teachers select a relevant, realistic topic that resonates with students' lives, mirroring situations they might face in English-speaking contexts. Lastly, enhance authenticity by integrating genuine materials like real conversations, videos, or articles, exposing students to authentic language use and cultural nuances.

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Katrina Johnson and Kara Mac Donald

Series Introduction by Editor

The newsletter has been piloting a four-column series on how being a language learner informs instructional practice as a language teacher promoted by the first article on the topic, becoming a Language Student on Leave to Teach Better upon Return by Rebekah Sidman-Taveau. In that article she shared the appreciation of the time and focus needed to study a language, the persistence it takes to move forward at an advanced level. With pilot column established, in the first article in the series, Michelle Skowbo interviewed a CATESOL member on how being a language learner offered insight her learners' negotiation of their language identities. In this second series article, Lisa Fischler shared her experience as a Mandarin and Cantonese learner and how learning by doing is most beneficial and influences her classroom practice. In the third series article, Chia-Ning Liu and Li-Yuan Liao share how their language learning experiences foster language clubs as a core function in building classroom proficiency goal. In the fourth article in the series, Chia-Ning Liu and Lia Yuan Lian spoke about the role of language clubs aligned with the curriculum as a means to develop proficiency and cultural competencies. In the last issue, Y.H. Lee shared a reflection as a language learner and how it intersects with her teaching practice regarding the use of word etymology and arbitrary, but phonologically related, associations in vocabulary acquisition.

In this issue, the authors, the tutor and her aunt, reflect on their experiences of supporting the literacy development of a second grader, *Sierra*, in a dual immersion program.

Tutor's Reflections

Like *Sierra* I grew up in an L1 English speaking family, and like her, was exposed to two foreign languages throughout my elementary schooling as part of the household in varying ways. From the time I was in kindergarten, my father worked for an American company and held a position that was based on Brazil. So, he lived in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo for the majority of the year (i.e., nine to ten months/year) for five or six years. My mother, siblings and I remained in the U.S. for various reasons. Yet we were all exposed to Brazilian culture in numerous ways. We all also had experiences visiting/living in Brazil while my father was there. When I was there, I found the other children accessible to me were expat kids from other countries in Latin

America and were Spanish speakers. These kids were able to speak English, but the novelty would wear off at some point and all communication among them and directed towards me would change to Spanish. I have fond and frustrating memories of watching *Sesame Street* in Portuguese on the living room TV. The fond memories were from the foundations for literacy being presented through a media platform I associated that what I knew in English from the U.S. I also have fond memories of how my next oldest sister, late high school age, taught me Portuguese survival basics for not only vocabulary (i.e., lexical level), but also basic grammar structures (i.e., sentence level), in the basement of our U.S. home with a full-size wall mounted chalk board. And one, I kid you not, wooden college student lecture chair for me.



(Cont.)

What clicked, or what I came to understand at some level over time, was that the approaches and strategies for learning to read in a second language, when literacy in the first language is not established, is a mishmash when not structured and supported systematically. I remember explicitly in the spring of second grade my mother and I went to have dinner with my neighbor baby siter and her son who was in my grade and a close friend. He brought the Sunday comics from the newspaper that morning to the pizza restaurant, and to pass the time before the pizza came, he read several comic strips. I was surprised that he not only could read the words, but he noticed the words as something meaningful beyond the cartoon images. I always saw words in the comics, but I didn't think they were directed at me as a kid.

I did learn to read at grade level, but it took a couple of years, as I gained agency a bit by third grade, and with Portuguese becoming less useful in my childhood social world, Spanish was the new focus (in Expat Latin America). As a *little*, this raised my awareness of acquiring literacy in English through fun incidental practice with my sister. Of course, my literacy development is more complex and dynamic, but understanding distinctions between the languages was meaningful for my acquisition of English literacy as an early elementary school student.

Reflections as Sierra's Tutor, a 2nd Grade Dual Immersion Student

I was invited to assist *Sierra* in her learning of English, Spanish and Math acquisition, as she was not at grade level due to her foundational Kindergarten year being virtual due to the 2020 COVID-19. I have training and experience in teaching young learner ESL/EFL, but I am not trained in bilingual education. Surprisingly at the beginning I did not give much thought to this. As a language educator, one would expect that I would have given bilingual education pedagogies more direct thought, but rather I focused on principles particular to teaching young learners (i.e., building routine, providing an interactive learning environment, play-based learning, modeling language input through book reading and language production through age-appropriate workbook activities and exercises).

I came equipped to the initial lessons 11 months ago with all the story books, accompanying English/Spanish corresponding CDs, mini whiteboards with color markers for instruction and writing practice, and bilingual workbook for her level. I was applying pedagogical practices for young learners, but not specific bilingual instructional approaches. I soon knew I had to read, as I understood myself far from working with such a learner group. However, once *Sierra* and I, and the family, had an established system in conjunction with *Sierra's* teacher, *Sierra* started to excel documented by school assessments and teacher comments.

What Being Sierra's Tutor and Sierra Taught Me

As a trained ESL/EFL/FL educator, with training and experience working with young learners, I saw a lot of *Sierra's* cognitive processes, struggles and grasping of content presented over time. It has been a joy. What she explicitly reminded me of as a language teacher, and as an emerging dual immersion young learner instructor is shared below.

Sight Words

For English literacy development, key list of words that cannot be decoded and do not follow regular rules are necessary for students memorize. The need for sight words is different in Spanish, since all words can be decoded (i.e., pronounced on constant phonological rules). In Spanish, high frequency words were not needed, and I switched to using short word list that were challenging for her to read, and to write. However, word production in writing was challenging for her even in the summer of 2nd grade. (Cont.)

Syllables

I understood the role of syllabification in English literacy instruction is not as strong as in Spanish, but the bilingual workbooks chosen by me had exercises on this skill in both languages. *Sierra* quickly grasped syllable identification in both languages, so maybe the practice with Spanish strengthened her English language understanding.

Vowels and Consonants

The building blocks of Spanish literacy begin with the vowels and then move to consonants to form syllables. Understanding that there are strong vowels (i.e., a-e-o) and weak vowels (i.e., i-u) determines separation of words into syllables, accent rules, and impacts comprehension. The building blocks of English literacy are the names and sounds of each letter. Knowing initial letter names and sounds are predictors of reading success in English. *Sierra's* struggle with the distinctions between the sound-symbol systems of the two languages signaled to me that I need to clearly establish which language system we would be working with. Nonetheless, the Spanish sound system is stronger in her repertoire and imposes it on the English when reading. This is an area to work on. An example, from a story book would be *Angélico* [Angelic], which would be pronounced correctly, but if when a word is seen with a similar phonetic collocation, she applies the Spanish pronunciation.

Rhyming Words and Word Families

Phonological awareness in Spanish occurs through writing, not through oral language development. In Spanish, if one can say it, a young learner can write it. However, understanding rime is fundamental in English to be able to decode and understand the relationship between sound and symbol as it appears at the beginning of the words. This skill is learned and taught orally, but needs to be established for subsequent writing skills (i.e., c-at (c/k); f-at(f/ph)). I quickly saw that *Sierra* needed a distinction of which phonological system was required of the activity at hand, as she mixed and matched.

Spelling

In Spanish, for *Sierra*, is difficult as she is just mastering the language input mode of each language. She still struggles to produce words she knows well when asked. For Spanish, she be supported to produce high frequency words only. For English, she cannot yet produce correctly spelled word output. This is understandable as English is opaque and super irregular. For conventional children in English instructional schools, spelling is taught through lists of words that correspond to letter patterns. However, in dual immersion schools, all instructional content is taught in Spanish, except for the English time period. The Spanish language has 27 letters that produce 24 phonemes, whereas the English language has 26 letters that produce 40-56 phonemes.

Aunt's Reflections

Sierra attends a dual language academy that is based on a two-way bilingual immersion (TWBI) program. TWBI programs develop students' language proficiencies through instruction in both English and Spanish. The program advertises that classrooms are linguistically balanced with half native/heritage Spanish speakers and half native English speakers. However, this is not so easy for the academy to control, as the student enrollment population is what it is and *Sierra* is a minority of the population as a native English speaker with no access to heritage Spanish speakers in the household. All of *Sierra's* classes are in Spanish except for English language arts, which is in English. This has fostered her Spanish speaking and oral comprehension abilities. However, with without ample exposure to both languages, *Sierra* was not at reading levels in either language. She did fairly through word problems, she failed to read the Spanish text aloud and grasp meaning. She (Cont.)

well in her mathematics abilities, but only when content was presented in Spanish orally. If presented not yet able to decode words in either language at the sentence level, and if reading aloud she is focusing on the pronunciation and meaning escapes her. *Sierra* is gaining an appreciation for other Spanish-speaking cultures and is progressing but overall was unable to develop mastery of 1st grade-level content standards.

We as a family, and me as well, thought that we could not fully assist *Sierra* because we didn't know Spanish. This is far from the first rodeo supporting the care and development of *littles* in our extended family. Yet most the virtual instruction due to the pandemic threw our family a curve ball. In addition, our family has never experience dual language instruction at any level, all schooled entirely in English. Times changes, opportunities become available.

What Being Sierra's Aunt and Sierra Taught Me

I was able to support *Sierra* in her dual immersion program for English, Spanish, and Math. Being an earshot from tutoring sessions for 11 months, I quickly learned I had not only the first-language base content knowledge, but also the basic and elementary Spanish base knowledge to assist *Sierra* with assignment. I had underestimated myself possibly a year ago when she began to fall behind, thinking I needed to be proficient in Spanish to read and understand her homework, and teach her in Spanish. I found quickly over time that was not the case, and I felt empowered to help by *baby*.

Mathematics

I don't know why it escaped me, but I can read the Roman Numerals in the Spanish math workbook and help her learn addition and subtraction in English. By the time she was in 2nd grade, she new the Spanish terms for numbers up to 100, as well as English. We discussed the math problems in English and used examples relevant to her to solve the equations.

Textual Reading for Pronunciation of Letter and Sound Connections

Since Spanish has one letter and one sound, I was able to help *Sierra* practice reading Spanish sentences, as well as English. I know from supporting other family members with young learners, I was able to draw in sight words in English from the internet.

Family, School Teacher, and Tutor Team Effort

Our family collectively supported *Sierra*, of course. Ms. Kara was an exceptional teacher and provided, as well as harnessed extra resources and support for *Sierra*. She was thankfully able to support *Sierra*. *Lo que más me gusta es ver mejorar a Sierra* [What I like most is to see *Sierra* improve] (See image below).

You ask a *little* to copy a sentence numerous times to not have the letters different sizes or slanting above or below the base line, you have time to search the English translation of the sentence. And with my basic elementary Spanish from high school, I know how to change the content to express my message.

Conclusion

As *Sierra's* aunt at times, I feel disappointed as it that everyone raves about the impact of bilingual Spanish-English programs on their children. I know it is simply a matter of her not establishing a strong foundation in kindergarten as she went through that year with virtual classes due to the pandemic. I know she is making progress documented by her teacher and school assessments, and I know it is a matter of time for everything to *click* for her. Also, her tutor has also shared that it's important to focus on what she has achieved and not to focus too much what she has yet to achieve, as she is working hard, and we all have learned how to better assist her.

***RW-IG Report – Writing Retreat* for Publishing in a CATESOL⁵⁴ Publication in 2024**

Sonia Estima and Kara Mac Donald

There are writing retreats for novelists, graduate students, and academics to help individuals find the space for uninterrupted writing, matched with the support and collaboration to make time productive for identified, although differing, goals. ELT classroom practitioners are often so busy with the daily logistics of serving students, lesson preparation, and attending to administrative responsibilities, and may not seek out such writing venues. Yet they are on the front lines with ELLs and can offer immense and valuable insight on how to best serve learners, whether it be an action research study, classroom activity, or reflective account. The challenge is carving out time to write a piece to share with CATESOL members through publication among the work and personal responsibilities.

Research Writers-Interest Group (RW-IG)

The co-coordinators of the Research Writers-Interest Group (RW-IG) have offered various webinars over the past several years, along with IG sessions provided at the annual conferences promoting the CATESOL Newsletter, Blog, and Journal as great venues for sharing expertise. Both venues have highlighted the wide range of submissions welcome by the CATESOL Newsletter, Blog, and Journal and how accessible they are for members to share their action research, conference presentations, classroom activities or personal reflections.

Join the RW-IG session at the 2023 CATESOL Annual Conference at Alameda College in Alameda, where the co-coordinators will again provide an overview of opportunities across CATESOL publications to further foster CATESOL's community of practice. Keep an eye out for this session as the conference program becomes available.

RW-IG Writing Retreat slated for December

To offer a new format for its online events, the RW-IG will be offering a virtual *Writing Retreat* from the comfort of your own home. We aim to leverage the energy and engagement members gain from the 2023 Annual CATESOL Conference, matched with the likelihood of more downtime once the fall semester is done, to offer a set period of time where you can put aside responsibilities of regular life to connect with others and make headway on your writing project. Yet before the hectic end of year celebrations.

Writing Retreat Details

When: Saturday January 20, 2024

Where: Online

Time: 10:00am-1:00pm

Schedule: Planning Your Writing & Staying Engaged (10:00am-10:45am)

Break (10:45am-11:00am)

Focus Breakout Room Discussions (11:00am-11:45am)

Dedicated Individual Writing Time Off-Line (12:00pm-12:45pm)

Whole Group Debrief (12:45pm-1:00pm)

(Cont.)

The RW-IG Writing *Retreat* will be an online three-hour event that will begin with short presentation of select chapters from Belcher's (2009) *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks* that address the writing process in general, rather than specifically for publishing a academic journal article. Then, there will be opportunities for attendees to go to break out rooms associated with the publication type (i.e., Journal, Newsletter, Blog, or another venue) that they are interested in submitting an article to. Each break out room will be facilitated by a moderator, where attendees share their writing ideas and challenges. The event then will offer with dedicated individual writing time (i.e., making an article outline, planning for a writing schedule, starting a piece and/or refining a partially completed piece). The event closes with a whole group reflection on the experience and personally identifying one's next steps for article submission to the identified publication.



Conclusion

You can register for the RW-IG Writing *Retreat* on the CATESOL Homepage on the CATESOL Homepage in November, and the information and direct link will be shared in the December issue of the Newsletter. It seems that January is a long way away. Yet don't wait register now and put it on your calendar to position yourself to start your writing project for publication in 2024. Time flies. A DIY writing retreat holed up in your own home is a possibility, but such DIY events lack the collaboration and support of colleagues and are prone to interruptions from daily responsibilities as you are alone and the time frame it not as protected when attending a group *retreat*.

Reference:

Belcher, W.L. (2009) *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks, A Guides to Academic Publishing Success*. University of Chicago.


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Member Submission III – Idioms Shouldn't Be the Icing on⁵⁶ the Cake, Low-Level Proficiency ELL's Benefit from Them, Too

Tim Berndt and Kara Mac Donald

Idioms are often reserved for upper intermediate and advanced learners, as they cannot fully be understood through a literal translation. In addition to the difficulty in deciphering meaning, idioms can be used in a sarcastic, ironic, or emphatic manner, which can also make it difficult for low-level learners to understand the nuances of both their meaning and use. The Inter-agency Language Roundtable (ILR) states learners at Level 2+ for all four skills can generally use idioms, although not always correctly (ILR, 2020) and at Level 3, they can use common idiomatic expressions (ILR, 2020). These in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) would be equivalent to B2 and C1. By this point in their learning, such learners have strong enough control of the language to operate in a variety of social and professional settings, and therefore have a better understanding and grasp of appropriate commonly used idiomatic expressions. At these levels, learners have full participatory ability in personal, social, and a wide variety of professional contexts. Idioms are a frequent part of everyday communication and are often situated in the history, politics, customs, and popular culture of the United States. Idioms provide cultural insights into the fabric of the language and culture, which provides opportunities for students to be exposed to the socio-cultural contexts associated with the idioms. Incorporating idioms in the English Language Learner (ELL) classroom can be beneficial for low-level proficiency ELLs as they permit these learners a grasp of the culture and community, while possibly living on the fringe of the English-speaking community in California despite calling nowhere else home.

The authors discuss the value of teaching idioms to low-level proficiency ELLs followed by a brief discussion on the value of teaching idioms to such learners. Next there is a discussion on pedagogical approaches to using idioms in the classroom regarding macro-strategies and micro-strategies, drawing on the work of Liu (2008). Then, two sample activities for introducing idioms low-level proficiency ELLs are provided, one addressing general approaches (i.e., macro-strategies) and the other specific techniques (i.e., micro-strategies). The sample activities presented not only introduce the idioms while exploring the underlying social-cultural factors that their meanings are derived from, but also give students an opportunity to use them in a meaningful communicative activity.

Rationale for Teaching Idioms to Low-Level Proficiency ELLs

An idiom is a group of words that contain meaning which is figurative, as well as words that cannot be translated fully nor literally (Al-Kadi, 2015). Generally, idioms are grouped into two categories: encoded and decoded idioms (Soto-Jurado & Garcia-Ponce, 2020). Encoding idiom meaning can be relatively easy to interpret as the meaning reflects the figurative sense of the words (e.g., when one door closes a window opens) and decoding idiom meaning is difficult to interpret as the meaning is detached from the figurative sense of the words (e.g., [a pot calling the kettle black](#)). However, there is also a model based on an idiom's transparency (Mantyla, 2004; Fernando, 1996). The first category of idioms is those which have a direct and clear link (i.e., transparent) between the figurative meaning and the literal translation of the words (i.e., wide awake). The second are idioms that have a partial link (i.e., semi-transparent) between the figurative meaning and the literal translation of the words (i.e., foot the bill), in that one portion assumes the literal meaning of the word/s and the other portion is figurative. The third group are idioms whose meaning is not transparent (i.e., opaque) based on the literal interpretation of the words (i.e., bite the bullet).

Idioms are rooted in history and cultural experience and may be difficult for learners to understand, as they do not yet possess sufficient socio-cultural and historical knowledge to interpret the meaning. For example, the idiom *a pot calling the kettle black*: in addition to the meaning being (Cont.)

fully based on figurative interpretation, it is also being used to describe a situation in which someone is accusing someone else of a fault which they themselves possess. However, the significance of *black* may be lost on an L2 ELL, due to their language and cultural background. Historically in English-speaking societies, pots and kettles were made of black iron, as opposed to terracotta or other material.

Since idioms are so interconnected with English socio-cultural and historical elements, they serve as a resource to explore English values and beliefs when learning and reviewing vocabulary in the classroom. As learners acquire English, they also acquire new socio-cultural frames of world experience, as well as idioms that can serve as yet another tool to broaden a learner's understanding of the North American English-speaking culture and build intercultural communicative competence.

Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching Idioms in the Classroom

Liu (2008) work is a comprehensive text on teaching idioms that addresses from idiom use, idiom comprehension and acquisition, and instructional strategies to error correction and assessment. For the purposes of this article, the authors, as pre-service and in-service teacher trainers, draw from the chapters on pedagogical instructional recommendations. Below they offer some macro-strategies and micro-strategies for integrating idioms into the classroom. As specific example of idiom activities for the ELL classroom are offered, addressing both a macro-strategy and micro-strategy approach, the following examples of pedagogical approaches/techniques are presented in bullet point format.

Idiom Pedagogy: Macro-Strategies, General Approaches

- **Idiom Corner:** space on a wall of the classroom used to post idioms that students have encountered or that the teacher would like students to learn.
- **Problem-Solving Activities:** guided opportunities for students to figure out the meaning of idioms via close syntactical and semantic analyses, using linguistic, conceptual, and pragmatic knowledge as well as imagination.
- **Topic-Specific Linguistic Context Exploration:** expanding on current curriculum semester topics and backward-building level and topic appropriate idioms into assigned lesson content.
- **Enhance Retention:** mnemonic strategies, rote learning, noticing alliterations.

Idiom Pedagogy: Micro-Strategies, Specific Techniques

- **Identify, compare, and contrast** idioms in the L1 and TL.
- **Explore differences** between an idiom's literal and figurative meanings.
- **Fill in the blank** with part/whole idiom in a passage.
- **Replace marked expressions** with idioms.
- **Decipher idioms' meanings** by using pragmatic and conceptual knowledge.
- **Conduct corpus search** for idiom examples.
- **Idiom games** developed by students or teacher.
- **Idiom notebook organized** by category/type.

In the next section, a description of implementing an idiom corner (i.e., macro-strategy) and an expansion on deciphering idioms' meanings by using pragmatic and conceptual knowledge (i.e., micro-strategy) are shared to provide tangible classroom application examples.(Cont.)

Classroom Application Examples

Below are two sample activities focused on introducing idioms to Semester One students.

Activities Focused on Macro-Strategies and General Approaches

Noticing is an essential part of learning a second language, and to develop students' awareness of idioms, an idiom corner or bulletin board can be created in the classroom. An idiom corner or bulletin board is a place in the classroom where students, as well as the teacher, can share idioms they can encounter in and out of the classroom. A schedule can be set up for a focus on one of the posted idioms as an Idiom of the Week. This can also increase students' interest in participating in posting idioms, as they will have the recognition of their idiom being the Idiom of the Week at some point.



Figure 1. Idiom of the Week Bulletin Board

Increasing students' interest and awareness can be done by showing how idioms can be organized in categories (i.e., topic, vocabulary theme, etc.). An example of topic related idioms are ways to say one is tired. An example of vocabulary theme related idioms are one that have different meanings but also contain an animal in them, such as 'Cat got your tongue', 'Horse around', and 'Smell a rat'. Students can be encouraged to do such categorization on the Idiom of the Week board or in a personal notebook.

To increase students' socio-cultural knowledge, idioms can be presented to activities presented in films or TV shows watched as part of the class. Idioms can be categorized into domains like family, sports, cooking, etc. For example, maybe in watching episodes of Big Bang Theory, the idiom 'tight knit family' can be presented with the adjustment of a 'tight knit group of friends'. Or in watching episodes of the Simpsons, 'chip off the old block' and 'chip off the old block' can be introduced.

Take advantage of unplanned encounters with idioms when students raise them in class. They can be difficult to understand when the metaphorical basis is different than in their L1, but they can be moments to leverage a discussion of English-culture specific concepts.

Activities Focused on Micro Strategies and Techniques

The selection of idioms that will be most useful to elementary level learners common daily situations will give them opportunities to use them, like the classroom for example. To develop understanding of idioms and develop interpretation strategies, students in pairs can be asked to examine idioms on strips of paper with idioms related to studying and learning with the correct meaning on strips of paper.

(Cont.)



Figure 1. Idiom Matching Activity

Once students have matched the idioms with the selected meaning, they can play the matching game on the whiteboard or SmartBoard to see if the pairs have matched the idioms and meaning correctly. For younger learners an image can be added to a card with the meaning strip of paper to support comprehension of the idiom for students to match, as in Figure 2 below.

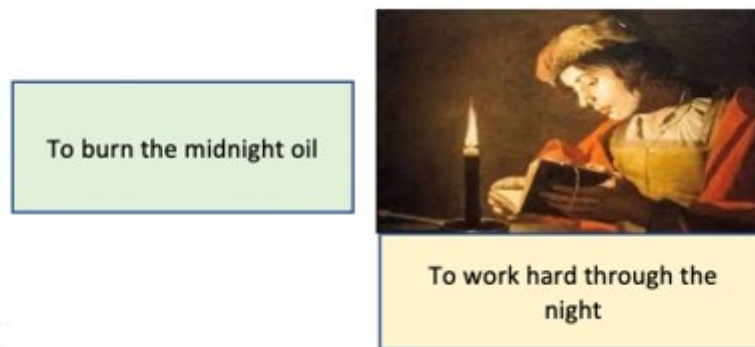


Figure 2. Idiom Matching Activity Example with Picture

As an alternative, students can be asked to draw the meaning of the idiom themselves.

Students can then be asked to research origin of the idiom's meaning to further assist with retention. For example, with 'to burn the midnight oil' before electricity people would work by candlelight and was used to say someone worked third through the night. Students in pairs can discuss situations related to class where they might use the idioms presented and to make a dialogue to present to the class.

Student A: There is a test tomorrow.
 Student B: I need *to burn the midnight oil*. I didn't do well on the last test.
 Student A: Oh, it will *be a piece of cake* for me.
 Student B: How can you say that? English is hard.
 Student A: I will *play hooky*. I won't be in class for the test.
 Student B: You will get a zero, it's better to come and get a D.
 Student A: On, you're right.

Figure 3. Sample Dialogue with Presented Idioms

Lastly, a strategy to increase retention students can be asked to share if there are idioms in their L1 that express similar meanings to the ones just studied, and how they compare in meaning the English expression.

Students can also be asked to guess the meaning of an idiom in context. To provide an authentic-like context, text message conversations that incorporate idiomatic expressions can be used (Figure 4). Students in pair attempt to predict the meaning of the idiom based on how it was used in the conversation. Lastly, students can write their own text message conversations using *ifaketextmessage*, <https://ifaketextmessage.com/>, so they could apply what they learned to different situations.

Conclusion

Idioms are arguably one of the most interesting and motivating aspects of any language. Time and again the authors have watched students (to say nothing of fellow instructors) light up with enthusiasm when an idiom is used or taught. These cultural gems need to be shared with all – and especially our newest learners!

Using Exploring the Available Tech Apps to Engage Learners in More Realistic Classroom Activities Increases Learners' Interest and Learning

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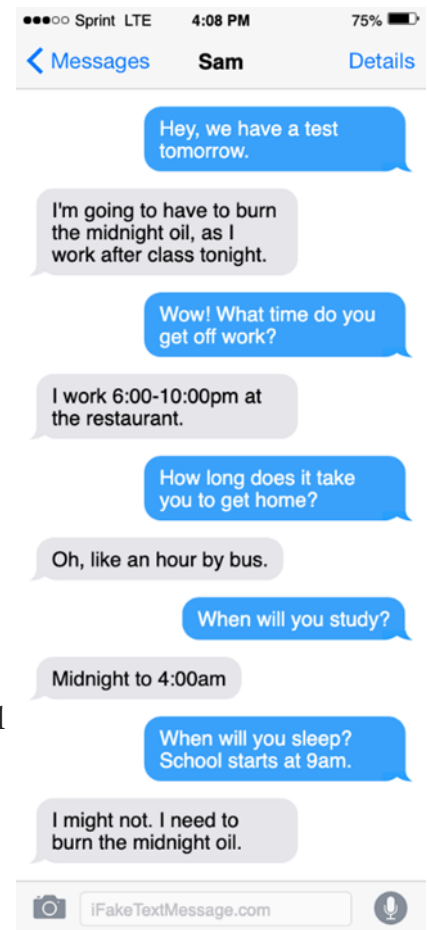


Figure 4: Text Message Sample with Idiomatic Expression

Mantyla, K. (2004). *Idioms and language users: The effect of the characteristics of idioms on their recognition and interpretation by native and non-native speakers of English*. [Unpublished master's thesis], University of Jyväskylä. <https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/13453>

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Co-Editor Article Series Submission I – Transferable Skills & Career Pivoting in the TESOL Field ⁶²

Amy Sleep

While completing my master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), a guest speaker in one of our courses made me cry.

It was the fall semester of 2020. We'd transitioned to fully remote learning so the course was over Zoom in the evening. My cohort peers and I were completing the most difficult semester of the program (think: notoriously challenging courses plus a teaching practicum) during a global pandemic. The course was Curriculum and Materials Design. The guest speaker was well-intentioned.

Our professor invited guest speakers to visit our class throughout the semester to talk about their experiences in curriculum development. I was particularly interested in this course and these visitors because I myself envisioned one day working in Curriculum Development. In this case, the guest speaker was a successful Instructional Designer. She shared the story of how she became an Instructional Designer after teaching ESL for many years. She described teaching full-time, the challenges she faced during this time, and how she ultimately became interested in video content creation – something that was initially a hobby done on the side, but that led to a pivot in her career. In her story, she described teaching full-time as personally draining and exhausting. She also described sort of “happening” upon her successful designer career.

So, what made me cry? What I heard during this guest speaker's visit at the time was this: “The thing you have chosen to study and dedicate your future career to is really difficult, draining, and unsustainable and I didn't want to do it anymore so now I do this.”

A panic and anxiety about the future set in. After the guest speaker signed off for the night, we debriefed as a class. I shared my anxieties with the class: “What if I don't like teaching? *How* am I supposed to do what she did? For her it just sort of... happened.”

Tears followed. And not only mine.

I'm sure we can recognize that a lot of these emotions were a result of compounded stressors and anxieties and I imagine we can all relate to a sense of doom or panic when thinking about the future. In regard to career development within the TESOL world, TESOL program students and graduates are aware now more than ever of the increasingly complex and unpredictability of a career in TESOL (Wu, 2019). My peers in my MA shared similar concerns as me during our program, often wondering what a career in this field can really look like and whether teaching is something that is enjoyable and sustainable for everyone.

Modern careers no longer follow the traditional linear paths, and careers within TESOL are no exception (Bright & Pryor, 2005; Wu, 2019). It has been almost three years now since that infamous night. Since then, I have graduated with my MA in TESOL, taught both in-person and online community ESL courses at various levels and within various contexts, transitioned to a Curriculum Development role for a workforce development non-profit, and now find myself volunteering for CATESOL and starting a new part-time instructional role in a community college's ESL Department.

I think about that evening with the guest speaker often as I've found myself reflecting, evaluating and exploring new interests to make shifts in my career. I've realized the merit in what that guest speaker shared with my class: that the skills and knowledge gained in my master's program and in teaching English (both before and after) have all allowed me to find success in new areas of (Cont.)

The professional TESOL world – and even worlds outside of TESOL. Not only that, these career pivots have allowed for improved practices in the ESL classroom.

In this four-part series, I want to share the ways in which I and some of my peers have pivoted in our careers and how TESOL has allowed for these pivots, and how those pivots have always inevitably allowed for a more fruitful contribution to TESOL. For this first submission, I'd like to simply brainstorm some of the invaluable transferable skills TESOL professionals possess.

Transferable Skills in TESOL

Take a moment to think of all the skills you've picked up, developed, or honed during your time as a language instructor. Are these skills useful *only* in your classroom? How might these skills transfer to other aspects of the TESOL field? Now, consider how these skills might transfer in any other professional setting or even personal settings.

First, all teachers – TESOL or otherwise – possess specialized knowledge and skills not shared by those in other professions that prepare us to solve practical problems encountered in daily work (Richards & Tang, 1995). Teaching requires flexibility and the ability to adapt in the moment and make adjustments to lessons to best serve the needs of the class. As the field is ever changing, ESL instructors are constantly “striving to equip themselves with new skill sets and understandings” of teaching methods, tools, and pedagogies (Cheng, 2019, p. 1). The COVID-19 pandemic gave teachers no option but to face the challenges of transitioning to virtual learning and the use of technology for language learning (Solis & Flores, 2023). Whether it's using how to use a new digital learning tool or understanding a student's specific topic of interest, we are often putting in time and effort to learn something ourselves to be able to then turn around and facilitate learning on that very thing for our learners. This kind of problem-solving and flexibility is crucial in any professional environment, particularly in those that are fast-paced and unpredictable.

Teachers must be effective communicators who can relay information and facilitate learning. Teachers are empathetic, trained to notice how our students are feeling and key into nonverbals to determine when they are confused, stressed, or lost (and make adjustments as necessary). ESL instructors develop strategies to communicate effectively and create meaning in the classroom with various barriers to learning and communication, with of course the obvious one – language. TESOL practitioners interact, create meaning, and foster relationships with individuals of multicultural, socioeconomic, multilingual, and racially diverse backgrounds from all over the world. Not only this, but we receive training in cultural awareness and cultural humility and are provided opportunities to put into practice these teachings on a regular basis. This prepares us to find creative means of communicating with not only our learners, but our peers and colleagues. In a constantly diversifying world, these skills are applicable in all aspects of our lives and allow us to make connections more feasibly.

This in turn makes us powerful advocates. Whether we realize it or not, we inherently become advocates for our learners through duties and practices not explicitly described in a job description (Peercy et al 2017). The role of an advocate comes in many shapes and forms and looks different for each teacher; however, our expertise on navigating language barriers and advocating for individuals with barriers is an incredible asset to all fields. As all companies in various fields grapple with these concerns, our skill sets and experiences can prove essential in collaborations with others. Take for example the world of healthcare in the US in which discussions and arguments for providing universal care often require language experts to mediate negotiations between medical professionals and non-native English speaking patients.

(Cont.)

Finally, in my reading of this very newsletter and other TESOL publications, I am always impressed by the level of reflection that our peers in this field engage in on a regular basis. Reflection is common within the field TESOL and often highlighted as an important part of TESOL pedagogy in teacher development programs (Farrell, 2016). In fact, my MA emphasized the importance of both teacher and learner reflection, requiring us to write reflections throughout the program. Reflection allows us to constantly improve ourselves and our practices, “solve problems through inquiry and enhance [our] own teaching self-efficacy and professionalism” (Cirocki & Farrell, 2017, p. 8). The emphasis on thoughtful reflection in the field of TESOL is something that grants us access to ourselves in ways that serves us beyond the classroom.

Conclusion

It seems appropriate to end this first submission on the point of reflection as it was the very practice of reflection on past moments (some tearful) in my academic and professional career that led me to writing this series. It was upon reflection that I realized how the skills described above (and more) have helped me handle challenges and be successful in professional and personal settings.

And to that guest speaker: thank you for sharing your story. Upon reflection, I understand the value in this story — a story of following your passions and leveraging all your past experiences to explore new areas of your career, and realizing how a career in this field gives us the skills and knowledge to find success in so many aspects of the professional world.

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Publication: Tips for Graduate Students and Teachers

Melissa Salek, M.S. Kim Special Series Column Editor

Writing a paper, be it for a class project or for a publication, can feel daunting at the beginning. Looking back on my publication journey, I can now see how the work I put in along the way, from the beginning steps of narrowing a topic to the final reviews and revisions, enabled me to transform my class papers to published journal articles. In an article on the use of digital writing labs, Uckelmann et al. (2022) broke down the writing process into clear steps, with a goal “to motivate the students by seeing how their work will affect the final paper” (p. 136). Sometimes it felt that the only way I could tackle an overwhelming assignment or publication goal was to break it down into steps. While different for everyone, I work best when I can outline specific goals and deadlines on a sheet of paper. I then have the pleasure of checking that goal off the list, motivating me to keep moving towards the next step. I am sharing my experiences through the many steps I took towards publishing my first two manuscripts, with the hope of motivating you in your journey. This article will focus on an aspect of writing that I found challenging – sifting through my wide list of ideas to identify a narrow and focused topic. I went back to graduate school to obtain my teaching certification, not to publish research, as I shared in my first column article in this newsletter (Salek & Kim, 2022). I took required coursework in research methods, discovering as I went a desire to further explore topics that intrigued me and a desire to share what I found out. In my second column article (Salek, 2023), I talked about the critical literature review I wrote for my TESOL course. Writing a critical literature review provided me with the opportunity to learn “what research was already out there, and help me better understand how I could use music to help my future English language learner (ELL) students” (Salek, 2023, p. 38). The steps I focused on in the second article were taking and organizing notes and learning the writing style needed for a critical literature review.

To fulfill my program’s capstone project. One of the challenges I faced was learning to focus on a specific topic, especially as there were so many ideas that I wanted to explore. In this article, I will share the steps I needed to go through to narrow the topic and refine the research questions. While my research was related to music education, the content area in which I teach, I believe the process and experience are similar regardless of the teaching disciplines. It is my hope that TESOL graduate students and teachers will also find my experiences insightful and motivating.

Narrowing My List of Wonderings and Observations to a Focused Topic

One of the first steps in starting research, narrowing a topic, is also one of the most common difficulties faced by university students (Sacred Heart University Library, 2020). Likewise, I found it challenging to select a specific and researchable topic from my broad list of wonderings and observations. I had a wide list of research topics which I wanted to explore, ranging from incorporating service into the music classroom to arts course enrollment comparisons in different types of schools. These ideas came from the articles I read and the programs that I had observed along with my own life experiences.

I quickly settled on charter school music programs as something I wanted to learn more about. My motivation to explore this topic started when I was looking for an elementary school for my son. In addition to private school options, I could enroll my son in the public school for which he was zoned, also known as traditional neighborhood public schools, or public magnet schools that focused on specialized programs such as science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (Cont.)

STEAM or medicine (Duval County Public Schools, n.d.). There were also several charter school options which appealed to me due to their specialized academic programs and the opportunity to continue at the same school for junior high. When I toured the local charter schools, however, I noticed that some did not offer year-round music programs. Those who did only had small band or choral programs. I was curious about how music courses at charter schools compared to similar courses at other types of schools. This also seemed like a potential topic for my research class as I was genuinely interested both as a parent and as a music educator.

Crafting a Problem and Purpose Statement

A research problem statement is “a specific, evidence-based, real-life issue faced by certain people or organizations that have significant negative implications to the involved parties” (National University Library Dissertation Center, 2022, para 5). While I understood what a problem statement was, it took me several attempts to convert my observation that charter schools in my area seemed to have fewer arts programs to a specific, researchable issue. I found that I needed to further refine my potential problem statement by posing these questions to myself: Do I look at a specific area or include the whole state? Should I narrow my inquiry to certain grades? Do I narrow the topic to specific music courses such as band or choir, or look at all music courses? I clearly had more work to do for this step. By reading pertinent research as well as talking with colleagues, I noticed that the band enrollment in the area over the past several years had decreased. I wondered if the increasing numbers of charter schools during this same time period had an effect on declining band enrollments. I therefore came up with the following problem statement: High school band enrollment in Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) has been declining (Salek, 2020).

Problem statements also incorporate the purpose for the research as well as what methods will be used to address the problem (McCombes & George, 2022). The purpose statement “announces the purpose, scope, and direction of the paper (The Writing Center, 2023). I needed to define specifically what I was examining concerning the high school band enrollment such as the specific time frame and how I was going to incorporate charter schools. I finalized my purpose statement as follows: “The purpose of this research is to examine factors influencing high school band enrollment, especially charter schools, in the Jacksonville metropolitan area since the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2003 through 2019” (Salek, 2020).

Forming Research Questions

Having a well-defined problem statement and research questions from the beginning contributes to a more focused and efficient literature review (Salek & Kim, 2022). However, instead of starting with a focused topic, I used my literature review to help refine my research questions and organize my approach to data collection. In addition to learning what was already known about charter schools and the arts, I read journal articles for ideas of how to word the research questions and ways to structure my database, especially as I combined several publicly-available databases into one.

The reviewed journal articles also helped me identify appropriate statistical methods and ideas for organizing my own data. Using the research articles as my model, I created the following research questions:

1. What are the trends in band enrollment in the Jacksonville metropolitan area?
2. Do correlations exist between the percent of students enrolled in traditional public school band programs and the opening of charter high schools in the Jacksonville metropolitan area?

(Cont.)

The reviewed journal articles also helped me identify appropriate statistical methods and ideas for organizing my own data. Using the research articles as my model, I created the following research questions:

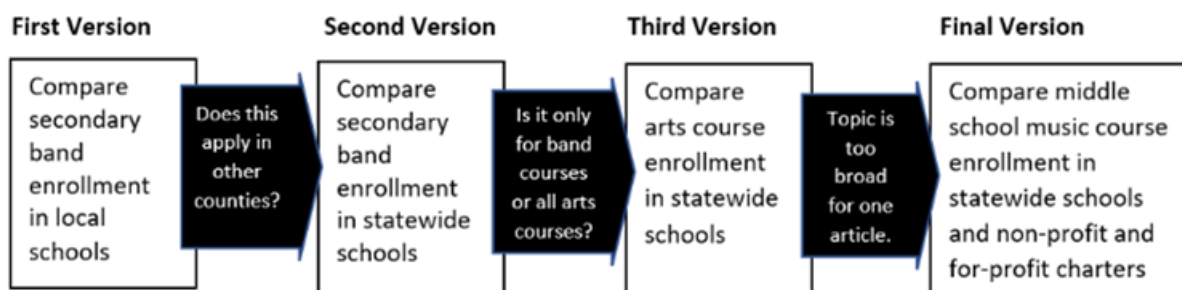
1. What are the trends in band enrollment in the Jacksonville metropolitan area?
2. Do correlations exist between the percent of students enrolled in traditional public school band programs and the opening of charter high schools in the Jacksonville metropolitan area?
3. Do significant differences exist between mean percent of students enrolled in these traditional public school band programs when differentiated by county, total school enrollment, school grade, total school percent of minorities, and total school percent of low social-economic status students? (Salek, 2020)

After setting up a more narrow and focused problem statement, purpose of the study, and research questions, I was excited to collect and analyze the data.

Evolution and Refinement of Research Focus

Upon completion of my data analysis, my next step was to present my findings at my first conference poster session with the Florida Music Education Association's state conference. The research from my first manuscript, however, was just a start. My research focus and methodology evolved over time. In the next section, I will share how I continued to refine my topic as I read pertinent journal articles and reflected on feedback and clarifying questions I had received from peers during additional conferences and poster presentations (see Figure 1). This feedback significantly shaped both my approach to my research as well as the manuscript presentation and continues to be invaluable as I grow as a researcher. However, given the importance of receiving feedback from a variety of people and experiences such as conferences, I will be devoting a subsequent article to this topic.

Figure 1 *Evolution of the Topic of Comparison of Music Enrollment at Florida Charter Schools*



As noted earlier, my first poster presentation at a state research conference focused on band enrollment trends in public schools, including charter schools, in one metropolitan area (Salek, 2020). However, the question came up as to whether this was a local phenomenon or if the secondary band enrollment trends extended to other counties. For my next conference poster presentation (Salek, 2021a), I revised my research questions, continuing to focus on the effects of school demographics and comparisons of public schools, but expanding the scope to include statewide data. As with the first conference, I received feedback that made me wonder whether the trends found in band enrollment applied to other music courses. I decided to expand the scope of the research again to include enrollment in all arts courses, narrowing the data to a specific year as the amount of data made it difficult to compile a multi-year database. My research questions for the first conference, I (Cont.)

received feedback that made me wonder whether the trends found in band enrollment applied to other music courses. I decided to expand the scope of the research again to include enrollment in all arts courses, narrowing the data to a specific year as the amount of data made it difficult to compile a multi-year database. My research questions continued to evolve, now comparing types of arts programs and music enrollment trends in elementary and secondary public schools (Salek, 2021b). When I tried to write up my findings, however, I found it difficult. The topic was now too broad, which would have resulted in a manuscript that was too long for publication.

I again revised the problem statement and research questions, this time adding the variable of the profit status of charter school management organizations. My purpose for the research shifted from examining the impact of opening charter schools on band enrollment trends to wondering if middle school students in charter schools had similar opportunities to access and enroll in music courses as did their counterparts in traditional public middle schools during a specific school year. While the research questions remained similar over time, my final research questions in my published manuscript were finalized as follows:

1. Do overall music course offerings and the specific classes that are offered differ between charter and traditional public middle schools in Florida?;
2. Does student enrollment in music courses differ between charter and traditional public middle schools in Florida?;
3. Is there a relationship between enrollment in Florida middle school music courses and school enrollment, annual school grade assigned by the state, percentage of minority students, or percentage of economically disadvantaged students; and
4. What is the effect of school management type and student enrollment on music courses at charter schools in Florida? (Salek, 2022).

By not rushing to finalize a topic, I was able to whittle away at my broad problem statement until I had a narrow and specific topic and targeted research questions.

Concluding Remarks

Revisions are part of the research and writing process and may evolve over time. While my journey took three years from initial project to publication, the slower process allowed room for me to explore the topic more deeply. My understanding about music education grew over time through other coursework and ongoing reading of relevant journal articles. I found that the more I read, the better I understood the writing style and expectations for a research article, including how to craft narrow topics and problem statements and write specific research questions. The process of writing, reviewing, and revising while discouraging at times, had its own intrinsic rewards as I applied what I learned. It improved both knowledge of my content area as well as the skills needed to communicate that knowledge. Publication may or may not be the outcome of your journey. Nevertheless, I encourage readers to continue to pursue researching and writing on TESOL and other topics in which you are interested. Being persistent in your commitment to learning will not only benefit your own continued growth as a writer, but also help you better support your ELL students as you continue to expand your understanding of your topic and how to best apply that knowledge in your classroom.

Bio

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What CATESOL Offers You! Membership Highlights-Submission 7

– The CATESOL Blog

Michelle Skowbo and Kara Mac Donald

CATESOL offers so many resources to members. The often-noticed ones are the annual conferences and chapter events. This is understandable as members seek tangible major opportunities for professional development.

This pilot column series for 2023 aims to highlight possibly overlooked or less utilized resources available to CATESOL members written by members for other members' awareness.

Without you, active members, CATESOL would not be the vibrant longstanding English language teaching association it is in the state of California.

Yet as a community of practice (CoP), we need to ensure that members are aware of the multiple resources the association makes available to them. In each issue, the column will highlight one member benefit. In this first column in the series, the CATESOL Blog is highlighted. The authors share the function of the CATESOL Blog, how to contribute, what are the guidelines and how members can expand its role.

The CATESOL Blog

Are you a blog writer? Do you read (or want a push to motivate you to read) new works on TESOL? Is your interest group preparing for a special workshop? The CATESOL Blog is the most flexible of the CATESOL publications. It mainly features monthly book reviews on texts related to teaching; it also includes previews and debriefs of special CATESOL workshops. Because of its flexible format, the CATESOL Blog is a great place for more “out-of-the-box” pieces as well. If you enjoy writing, consider providing a reflection on a teaching technique, your experiences in publishing or policy work, or an interview with someone whose expertise you value. Check it out [here](#).

There are no set deadlines, as the blog published on a rolling submission basis. Currently, the only set blog posting is the monthly Book Review that published around the middle to end of each month. If you would like to offer a monthly or quarterly blog posting under a running theme or topic, reach out to the editor, Michelle Skowbo at blog@catesol.org. If you have any single posting, you wish to share you can submit it for posting at the same email: blog@catesol.org.

The CATESOL Blog is an active resource for members but is has so much potential to be expanded to offer membership a place for sharing and learning as a CoP.

The CATESOL Blog is a great place for more “out-of-the box” pieces.



CATESOL Blog–Call for Submissions

The CATESOL Blog is published monthly and accepts a range of article types for publication.

- Did you recently attend a CATESOL event or webinar and wish to share a reflective piece of what you got out of the event? [Write an article about it.](#)
- Would you like to co-author a book review with the Blog's book review column editor to get acquainted with writing one? [Contact the blog editors to get connected to do so.](#)
- Are you a chapter or interest group coordinator and have an event coming up that you would like membership to know about ahead of time in more detail to attract attendance? [Write up a pre-event summary.](#)
- Have you attended a TESOL event that you would like to share the information with members? [Write a post-event about your take-aways.](#)
- Have an innovative lesson activity or practice you can share to assist members? Write a short practitioner piece.
- If you have something to share, or if you have someone you would like to recommend to contribute, feel free to email the editors **Michelle Skowbo** at meskowbo@gmail.com

Have you read the CATESOL Blog recently?

Access the blog at <https://catesol.org/blog/catesol-blog>

Get a feel for its style and what has been published. Get ideas for other areas and topics that membership will benefit from that you would like to share.

