CATESOL NEWSLETTER

## SERVING TEACHERS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Letter from the CATESOL President

Dear CATESOL Family,

Happy summer! I hope you had a fruitful spring semester. Some of you may be teaching this summer. I hope you enjoy the warmer weather and longer days. Others may be taking the summer off. Enjoy a well-deserved break.

We had a packed spring with conferences, workshops, and meetings: the Capital Area Chapter had its in-person conference (April 12); the Orange County Chapter hosted an in-person mixer (April 20); the San Diego Chapter had its in-person conference (April 27); and the Bay Area Chapter hosted a virtual conference (May 11). The levels and interest groups also hosted workshops and meetings throughout the spring. I could join some of the conferences and events, and I am glad to report that they have impacted my growth academically, socially, and culturally.

Summer brings us time to reflect. It is indeed a good time to pause and take a deep breath. Consider taking on a new regimen of being mindful of your well-being. It may be taking a stroll around your neighborhood, picking up a new hobby, gardening, or meditating. Furthermore, let us find time to celebrate our accomplishments and ponder our growth. In return, let us practice cultural mindedness with our students, colleagues, friends, and family. (Cont.)
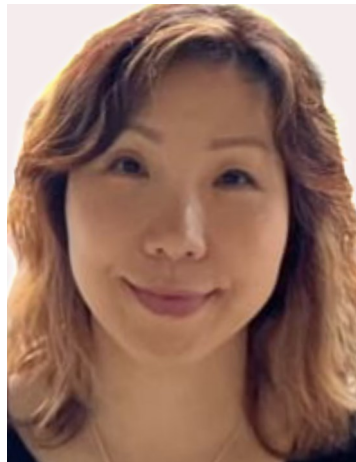
CONTENTS

Letter from the CATESOL President cont.-

With the spring election in June, we will onboard and welcome new board members to CATESOL this fall. The State Conference at California State University Los Angeles from November 14 to November 16 will provide ample opportunities to volunteer, present, and spend meaningful time with CATESOLers. The State Conference will hold a CATESOL Education Foundation (CEF) election this year, and with the election, we will have a new leadership team at CEF.

I hope this summer brings you many new opportunities for your profession, community of practice, mentorship, and, most of all, some time to unwind and appreciate your loved ones. Thank you.

With warm regards,

Song Hong, CATESOL President 2023-2025

Words from the Editor
Kara Mac Donald

The Feature article highlights the Bay Area Chapter conference's success. The chapter is also planning another one at the end of summer or early fall, so keep an eye out for that professional development opportunity. The Feature Focus highlights another recent CATESOL event, the San Diego Chapter conference. The community that is fostered, along with the professional development, are a couple of the many great benefits from being a CATESOL member. The second Feature Focus discusses the power of expectations and implications for second language educators. There are several Member Submissions addressing topics ranging from being a teacher learning a third foreign language to a CATESOL member's new business venture around *The Spoken Word,* the impact of language exchanges beyond language learning and two examining the role of Diagnostic Assessment. There is the second NNEA column with Part Two of the counter narrative introduced in the March (57-1) issue. This issue also introduces a new column, Multilingual TESOL Educators with a fantastic piece on a teacher's journey from Africa to America. There is a TOP-IG and CIRT-IG report and another installment of the insights and tips on publishing, as well a Student Voices column sharing Part One of a ELL students' experience in participating in a summer online conversational project to practice other foreign languages of interest. There is the fourth, and final, article in the Co-Editor's column offered by Amy Sleep. The newsletter is a success due to you as members. Thank you and when you have something to share, please think of the CATESOL Newsletter. Send submissions and article inquires to newsletter@catesol.org

Feature — Bay Area Chapter Spring Conference

Bentley Cavazzi

Conference Wrap-Up: Bay Area Chapter Event on May 11, 2024
On May 11, 2024, the Bay Area Chapter hosted an engaging and interactive virtual conference that left participants inspired and equipped to integrate AI into their educational practices. The event, organized by Johanna Carranza, Merve Beyazit Taner, Bentley Cavazzi, Xiaoli (Lydia) Lu, and Guillermo Campos, featured thought-provoking keynote presentations, hands-on activities, and dynamic breakout sessions.

Keynote Highlights
The conference started with the keynote presentation, "Wrapping Your Head Around the Future: The Perils–and Possibilities–of AI," delivered by Susan Gaer and David Wiese. The keynote speakers captivated the audience with their insights into the revolutionary impact of AI on education. Susan Gaer shared her experience in adult noncredit writing classes at the American University of Afghanistan, emphasizing the ethical integration of AI tools. David Wiese demonstrated how AI could be harnessed to create innovative classroom materials, design guided first-year writing assignments, and develop writing prompts that challenge AI itself. Their presentations underscored the importance of balancing innovation with responsibility in shaping the future of education.

Featured Speakers and Interactive Sessions
Following the keynote, Kristi Reyes took the virtual stage with her session on "AI Integration for Student Assignments/Projects." Kristi, a tenured faculty member in the Noncredit ESL program at MiraCosta College, showcased how AI tools can revolutionize language instruction. She highlighted various student projects that utilized AI, allowing English language learners to develop AI literacy while enhancing their language skills. Participants were inspired by her practical examples and the potential for AI to foster creativity and critical thinking in students.
Our second featured speaker, Marsha Chan, presented on the theme of "Visualizing Speech to Enable Greater Intelligibility," which was another highlight. Known as the Pronunciation Doctor on YouTube, Marsha demonstrated how spectrograms and digital audio recording applications like Audacity can enhance learners' understanding of spoken English. Her session was particularly valuable for educators focusing on speech, pronunciation, and listening skills, providing them with powerful tools to support students with visual learning preferences.

Breakout Sessions and Closing
The conference continued with concurrent sessions that allowed participants to dive deeper into specific topics. Amanda Simons from San Diego College of Continuing Education discussed "Future-Focused and Equitable Considerations for Integrating AI in the Classroom," highlighting the importance of addressing language discrimination and the potentially harmful consequences of AI. Alternatively, Leslie Sherwood from UCLA and Kara Mac Donald from the Defense Language Institute presented on "Fostering AI Literacy through a Collaborative Action Research Project," sharing their research and curricular revisions to enhance AI literacy among students.

Throughout the event, attendees engaged actively with speakers through Q&A sessions, hands-on examples, and interactive breakout room activities. This format fostered a collaborative allowing participants to share their experiences and ideas. The day concluded with an opportunity drawing and a closing session that left attendees feeling inspired and equipped to implement AI tools in their educational contexts. The Bay Area Chapter's virtual conference was a resounding success, providing valuable insights and practical strategies for educators navigating the evolving (Cont.)

Feature—(Cont.)

landscape of AI in education.

Thank you to all who attended and contributed to this enlightening event. We look forward to seeing you at our next conference!

If you are interested in these presentations, the first three are available on the CATESOL YouTube Channel. The concurrent sessions will be posted in the coming weeks!

CATESOL Youtube Channel
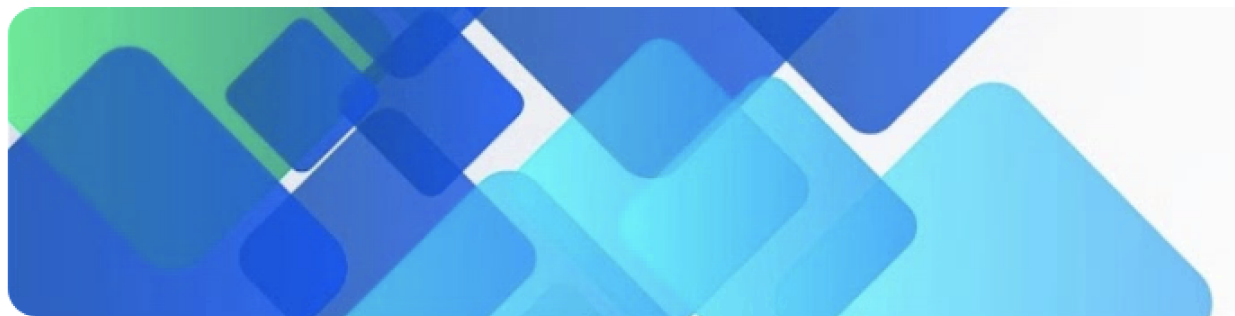
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Focus Feature — San Diego Chapter & 2024 Spring In-Person Conference: "Fostering a Community of Learners in the Classroom and Beyond"

Burcu Chatham, Amanda Simons, and Ellie Kuznetsova

The pandemic has changed so much in our personal and professional lives, and it sure changed a lot in our community of ESL instructors, administrators, and staff who work in different settings. The CATESOL San Diego Chapter, like other chapters and the state organization, had to make a variety of adjustments during the pandemic, such as meeting online instead of in-person, gathering outside in a park instead of a classroom or a conference room. So, when our post-pandemic board came together in 2022, we decided to focus on bringing the ESL community from the San Diego area together as frequently as possible and gradually more and more through in-person events. We were all in agreement that as much as we, ESL instructors, have been resilient and resourceful when it came to conducting Zoom classes and mastering online learning management systems, by then we also knew that Zoom fatigue is real and it had not been easy to maintain and grow our community through only online activities and meetings. We as human beings needed that personal, three-dimensional, old-style, traditional -pick your favorite adjective- touch in order to continue as a community.

Here we are now, after holding ten chapter events, eight of which were in-person, since December 2022, we were ready to bring together the ESL community from the greater San Diego Area and beyond in our Spring Conference "Fostering a Community of Learners in the Classrooms and Beyond" on Saturday April 27, 2024.

The theme of our conference was voted most by members of our community, and here you can read the perfect reason for that vote, from the abstract of our plenary speaker, Ingrid Sbacchi Bairstow:

> *"You know it when you see it. A class gels. Student motivation and success is high. Colleagues seek each other for unpaid happy hours to share teaching ideas. Both examples include laughter and joy. These are examples of the power of community. Unfortunately, the rise of online, hybrid, and even in-person workplaces and classrooms is creeping into time allotted for motivational and enjoyable community-building activities. Efforts to 'humanize' these places are crucial."*

Our plenary speaker, Ingrid Bairstow, who is currently a full-time associate professor at ESL Credit & Noncredit program in Imperial Valley College, has always been the champion of fostering inclusive and engaging communities among her students and colleagues during her career. In 2023, she received the "Leon Baradat Service Award" a distinction conferred to faculty members who "have demonstrated excellence beyond the classroom or primary work site in fostering engagement and creating a positive and inclusive campus climate through institutional service" at MiraCosta College.

Following our plenary, we featured eight presentations and one panel held by a total of thirteen resourceful and passionate ESL faculty who will share with us their strategies, methods, and tools that they use to foster the community of learners in their classrooms day after day while fulfilling their teaching duties both in-person and online. Their expertise ranges from teaching pre-literate beginners to intermediate and advanced level learners.

Our students are not different from us! Regardless of their digital literacy before the pandemic, many learned how to attend classes in Zoom and complete their assignments in learning

management systems. However, like us they also want to build their community in the classrooms, online or in-person, where they feel safe and valued. "Humanizing" the learning spaces, online or in-person, can only be possible if we come together ourselves, learn the best practices from each other, and expand and strengthen our own community.

From interactive workshops to thought-provoking presentations and a panel, our conference featured a diverse array of sessions tailored to meet the needs and interests of TESOL professionals at all levels. Whether you were a seasoned educator seeking fresh perspectives or a newcomer eager to expand your knowledge, there was something for everyone at this dynamic event.

One of the most rewarding aspects of attending a CATESOL conference is the opportunity to connect with fellow educators, share ideas, and forge meaningful collaborations. Keep a look out for future chapter events.

Check our chapter website's "Events" for upcoming events.

CATESOL Education Foundation

CATESOL Interest Group Award:
Ron Lee
Technology Award

This $1,000 award will go to the ESL instructor who has integrated technology in innovative ways to support ESL teaching.

Deadline extended to July 15, 2024

Information HERE   Application HERE

Focus Feature II — The Power of Expectations and Implications for Second Language Teachers

Jon Phillips

How much influence do the expectations of teachers and parents have on a student's learning and performance? The answer may be found in a fascinating study from the 1960s that forever altered our understanding of the power of expectations – and still rings true today.

Researchers informed a group of teachers that some of their students had been identified as potential high achievers who would blossom over the academic year. In reality, these students were chosen at random. And yet, by the end of the year, these randomly selected students had made significantly more progress than their peers. (Timmermans, A.C., Rubie-Davies, C.M., & Rjosk, C., 2018); (Rosenthal. R. & Jacobson, L., 1968).

This phenomenon became known as the Pygmalion Effect, illustrating the transformative impact of high expectations on student achievement. But what happens when expectations are low? And how can we as educators leverage the power of expectations to maximize student success?

The impact of expectations on students – High or low

The Pygmalion Effect: the power of high expectations

The term "Pygmalion Effect" originates from Greek mythology. Pygmalion, a renowned sculptor, fell in love with a beautiful statue he had carved out of ivory. His deep affection for his creation was so profound that the statue transformed into a living being. In an educational context, the Pygmalion Effect refers to the phenomenon where students rise to meet the high standards and expectations set by others. (Timmermans, A.C., Rubie-Davies, C.M., & Rjosk, C., 2018).

The Golem Effect: The negative impact of low expectations

Conversely, the Golem Effect demonstrates the negative consequences of low expectations. Named after the Golem from Jewish myths, a creature made of unfinished and raw clay which eventually became a violent monster, this effect highlights how students may underperform when little is expected of them. In a study on the Golem Effect in education, researchers found two key outcomes of low expectations: The teachers reacted more negatively towards the students; and the students, in turn, performed worse. (Timmermans, A.C., Rubie-Davies, C.M., & Rjosk, C., 2018).

Expectations are Everything

The evidence of the impact of teacher expectations on student learning is both broad and deep. John Hattie (2008) analyzed 613 studies on teacher expectations as part of the Visible Learning database and found that students' achievement tracks closely with teacher expectations. In some cases, race, ethnicity, language proficiency, disability, gender, even appearance can subconsciously influence the expectations of a student. In other words, the evidence is you get what you expect.

Expectations communicate to students what the teacher believes they can and cannot accomplish. Many of these explicit or implicit expectations come in the form of actions, not words. Assignments are an example of this. Educators rarely assign tasks to students that they do not believe most can successfully complete as a result of teaching. Education Trust explored this phenomenon in a series of Equity in Motion reports (2018). They analyzed thousands of assignments in English/language arts and mathematics in the spring of the school year. The researchers found that a startling percentage of tasks were below grade level, focused on basic recall rather than analysis, and held a low cognitive demand. They further documented the long-term trajectory of low expectations over multiple school years, noting that some students fall further behind with each (Cont.)

passing year and never catch up.

How expectations are transmitted from the teacher to their students in the classroom

David Robson (2022) mentions that the most obvious means would be overt praise or criticism; we all know that encouragement can be helpful and criticism hurtful. But someone's expectations are also evident in the goals they set, which can affect performance. If a teacher continually chooses more ambitious tasks for their favorites, that provides further opportunities for learning, while the rest of the group misses out on those opportunities.

Other signals may be subtler. Imagine you are asked a question and make an error while answering. If someone has high expectations of your abilities, they might rephrase their question or talk you through the problem. Someone with lower expectations, however, may simply move on, subtly hints that they don't think you are going to learn from the mistake. (Brophy, J.E., and Good, T.L., 1970).

Perhaps most important are the nonverbal cues. People are less likely to smile, and they make less eye contact if they have lower expectations of you, for example — small differences in interaction that are nevertheless easily perceived by children and adults. Even silence can be important. If someone leaves a short pause after you have given a quick response to a question, it can give you a further chance to expand on your ideas and refine your thinking.

However the expectations are communicated, the research shows that they are soon internalized by the people on the receiving end, reducing or raising their motivation and self-belief, and affecting their performance.

So how might we interrupt the damage that low expectations cause? The Australian educator Christine Rubie-Davies (2015) has researched how high-expectations teaching is manifested in daily practice:

> Recent research has found that the effect of expectations is the most prominent at the beginning of the school year. This is because students have no preconceived notions and seek support on what is realistically achievable. If you give students affirmation that they can do well before they start doubting themselves, it allows them to internalize this belief, which becomes a huge advantage.

> As teachers, try to think about the ways your behaviors may be transmitting your expectations to your students, both verbally and nonverbally. You may not be conscious of your body language or tone of voice, so it could be helpful either to ask an outside observer to watch your interactions or to film yourself interacting with your students.

> Communicate high expectations through your planning. Develop tasks that require students to engage in analysis and reasoning, not just simple recall of facts. Revisit tasks assigned in units to see if they align to the content standards and identify the high-level goals they should be working toward. Ways to increase the cognitive demand of tasks include open, rather than closed questions, withholding some information in tasks so that students must work together to locate additional resources, and requiring them to link new knowledge to existing skills and prior concepts.

> Group students carefully. Use mixed-ability groups that encourage students to work together to accomplish tasks. Use differentiation as it was meant to be used: The learning is held constant, while the pathways to get there may differ. Ability grouping widens, rather than narrows, learning differences, because it makes it easier to change the learning

weeks so that students profit from learning alongside each of their classmates.

Set goals with students and assist them in monitoring their progress. Too often, students have vague and distant goals with little sense of the actions and incremental steps needed to get there. Meet with students regularly to set goals that are measurable, attainable, and progress toward long-term outcomes.

Final thoughts

Studies have found that when expectations are unrealistic and far exceed a student's ability, it can worsen their academic performance. (Lichtenfeld et al, 2016). Moreover, these expectations can overwhelm students with pressure, leading to stress and anxiety. Try to set realistically high and positive expectations for students, make it clear to them that they can achieve them, and help them come up with a plan to do so. It is difficult to rise above low expectations. If you set your expectations just right (that is, both challenging and realistic), it will help your students reach their full potential and flourish.

Resources

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Member Submission I — Job Duties: Must be learning[10] a third language concurrent to teaching

Roger W. Anderson

A Problem ? (emphasis :?)

Forgetting is human. It is an essential part of being a functioning person in society. We cannot remember all the details, all the time, of every topic we encounter in our day. Our brains do not function like that. Cognitive science recognizes that the brain lets go of less important bits of information (neural networks), so that more salient, pressing information can be re retained.

Reviewing studies that bear upon learning, Goodwyn, Rouleau & Gibson (2020) summarized in their book « Learning that Sticks » the following findings:

- Students forget 90% of what they learned within one month (Medina, 2008)

- Repeat a new skill 24 times before reaching 80% competency (Anderson, 1995)

- Sleep cleans out weak memories; such "decluttering" avails space/ resources for new memories (Goodwyn, Rouleau & Gibson, 2020, p. 19)

The implications of the naturalness of forgetting for the classroom are too many to be fully explored here. One overarching implication that such findings suggest is that instructors -of whatever subject- may begin naturally to forget their own experience of learning whatever skill they now are teaching learners.

Language learning (second language acquisition) is a highly complex process that involves social, cognitive, and affective dimensions (Douglas Fir, 2015). As such, it is impossible that instructors retain vivid memories of their own learning experience as the distance grows between the present and their own learning of the language they teach. Is this really a problem?

« The curse of knowlede »

Grant (2023) pointed out that novice learners of Physics would likely have a terrible experience having Einstein as professor of an Introduction to Physics class. Why? Because Einstein would likely suffer from the « curse of knowledge », a phenomenon in which an expert cannot fathom not knowing what they know (p. 63). With all due respect to Einstein, developing groundbreaking theories of physics and facilitating true learners' appreciation of basic concepts of physics are two entirely separate tasks necessitating separate skillsets, even if both fall within the field of Physics.

Figlio, Schapiro, & Soter (2015) explored the question of the « knowledge curse » empirically, collecting data from first year college students across 7 years of cohorts at Northwestern University. Their published paper, entitled «"Are Tenure Track Professors Better Teachers?" » found that students who took introductory courses taught by non-expert instructors performed much better that students who took courses taught by tenured faculty. This suggests that something real, akin to the « curse of knowledge » is afoot.

Language instructors are similarly vulnerable to such a curse. Like Einstein, the world's best writers and orators would not necessarily make the best language educators. Setting aside the Shakespeares and Frederick Douglases of history, language instructors are themselves masters of the language they teach — to varying degrees, of course. They can utilize the language appropriately, fluently, in culturally-acceptable manners. They serve as models for their learners. Yet highlighting the paths they took to reach such mastery may not be available to all instructors. Those instructors teaching learners languagetheir native language did not acquire the language as a second language, and thus, (Cont.)

did not experience what their learners are aspiring to do—learn the target language as a second language. Conversely, amongst instructors teaching a language they acquired after having acquired their native language, it is not uncommon that they underwent such learning years or even decades prior. In other words, long stretches of time may unfold between the present and the instructor's own struggle to learn the target language (or any additional language, for that matter).

This may mean that instructors have quite naturally forgotten the small pleasures of learning a new language and many of the initial hardships as well. The aspects of learning that cause anxiety and stress, as well as enjoyment and enlightenment become woven into the fabric of normal language use, losing vividness as time elapses from the moment when the teacher—as learner—learned the target language until the present. Does this mean they are bad teachers ? Of course not. It may mean that they have less awareness of the stress-inducing practices and procedures their students are undergoing, and are less attentive to the challenges of learning a new language generally.

One Possible Remedy

A quick scan across other sectors of the economy finds that a position increasing in visibility is one called « user experience » experts.

Although not entirely new, this work seems to be afforded more gravitas since the advent of the digital age. In this role, an individual is essentially compensated to have a first-hand encounter with the product or service a company is selling. The expert will explore in detail and report back on the ease of which the product was searched and obtained, its quality during use, its pricing and perceived overall value, and potentially even its durability. Such work can be done both before or after a product or service is made available to the public. Why is such a role so valuable to a company? This expertise provides companies an unbiased—or less-biased—opinion on their service, using a methodology that is experientially-based. Moreover, the findings of such work can shed light on its defects to be addressed, and strongpoints to be trumpeted in marketing campaigns.

If we took language learning as seriously as we do consumer society, language education would have its own "user experience" experts. Until that day comes, we can consider what aspects of their work could be replicated or imitated. In a way, this work is already being implemented via announced, or more specifically un-announced, classroom observations—usually made by a principal or department chair who may or may not be familiar with successful, age-appropriate practices of a world language education classroom. Yet the parachuting of an external observer into one class session cannot legitimately attest to the quality of the overall learning experience in a classroom. It does provide an adequate sample of experiential learning to understand learners' experiences. Moreover, nothing guarantees that the observations made by the parachutist-administrator will have any impact on the methods, attitudes, or ideologies that the instructor brings to their learning context. At worst, it may be an anxiety-inducing experience that hinders a teachers' performance rather than facilitates its improvement.

Replicating the spirit of a "user experience expert" more than its job duties, instructors could develop a greater awareness and empathy of their learners' plight by subjecting themselves to experiential learning—by endeavoring to learn another language themselves. Such experience can remind them of the hardship of learning a new language and the immense sense of accomplishment when processing or using a new language correctly. Recognizing the onward progression of time, no other way exists for an instructor to re-live their own language learning but through starting fresh. In doing so, instructors will not lose touch with the newness of language learning, which their learners are experiencing. Not only would instructors gain new linguistic skills, but they would also gain new insights with which they could improve their craft of teaching. (Cont.)

Between the ideal and reality

Admittedly, finding the time and resources to do so may be beyond the reach of some instructors at present. The best arrangement may be one in which the instructor's learning of a third language is on-going—just as their teaching (of the second language) is going. Due to institutional constraints, it is often not feasible for instructors to do so. Third language study would require personal and financial commitments from the instructor that likely exceed instructors' job responsibilities as currently described. Yet we can dream of an ideal institution, in an ideal society, it seems preferable that languages would be learning an additional language, just as all teachers would be engaged in some learning activity—outside their realm of expertise—that challenged them cognitively, socially, and emotionally. Ideally, institutions should recognize the benefits of having a teaching workforce that is both expert in the target language, pedagogically trained, and engaged in their own linguistic development— both for their personal enrichment and wellness, and for the benefit of their learners. Imagine future job postings in which the duties of a teaching position include being enrolled and actively engaged in one's own language learning of a language of the applicant's choosing (all expenses paid by the institution). If such an institution already exists, please forward me the link! (Such roles might already exist in a multilingual Scandinavian country that enjoys a high happiness-index score).

Nonetheless, the possibilities for online (asynchronous) or weekend classes are expanding. New software, apps, and tutoring services (particularly those using immigrant/ refugee native speakers) make available new formats previously not conceived of. As we know, the dedicated, lifelong language-learner will find a way to manage.

The take-away

Instructors and learners are separated by a wall of knowledge. Learners are progressively climbing to the other side, while instructors must point out the crevices to use as toeholds and grips to slowly climb over the wall. Instructors know where these crevices are located on the wall. Yet their memory will fade, quite naturally, of their own experience of climbing over the wall. The fear of falling, as muscles tire, slowly subsided as they lurched up the wall, feeling immense satisfaction to finally be able to peek over its top. To keep such memories fresh, instructors can undertake the study of an additional language—one in which they have no proficiency. Even modest commitments to learning (10 minutes on Duo Lingo or one YouTube video daily) may be sufficient to reposition oneself vis-à-vis the language learning experience. Being able to tell one's learners, "I know exactly how you feel. I had a similar problem this week in learning Korean…", may be a powerful, mutually beneficial tool in the classroom.

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Member Update — CATESOL Newsletter Experiencing Healthy[13] Growth; The Editor Team's Planned Behind the Scenes Development

Kara Mac Donald and Amy Sleep

CATESOL NEWSLETTER

SERVING TEACHERS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The CATESOL Newsletter has been publishing quarterly issues on a regular scheduled basis since the Spring of 2020. Over the years, the issues have become more robust with contributions from a variety of CATESOL members, CATESOL leadership, and invited author and guest author submissions.

Amy Sleep joined the newsletter team in September of 2023, and this has not only allowed for a division of the work, but also discussions on how we can improve the logistics of publishing the newsletter. One significant change to the platform that the newsletter is produced in before being converted to a PDF for publication on the CATESOL website. The newsletter has been produced in Microsoft Publisher, which has served the publication's needs well but it is an application not compatible with Macbooks' operating systems and is not supported by web-based word processing platforms, like Google docs.

To move away from one individual's personal computer being a hub for CATESOL Newsletter submissions and final layout version of the newsletter's issue for publication, we are looking into another platform that is web-based and allows for easier free-time collaboration. We are planning for Amy to do a few duplicate article layouts in Canva, or another application, this issue on the back end to work out any glitches, tweaks needed etc. We are still publishing Issue 57-2 using Publisher. However, depending on how the trial goes, we will either fully move to the new platform for the June or September issue. The general CATESOL Blue will remain and the general look and feel of what has been used as a template will remain, but with a slight shift to note the change in platform and the ongoing development of the newsletter.

There will be no change to accessing the newsletter on the CATESOL website.

CATESOL Newsletter Team
Kara Mac Donald, Newsletter Editor
Amy Sleep, Co-Editor
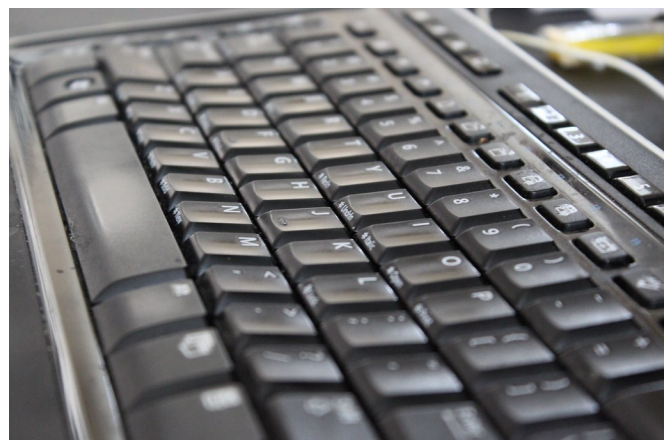
Member Submission II — Improving Reading Fluency for EFL Pronunciation Students: A Case Study

Clarissa Jones

Through my MA TESOL classes at Biola University, I had the chance to explore reading fluency strategies. These strategies intrigued me because I have always enjoyed reading. However, I know that is not everyone's experience, and the idea of helping my students improve their reading fluency, and concurrently, their enjoyment of reading, inspired me. I decided to apply reading fluency strategies through intentional activities for my EFL university students.

Why is improving reading fluency important?

Improving students' reading fluency carries dividends into many other areas. Anderson (1999) highlights several benefits, including: increased motivation, supporting increased content reading demands in higher education, and improved performance on standardized tests. For my Reading for Pronunciation freshman EFL university students, improving their reading fluency also stood to benefit their ability to chunk phrases accurately, promoting accurate pauses while speaking, and improve their English pronunciation, including rhythm.

How does reading fluency connect to pronunciation?

For my students, I recorded the first seven chapters of The BFG by Ronald Dahl, reading at a natural rate, using Audacity to clean up my recording to make it more understandable. I chose The BFG because I had enjoyed the book as a child and had a hard copy to read from in my personal library. Choosing a middle-grade book also supported my students' comprehension as they range from an A2-B1 level, according to the CEFR scale. Students were tasked with listening to one chapter per day while reading along. In this way, students could hear the pronunciation of English words as they read. From my own personal reading experience, I know just how tricky it can be to pronounce English words. As an early reader reading above my grade level, I often read words that I hadn't heard anyone pronounce before. My family still jokes about some of my early pronunciation mistakes. Students were also encouraged to notice the rhythm of English, made up of stressed and unstressed words, pauses, and intonation. One of the challenges my students face is the difference in Chinese, their L1, being a syllable-timed language while English, their L2, functions as a stress-timed language. Chang and Millett (2014) found in a study that "the use of simultaneous reading and listening before focusing on listening only is the most effective approach in improving L2 listening fluency" (p. 37). It is key for my students to improve in their receptive and productive pronunciation skills, which reading while listening supports.

What was the result?

After students read and listened to all seven chapters of The BFG, they sent a voice message detailing what was difficult, what they learned about pronunciation, and their experience. Students reported struggling with the rate of reading, which is understandable as I usually slow down my speed of speaking in class, but several were able to track with the rate of reading after repeated listening. Some students struggled to understand the words that Ronald Dahl used, several of which he created specifically for The BFG. I could mitigate this in the future by selecting a less imaginative book. Overall, students reported hearing the rhythm of English pronunciation and commented on key features such as stressed words and pauses. Several students mentioned appreciating the story.

How did follow-up occur?

The following week, students were given further reading fluency homework, consisting of

seven options ranging from finishing listening to and reading The BFG, to recording themselves reading a chapter of The BFG and comparing their pronunciation to the recording I had made to timed reading aloud activities. Students were required to submit a record of what they chose and a voice message reflecting on their experience. Those who chose timed reading reported an increase in their reading rate. Those who chose to record their own reading of a chapter and then compare it with my own pronunciation reported working on their recording multiple times. I appreciated their effort and could tell a difference in their pronunciation. Several students who chose to finish listening to and reading The BFG seemingly chose to watch the movie instead, based on several nearly identical voice messages that sounded like a synopsis of the movie. While disappointing, I could mitigate this potential for cheating in the future by choosing a lesser-known book, one without an accompanying movie. Additional follow-up was included in small group discussion activities during class where students shared what they did for the homework and what they learned with one another. I also provided personalized voice message feedback to each student following each homework submission.

Conclusion

Overall, I saw my students' improve their reading fluency, listening fluency, and pronunciation through this activity. The extension of homework with student selected options increased student choice, and students learned more about English pronunciation through listening to The BFG. I would repeat this activity in the future with modifications as mentioned above. Reading fluency can be adapted to various classrooms and addresses integrated skills, especially when the focus is reading while listening.

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Ron Lee Technology Award

The application deadline for **2024 Ron Lee Technology Award** has been extended to **July 15th, 2024**.

If you had a technology-integrated class activity or project that had a positive impact on students' language learning, don't miss your chance for the **Ron Lee Technology CATESOL Award.**

The $1,000 award will go to one or two candidates who have integrated technology in innovative ways to support ESL teaching.

Please see more details (information and application) about the 2024 Ron Lee Technology Award: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ETXWJOwZ7HKqtsKRjdnEyNfQ_MPLY1jY/view?usp=sharing

With any questions about the Award, please email Yoon Kyoung Chae at yoonchae121@gmail.com. Thank you!

Yoon Kyoung Chae
2024 CATESOL - Ron Lee Technology Award coordinator

Member Submission III — My Passion Project: The Spoken Word English Language Teaching (ELT) Institute

Robyn Mosely

I have always loved words. I love reading words. I love writing words. And most of all, I love discovering new words. As a child, I delighted in reading and often found myself lost in books, metamorphosing into the characters, places, and times. My favorite retreats were the local libraries and bookstores, soaking in every word on a page or marveling at the massive book collections. This enthusiasm for learning and sharing knowledge heightened throughout my youth and through organizations such as Girl Scouts, Junior Achievement, and the Red Cross, evolved into a commitment to community activism. Today, learning, inspiring growth in others, and championing social change feed my soul.

Traveling the world elevated my desire to grow from a community activist into a global citizen and an agent of change. Wanderlust opened my eyes to a world of stark contrasts — beauty and unsightliness, joy and pain, and privilege and oppression. Global adventures shaped my appreciation for diverse cultural experiences and world languages and drive for social justice advocacy. These passions merged to inspire my pursuit of a future as a language educator and are the driving forces behind the inception of The Spoken Word English Language Teaching (ELT) Institute. Founded in 2024, the Institute is a labor of love for its founder, Robyn Mosely. It is a testament to the power of language to transform lives.

The Spoken Word English Language Teaching (ELT) Institute advocates anti-racism, cultural representation, and inclusion in English language teaching methodologies and materials. Our mission is to examine, illuminate, and dismantle linguistic stratification within ELT practices. Guided by the vision that language can serve as a bridge to connect global communities and transform lives, the Institute's principal focus is developing the materials and methodologies to create safe and inspired learning spaces for students and teachers. Four approaches direct the work at the Spoken Word ELT Institute:

1. Practice the principles of intercultural competence to address the profound need for diverse ELT pedagogy.

2. Design immersive and communicative multimedia learning experiences that center culturally diverse student populations.

3. Create learning environments where historically absent student communities feel seen, heard, and motivated to achieve English language proficiency. By mirroring the (Cont.)

the lived realities of learners in English language curriculums, the Institute seeks to attract more students, educators, and researchers from marginalized communities to study language and linguistics. Educators, researchers from marginalized communities to study language and linguistics.

4. Heighten awareness of careers in language and linguistic professions among historically underrepresented populations. Champion opportunities to advance the inclusion of these populations in linguistic communities.

The Spoken Word ELT Institutes aims to serve as a beacon of light for students, teachers, and communities around the globe, teaching, empowering, and uplifting lives. Because words matter.

For more information about the Spoken Word ELT Institute, please visit the website at
 https://www.thespokenword-elt.org/

Robyn D. Mosely, Founder

New Column Series-

Teacher Trainers– Insights for Novice and Veteran TESOL Educators

The CATESOL Newsletter has a variety of columns with specific focus that run in each issue and/or some that run periodically.

However, the newsletter has not offered any specific focused articles on pre-service and in-service training around TESOL.

Such a column would be a great benefit to novice and newly graduate TESOL educators in our readership.

Jon Phillips, an active TESOL and CATESOL member, will be offering a four series column dedicated to TESOL pre-service and in-service educators.

The column running September 2024 (Issue 57-3) to June 2025 (Issue 58-2) will offer **Insights for Novice and Veteran TESOL Educators**.

Author Bio -

Jon Phillips has over 35 years of experience in the TESOL field of which he has mainly worked in teacher pre-service and in-service training in a variety of contexts. Starting in the Peace Corps and then working for a variety of organizations, his work has taken him to Nepal, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and beyond, before returning to the U.S. in the early 2000's where he directly works with pre-service and in-service language teachers.

Keep an eye out for Jon Philip's future articles on teacher training in TESOL.

Non-Native English Author Column — Counter-narrative of a Romanian "Gypsy" student in a Spanish university: Part II

Noemí Castelo Veiga

Editor's Note:

The following submission is a part two to this author's entry to CATESOL's new Non-Native English Author (NNEA) Column, which provides a space for non-native English speaking authors to share their creative writing and alternative writing pieces unrelated to TESOL, ELT, and SLA. Part one is in Volume 57, Issue 2 published in June 2024.

If you, someone you know, or a student of yours is interested in submitting a creative writing piece to the NNEA column, please reach out to newsletter@catesol.org.

INTRODUCTION

Dear readers of the CATESOL newsletter,

In the following pages I present the second part of a counter-narrative about a Romanian "Gypsy" student at a Spanish university. A counter-narrative is a story that gives voice to oppressed marginalized or excluded persons in society. In this counter-narrative, I focus on the Roma people, who have been traditionally marginalized in nice Europe. I hope you enjoyed the first, which appeared in the March 2024 CATESOL newsletter. To write this story I have relied on several Spanish documentary and bibliographic sources, which I have collected in the "References" section, but the names and characters I have used are completely fictitious.

I hope you enjoy reading it!

If you wish, you can scan the following QR code and leave your comments about it. I also leave you my email address: ncv_212@hotmail.es.

Sincerely yours,

Noemí Castelo Veiga

Counter-narrative of a Romanian "Gypsy" student in a Spanish university: Part II

Professor Marina: Good morning, Petro. I would like to congratulate you for your presentation and for this last contribution. My name is Marina and I am a professor at the College of Education of this university. I teach in Primary Education, Early Childhood and Social Education. I would like to comment briefly on two issues.

On the one hand, I do believe that professors in general focus too much on quality standards, persistence and graduation, and we forget that behind them there are people, and very diverse people. What is success? Which is more important: To have low absenteeism rates or that students learn in class? Is it not absenteeism that they only go to warm the chair because they do not feel identified neither with the classes nor with the educational institutions? This is a question we must ask ourselves.

On the other hand, professors and teachers are also people. We have a lot of students per classroom, each one with their particular characteristics. We lack material resources, personnel and

sometimes we can't cope any more. This year I am coordinating 21 Final Degree Projects and I am the mother of two daughters. I have to get home and I also have to do things. I know teachers in Secondary Education who have three meetings a day, more classes, more tutoring session. And they can't do any more. I totally agree with you: We lack resources and we need a methodological change of the whole educational system. But with meetings and presentations like today's I feel that we are going in the right direction. Thank you, and thanks also to Professor Mercedes.

(The audience applauds enthusiastically and the man sitting next to Professor Marina raises his hand)

Petro: Thank you, Professor Marina. Certainly an excellent and constructive contribution. I think someone else would like to take the floor.

Professor Hugo: Yes, good morning everyone. I join Professor Marina in congratulating you. I also teach at the College of Education and I totally agree with her that we are overwhelmed. What improvement strategies can we develop? Perhaps we should pay more attention to aspects related to the family reconciliation of the educational community: students, administrative staff and faculty. Many times I would have liked to take courses on socio-educational attention to cultural diversity, but when? I don't have the time. In this sense, I believe that another strategy would have to be along the lines of training: What, how, and when? I would also add participation, favoring school-family-community participation, of all families and in all educational stages. If the members of the family participate in Pre-school or Primary School, they will accumulate positive experiences that they will probably continue to develop in Secondary Education, a stage where the data has shown, as was pointed out in one of the contributions, the high school failure suffered by most of the Roma people in our country. In this regard, a week ago I read an article by Quintas-Quintas et al. (2022) on family participation in schools with a high presence of immigrant and economically disadvantaged students. Allow me to share some annotations I have made.

(Professor Hugo opens a small notebook he had in his briefcase)

Professor Hugo: I continue with my contribution. The positive influence of school involvement on students' academic performance is clear. Unfortunately, the involvement of immigrant families is below that of native families in all European educational systems. We need Family Associations and the School Council to represent the whole student body. It is a way for them, and their families, to feel part of the institution. It is clear that there are many obstacles: Linguistic, cultural and religious, economic or lack of knowledge of the functioning of the bodies. We need to remove these obstacles, or reduce them as much as possible, to encourage the involvement of all. For example, if some families cannot afford to pay the fee for the Family Association, this should not prevent them from participating in the Association or in the School Council, and the center could provide small scholarships to cover the cost. Another strategy would be to give informative talks about the functioning of the bodies once a week. I do not know. All families could implement workshops on certain activities, without falling into a folkloric manifestation of culture. In this way, they could get to know each other better, favoring the elimination of prejudices and reducing the distrust that both groups —the native and the immigrant population— have for each other. As Quintas-Quintas et al. (2022) conclude in their research, it is necessary to establish center policies that make it possible to carry out these practices beyond the individual dimension or the circumstantial presence of those who are part of the school community at a given time. Thank you!

(The audience applauds enthusiastically)

Petro: Thank you very much, Professor Hugo. I am very happy not only for this presentation, but for the high level of participation you are having. Does anyone else want to make

any comments, either regarding Professor Hugo's contribution or any of the previous contributions?

A hand begins to rise shyly. I... (a shaky voice is heard)

Student Sergio: Good morning everyone. I am not an immigrant nor do I belong to any minority ethnic group. I was born in a small village in the Mariña Lucense. My family is Galician with a very low income and, to some extent, I have also had many difficulties getting ahead with my studies. I work at the same time and sometimes it is very difficult for me to combine my studies. This is my last year of my degree. I also study Pedagogy and I agree with you Petro, Professor Mercedes is great.

(Laughter can be heard in the background)

Student Sergio: I am very aware of the subject. My Final Degree Project is about the challenges that educational institutions must face in relation to the attention and, if necessary, the management of diversity. Immigration is not a circumstantial issue, but a permanent and structural one. What can we do? In view of the previous contributions and proposals for improvement, very interesting of course, I would add another issue related to representation.

I think it was Professor Hugo who spoke about the need for greater representation of immigrant, non-immigrant "Gypsy" and native families in school bodies.

Well, as a student I have witnessed in Primary and Secondary Education, even in this university, how foreign students have had to integrate other new foreign students who arrived later or in the middle of the school year. Many times they were not even from their own country. I don't know, I understand that the teaching staff has the best intentions, but I think that we need more multicultural representation in the very composition of the educational institutions. This goes through the faculty and administrative staff. If there had been and existed a greater representation, I am sure that the teachers and professors would not ask the foreign students to integrate other students when many of them are not integrated in class either. I do not know if I have explained myself well. I think this is an issue we need to address. Institutions cannot remain isolated from social reality. Only in this way will we be able to favor a greater identification, creating institutions not only for all and from all, but with all. Thank you!

Wonderful thought, wonderful contribution (a voice in the background is heard loudly)

Petro: Thank you very much Sergio. It has been a magnificent contribution. I am sure that your Final Degree Project will be excellent. Lots of encouragement and good luck! I think someone else wants to speak.

Professor Estrella: Sorry. I don't know if I have been heard well with the applause. I thought it was a fantastic speech, student Sergio. I also think it is great to be sitting here today talking about these issues, which are still on the agenda. Thank you, Petro, and thank you, Professor Mercedes. You are wonderful!

One matter that worries me a lot and that has not been addressed is school segregation of foreign, Roma people or low-income students.

(Professor Estrella lifts the book in her right hand. The cover reads "Becoming Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Opportunities for Colleges and Universities" by Ginna Ann Garcia)

Professor Estrella: Do you see this book? It's from the year 2019. It focuses on Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). What are HSIs? They are those non-profit institutions of Higher Education in the United States that serve Hispanics, having a full-time undergraduate enrollment (FTE) of at least 25% Hispanic. Today there are nearly 600 HSIs throughout the United States. The

numbers are growing. Now, do these institutions really serve Hispanics and other racialized populations? We are talking about another country, another continent, I know. Practices cannot be transported from one context to another. I also know that. But I consider it pertinent to address this issue because the author focuses on racialization at the organizational level, and not at the individual level. In our case, we would speak of institutional racism. And I think it is important to consider this and apply it to our Spanish Primary, Secondary and University institutions.

I am 73 years old. I have been retired for 7 years, but I have always been an active member in the fight for inclusion. I was a Primary School teacher for 25 years and then I went on to teach at the university level. Do you remember the Bridge Schools? Yes, those famous institutions of 40 years ago, segregated, public and exclusively for marginalized "Gypsy" children. Perhaps their intention was not bad, because they wanted to bridge, how to say, they wanted to prepare these children so that they could continue their studies in normalized public schools. However, the reality turned out to be quite different, as very few went on to them. In the end, it only constituted the ghettoization of this group. After a while, some colleagues of mine and I organized ourselves to discuss this school model, concerned about finding the most appropriate methodologies. At the time, no one in our context had any experience, let alone knew how to teach an ethnic minority. We were novices, but we were eager, very eager for inclusion.

Nowadays, it is true that schooling has improved a lot, especially in the Pre-school and Primary school stages, thanks to the pedagogical renovation of the eighties, which addressed, among other things, the schooling process of the "Gypsy" community. We can affirm then that there are no longer specific centers to "normalize" the "Gypsies". But only in theory, because for a few years now we have been living in practice a process of educational ghettoization: Our public centers with a high concentration of immigrants, ethnic minorities and low-income populations, present an image of low status and a flight of enrollment from the rest of the student body. A few years ago, in 2019, a colleague of mine conducted an interview with Periódico Aragón on this topic where he addressed the same points I mentioned. The reference to the news item (let me look it up...yes, here it is: Viejo (2019)), yes. I tracked it down. Here you have all the information I said today. I'll pass you the reference later, Petro.

Let's not forget that Galicia is one of the Spanish communities that leads in school segregation. This is our first pending task in the inclusion agenda. Thank you!

Petro: Thank you, Professor Estrella. Thank you for your work, for your commendable work. Yesterday, today and always. Of course, I will take the reference you have given me and I will send it to those attendees who are interested in going deeper into these themes. Those people can write to me at the e-mail address you see in this slide and I will send them the bibliographic material used in the presentation.

(I am very excited, I think we have come a long way today. I look at the clock, there are only 5 minutes left. I drink some water and continue with my speech)

Petro: I think it is getting close to the farewell. These initiatives must continue to be carried out regularly in these Higher Education contexts. There have been many interesting contributions. Undoubtedly, we have all learned a lot today. Thank you, thank you very much. It is not a "goodbye", but a "see you soon."

(The audience applauds effusively. Several teachers and students approach me and Professor Mercedes to congratulate us on the initiative)

Petro: The next morning I find myself in the university library taking notes on the Gutiérrez et al. (2019) article. Yes, this I will also put in my outline along with the information from yesterday's contributions. Yes, and this I will also incorporate. What a fantastic day, I learned a lot. I start to draw an outline:

Lines of action to improve the inclusion of the Roma population in Spanish society

Notes: Low incidence of social policies carried out in recent years. Low levels of involvement and active participation. Institutional racism. Lack of coordination and transversality. Educational problems and segregation.

Lines of action:

1. Housing. Improve access, fight against spatial segregation.

2. Health. Promotion of healthy lifestyles, information and awareness of existing health resources. Figure of the mediator.

3. Employment. Training and socio-labor insertion programs. Training courses.

4. Education. Changes in curricular design and didactic materials (incorporation of other discourses, other voices, but without falling into a technical-reductionist or romantic-folklore conception of culture); attention to linguistic differences (fundamental axes: Learning a second language and language brokering processes of children and youth); methodology and evaluation (change of paradigm, questioning of evaluation standards, use of participatory and innovative methodological strategies: Cooperative learning, meaningful learning, service-learning, funds of knowledge approach, others); training of education professionals (attention to initial and continuous training); center representation (greater diversity in the composition of faculty, and administrative and service personnel); center-family-community involvement (favor the participation of these families in educational bodies and during all academic stages); school segregation (fight against ghetto centers, establish measures with the state administration in general and autonomous administration in particular, incorporate the figure of the social educator in educational centers).

Final objective: Intercultural societies.

(Suddenly a noise is heard. It is professor Mercedes)

Professor Mercedes: Good morning, Petro. Yesterday's lecture was a great success. Several teachers and students have written to me to thank us. We have to do another one very soon. Congratulations, you were great!

Petro: Thank you very much, Professor Mercedes. I had a lot of nerves, but I am very happy with the results. Now I am making an outline about what we learned yesterday along with the information extracted from a 2019 article I read today.

(Professor Mercedes reads my outline)

Professor Mercedes: This looks fabulous.

(Underneath she writes the following words: Possible draft of Petro's Final Degree Project, while smiling with satisfaction. Then Mateo, her husband, appears)

Professor Mercedes: Hi, honey. Have you brought Pancho?

Mateo: Good morning, my sunshine. Yes, today I preferred to bring him rather than the

(Cont.)

white cane.

Petro: Good morning, Mateo.

Mateo: Good morning, Petro. Excellent presentation yesterday. Here, this is for you.

(Mateo holds a book in his hands. The front cover reads "Ensayo sobre la ceguera" by José Saramago)

Mateo: I'm sure you'll love it. I kept this copy for many years before I lost my sight. It is one of my favorite books.

Petro: Thank you very much, Mateo!

(Mateo and Professor Mercedes leave the library)

Petro: I glance at the book, stop at page 373 and begin to read in a low voice:
    "I don't think we did go blind, I think we are blind, blind who see, blind who, seeing, do not see". Yes, Mateo may be blind, but he is the one who sees the most. He does not have social blindness. I put the book under my right arm, pick up my things and get ready to leave, because it is already two o'clock in the afternoon and it is time for lunch.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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AUTHOR

Noemí Castelo Veiga - ncv_212@hotmail.es

Noemí Castelo Veiga has a degree in Social Education from the University of Vigo (Spain) with the Extraordinary End of Career Award from the University of Vigo and the End of Career Award from the Autonomous Community of Galicia, Spain. She has completed a Master´s Degree in Educational Research at the University of Santiago de Compostela (Spain), obtaining the Extraordinary End of Master Award from the same university. She is currently pursuing her doctoral studies at the University of Santiago de Compostela with a grant from the University Teacher Training Program of

the Spanish Ministry. Her doctoral thesis studies cultural diversity and training and professional perspectives of social educators in this regard. Her lines of research are the mainly oriented to cultural diversity, multi and intercultural education, teaching, the competence profile of education and social education professionals, and employability.

During the months of September, October and November 2023 she has made an international stay at CSU, Monterey Bay thanks to a mobility grant from the Ministry of Spain. Her sponsoring professor was Emeritus Professor Dr. Christine Sleeter and her point of contact with the university was Dr. Ondine Gage.

CATESOL Blog: Call for Submissions

The CATESOL Blog is published monthly and accepts a range of article types for publication. Plan on trying out *breathwork* in your classroom? Write about it on the blog!

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CATESOL Blog Update — New Book Review Format Available on the CATESOL Blog

Michelle Skowbo and Kara Mac Donald

As of February, the CATESOL Blog Book Review has launched a new format for book reviews under the column title as Book Review Reflections. The newly available book review format strives to make submissions more accessible to more authors who may wish to publish work on texts they may find beneficial but may not be familiar with book reviews as a genre or may have not written a book review before and may like a way to get their feet wet in sharing information on a book interest to them.

Existing Practice - Format for Book Reviews

Book Reviews are sole authored or co-authored pieces that summarize each chapter of a text individually, with the book review directly reflecting the structure of the published book. The book review author/s also write and introduction to the overall book chapter summaries, as well as a Conclusion to the overall book review. The length of the of the book reviews are not regulated. The length is guided by the length of a book and the depth of content addressed, and so the authors make the determination of the length of the review.

Newly Established Practice - Format for Book Review Reflections

Book Review Reflections are sole authored pieces that summarize the text overall, with a summary of the overall book's content. The book review reflection author does not need to specifically write and Introduction and Conclusion to the overall book review reflection. The length of the book review reflections is not regulated. However, based on the nature of the format, we expect the length of these submissions will be between 400-800 words depending on the length and nature of the book's content.

What Books Are Eligible for Book Reviews and Book Reflections on the CATESOL Blog

Academic journals frequently have standing calls for book reviews. These reviews most often than note focus on newly published books, but the CATESOL Blog accepts submission on books regardless of the publication year. We serve a range of members and a longstanding classic texts may be new to a recent TESOL graduate entering the field. Or a long used faithful books by a veteran educator may benefit many members who are not aware of it. So, if you have a book that speaks to you, we invite you to develop a submission to share with your peers.

Examples of two Book Review Reflections, published for February and March contributions can be viewed here.

February: *Book Review Reflection*: English L2 Reading: Getting to the Bottom. By Barbara M. Birch and Sean Fulop

March: *Book Review Reflection*: Working Collaboratively in Second/Foreign Language Learning. Edi-

Multilingual TESOL Educators — Becoming Sweet and Spicy: Natasha's English Language Journey From Africa to American English

Laura Butler

I met "Natasha" (pseudonym) in 2023 when I became her GED and ESL tutor through the community center where I volunteer and where she takes classes. We are currently still working together. I interviewed Natasha, a 22-year-old Cameroonian national who has been living in the U.S. for about one year as a refugee about her experiences with language learning. Natasha speaks five languages, four of which she speaks natively. The fifth language, English, is still "in progress" as Natasha does not consider herself a fluent English speaker. The purpose of this interview case study was to investigate some of Natasha's language learning history, goals, and strategies to better understand how she has been able to acquire language in the past and how she intends to add to her language repertoire in the future. I also sought to investigate which of Natasha's L2 learning habits and personal attitudes can be incorporated into bilingual and foreign language instruction. This paper reports Natasha's early childhood language experiences, the linguistic landscape of her war-torn home country, her experiences learning English in America, and her understanding of her ideal L2 self, mainly based on an hour-long interview.

Natasha's Early Language Experiences and Bilingual Schooling in Cameroon

One of the main drivers of my curiosity in Natasha's case was the nature of the civil war in her home country of Cameroon. The nation is currently split along linguistic lines tracing back to European colonization. Approximately 20% of the country is Anglophone with the remaining 80% being Francophone. Initially, Anglophone separatist groups agreed to restrict their fighting to the government's military; however, these militias have begun attacking and kidnapping civilians, forcing many to flee (Pollitt, 2022). Natasha's family lived primarily in the Francophone region but owned a house in the Anglophone section of the country as well. During our interview, she outlined several instances in which code-switching from one language to another made her feel more safe in her surroundings in Cameroon. She has continued to use her language repertoire selectively for the same reasons in the U.S., finding a sense of safety in her ability to choose to speak in a language others are unlikely to understand. For Natasha and her family, though, multilingualism is both a safety tactic and an ideal way of moving about the world. What I discovered during our interview was that Natasha has an incredibly high regard for multilingualism thanks to the influence of her parents and her experience attending an academically rigorous bilingual school during the first several years of her education. Our interview also revealed that Natasha employs some highly sophisticated metacognitive strategies when endeavoring to understand a new language. In discussing how language acquisition is most relevant to her academic and professional ambitions, I learned that Natasha also values multilingualism for practical, functional purposes, explaining to me that she intends to study medicine in college, and, in order to provide the highest quality care to her future patients, she wants to be able to communicate in as many languages as possible. I plan to discuss these three main discoveries from the interview in detail further.

Cameroon is home to over 250 languages, and, while French and English are the country's official languages, only a small fraction of Cameroonian citizens are literate in French, English, or both (Collins, 2019). Natasha speaks four languages natively (excluding any "standard" variety of English, such as British English): Eton, Ewondo, French, and West African Pidgin English. I asked her which of these languages she considers to be her "mother tongue" and she explained to me that the concept of a "mother tongue" in Cameroonian society is not merely a designation of a child's first language, but is also respected as a means of transmitting culture intergenerationally. Eton

Ewondo, French, and West African Pidgin English. I asked her which of these languages she considers to be her "mother tongue" and she explained to me that the concept of a "mother tongue" in Cameroonian society is not merely a designation of a child's first language, but is also respected as a means of transmitting culture intergenerationally. Eton is an ethnic dialect spoken by Natasha's mother and Ewondo is an ethnic dialect spoken by her father. She learned both of these languages dually from birth and was raised in the cultures these languages represent.

In addition to local ethnic dialects, Natasha also learned French and West African Pidgin English before she began schooling. She began attending a French and English bilingual school around age five and continued her education in a monolingual French medium after grade six. She commented that bilingual schooling was quite rigorous and sometimes caused her to feel as if she didn't understand either French or English as well as she'd previously thought. Natasha explained that, in attending a bilingual school, she was required to study all subjects in both English and French, which occasionally caused her to question her language abilities. However, she is ultimately very grateful for several years of bilingual schooling, noting that any education in Cameroon is expensive, but bilingual education is particularly pricy.

One might be tempted to assume that Natasha comes from a family of means who desired bilingual education for Natasha and her siblings as a marker of prestige. The assumption that Natasha's family used multilingualism as a form of social currency in Cameroon may seem reasonable to outside observers, but Natasha described her family's language use in their home country in more specific situations. She explained that her father, whom she dearly admires, elucidated to her that multilingualism kept their family safe. He employed a hypothetical scenario to explain how a multilingual family could fool a burglar by calling for help in a language the thief does not understand.

The multilingual status of Natasha's family was created intentionally by her parents who imparted to their children the notion of multilingualism as a virtue in and of itself. All of Natasha's three siblings are also multilingual, with two being more proficient in English and she and another sibling being more proficient in French. All family members speak Eton, Ewondo, and Pidgin English, and Natasha describes Pidgin English as the lingua franca of her own family, as well as for her entire home country. When Natasha spoke about her parents' views on language learning, she expressed a great deal of gratitude and pride, and it was during this early part of the interview that I first saw Natasha's ideal L2 self. The ideal L2 self is defined as an intrinsic motivator that allows language learners to strive to be, "the kind of person we would like to be" (Ortega, 2009, p.104) as users of a new language.

In addition to the admiration she has for her parents, Natasha seems to have an independent love of language learning, saying things like, "I just love it!" and "I would be very proud of myself if I learned another language" (Natasha, personal communication, 2/14/2024). There was one sentiment that surfaced several times during my conversation with Natasha: she is highly sensitive to the situations of other people, especially in a language-learning context. She expressed sympathy for people she knew in Cameroon who did not have the advantage of bilingual education or any education. I conjecture that this highly positive view of education and the high priority placed on language learning in her family created an ideal foundation for Natasha to not only become multilingual before adulthood but also to endow her with a mindset that continues to serve her as she acquires more English. As Ortega (2009) explains, "past experiences and attitudes play a causal role in shaping L2 learning motivation" (p. 98).

Natasha's Language Use and Attitudes in Cameroon

Natasha's use of and attitudes about Pidgin English were particularly interesting to me, as the interview revealed just how much of an influence the language has on her life. Aside from being the lingua franca of her family, Natasha reports that she used Pidgin English to speak with others in Cameroon, particularly with those who had not received any formal education. Again, Natasha demonstrated a great deal of compassion for these people, refusing to judge them for their lack of opportunity. Even so, Natasha describes Pidgin English as "bad" English in comparison to a "standard variety" such as British English or American English, two among numerous varieties of so-called "standard" English (Jenkins, 2015). Nevertheless, she's quite cognizant of Pidgin English's usefulness both in Cameroon and in the U.S., commenting that she will switch to Pidgin English when speaking with siblings in public if she senses danger. For example, taking cues from her father's advice on language use and safety, when walking in public with her sister, if Natasha notices a person who makes her feel unsafe, she will use Pidgin English to urge her sister to walk more quickly or cross the street to get away from the unsafe person. This keen awareness of her surroundings results in constant code-switching, meaning that all of Natasha's available languages are being used daily. Because of this consistent use, Natasha is likely not only to retain expressiveness in her mother tongues, but her current language use could also potentially predict her future success in language learning (Jenkins, 2015; Ortega, 2009). She is currently using five languages roughly equally every day, even if she uses a mixture of languages all at once, rather than one at a time, as, she explained, both scenarios are routine for her, due to growing up in a household where many languages were constantly in use.

Natasha explained to me that, in addition to her own family's feelings about bilingualism, it is a skill that is highly admired within her home country, but with some caveats. Those who can speak both French and English fluently - what Natasha refers to as a "pure" bilingual - are shown a great deal of respect, but it is better, she noted, to be entirely fluent in French and less fluent in English rather than the other way around. This is due to the president of Cameroon showing favoritism toward Francophone citizens, further inflaming the country's political strife (Pollitt, 2022). The admiration and status that is conferred through bilingual attainment almost certainly had an influence on Natasha's desire to be as multilingual as possible before she even left Cameroon.

Natasha's Language Use and Attitudes in The U.S.

Now, in the U.S., Natasha sees even more reason to learn yet more languages, first becoming fluent (by her own measure) in English, and next looking into acquiring Spanish. Natasha seems to see the multilingual nature of America as a means for connecting with as many people as possible, rather than as an obstacle to connection due to the sheer variety of languages spoken in America and in the metropolitan Midwestern city, where she currently resides. She aspires to work in the medical field as either a pediatric doctor or nurse and understands that, if a patient does not speak English, she will have to meet them in their own linguistic space to provide care.

What I noticed about Natasha's descriptions of her language experiences in Cameroon was that she has been able to successfully transfer a lot of her learning strategies from her formal schooling in Cameroon to her current education situation in the U.S., which includes adult ESL and GED classes at a community center. GED stands for General Educational Development and is a series of four tests - math, science, social studies, and language arts - that, when passed, confer a U.S. high school equivalency diploma, commonly referred to as an HSE. In these classes, because she is deeply sensitive to the plight of others, Natasha frequently translates or assists classmates who are having difficulty understanding something. She reports that helping others by using English increases her confidence in her language abilities and provides her with opportunities to put (Cont.)

her personal values, such as compassion, into practice. I think this point is something worth considering deeply. As teachers, I believe that it's vital to recognize the personal contributions our students bring to the classroom, especially in an adult education context. These students are not just supporting their peers, but bolstering their own self-esteem by being able to use newly acquired knowledge to bring about a positive change. It has been my experience that when students encourage each other, it creates a more ideal environment for learning. In particular, if one does not fear derision, but rather expects encouragement from one's classmates, it's easier to take risks with newly acquired language items, trying out new vocabulary or verb tenses, for example as Harmer (2015) reported. Not every classroom will be filled with "Natashas," but I suspect that when teachers encourage outgoing students who display helpful behavior toward their classmates, it will have a similar effect.

Returning to Natasha's use of and views concerning Pidgin English, I noticed that some of her comments seemed to contradict one another. On the one hand, Natasha has always been a good student and held leadership positions while in high school in Cameroon. She expressed that she felt comfortable making mistakes in spoken or written English when working with me specifically, as she said that my overall comportment is relaxed and non-judgemental. In our study sessions, Natasha is not shy about asking me for vocabulary definitions and using the new knowledge to compose sentences for practice. While I was happy to hear that I had created a comfortable learning environment for Natasha, I can envision many situations in which she might be less willing to attempt speaking English depending on her comfort level with her interlocutor. Even if Natasha is currently unwilling to make mistakes in front of certain people, she has expressed to me several times that she'd like to make more American friends with whom she can practice speaking so-called Standard American English (Jenkins, 2015). Conversely, Natasha is very aware of what she does *not* know yet. While she has an understanding of the role of failure in the learning process, she has, to date, faced very few obstacles to achievement in her education. As Natasha does not consider herself a fluent speaker of any standard English variety - though many of her classmates do - I wonder if her tendency to default to Pidgin English as frequently as she does is, in fact, an avoidance strategy (Ortega, 2009). Natasha refers to Pidgin English as "bad" English, yet she uses the language in the U.S. frequently, whether it's to communicate with her siblings and parents, or when speaking internally. In fact, when I asked Natasha which of her languages she uses most in the U.S., she said Pidgin English. She expressed many times during our conversation that Pidgin English is very dear to her culturally, but the language does not serve Natasha's ideal L2 self in the same way a standard variety of English does.

Natasha as an English Language Learner

Currently, Natasha is learning English both in a classroom setting and in naturalistic settings and identified some difficulties in both contexts. One of the main problems she encounters is speech that is too rapid, causing her to mishear words or lose understanding entirely. When she is forced to engage with speech that is too fast for her to understand, her general strategy is to stop and think silently about what was just said, repeating it over and over in her own head to determine meaning. While I feel this strategy is helping her at this point in her language learning, it can slow her down when she is attempting to have a conversation. Natasha praised my own English speaking for its "neatness" and "precision" (Natasha, personal communication, 2/14/2024), two qualities I was unaware of in myself, but an evaluation I was, nevertheless, flattered to hear. Though, she occasionally finds other English speakers more difficult to understand, and specifically noted the difference between the phrase "want to" and its colloquial cousin "wanna," yet again demonstrating her interest in the speaking habits of others. Natasha's view of the English language is arguably, (Cont.)

more "tidied up" than many native speakers'. I conjecture that her relationship with Pidgin English has influenced her notions of what "good" English looks and sounds like, be it the Standard British variety she was taught in Africa, or the Standard American variety she is learning now (Jenkins, 2015). What was even more interesting about Natasha's evaluation of spoken American English is that she does not denigrate people who say "wanna" rather than "want to" or any similar laxity in speech; rather, she seems amused at the diversity of linguistic expression in the U.S. and commented that, now that she lives here, she'll have to adjust her own speech to fit in with Americans, referring to this fine-tuning as making her speech more, "sweet and spicy" (Natasha, personal communication, 2/14/2024).

What is clear to me is that Natasha has an understanding of interpersonal communication that goes beyond knowing multiple languages. She understands the influence of nuance, context, and culture. She commented that if she were to return to Cameroon today, she would be very careful to make sure her English sounded as polished as possible, as cultural mores in that country demand a different presentation than the one Natasha is currently using in the U.S.

When faced with difficulties in acquiring more English, Natasha utilizes several strategies that appear to have a strong impact on her ability to improve. As I've stated above, Natasha is highly sensitive to the space around her which allows her to notice new information at perhaps a higher rate than her peers. It is impossible to know just how Natasha compares to her peers in this area, as Ortega (2009) notes that noticing strategies are notoriously difficult to study, due to their internal and sometimes subconscious nature. In speaking with Natasha, though, I was able to see quite clearly that she intentionally integrates the space around her - including background speech and conversations - into her advancement of English. Natasha appears to have a very strong working memory, as she told me that if she doesn't understand a new vocabulary word and cannot determine its meaning immediately, she will remember it and look it up later. I found her ability to remember what she does not yet understand to be remarkable, and I suspect her memory is not only a factor in her linguistic abilities but also helped her attain high grades while studying in Cameroon (Ortega, 2009).

Another thing I found notable about Natasha's learning strategies is her ability to use context to derive meaning in oral speech. As school children, we are often taught to use context clues while reading, but Natasha is able to use them aurally. During one of our conversations, she asked me if a new word she had heard, "mandatory," meant the same thing as a word she already knew, "obligatory" (Natasha, personal communication, 2/14/2024). I asked her to describe the scenario in which she heard but did not immediately understand "mandatory," and she said she had overheard another student ask their teacher if a certain assignment was mandatory or not. I told her that, yes, "mandatory" and "obligatory" are synonyms and, in most cases, can be used interchangeably. While I recognize that for many learners, the swirling vocabulary around them can be overwhelming and confusing, especially at the start, Natasha has some advantages here. Firstly, she has been speaking English in some form for her entire life, so she may feel less intimidated by new words than students who have had less exposure to English. Secondly, she maintains usage of all her L1s, which allows her to think metacognitively about English acquisition, as she can compare unknown items that sound familiar to words and syntax she has already mastered in another language, particularly French (Ortega, 2009). I posit that English language teachers can use this context-based strategy in listening exercises, but I would suggest this strategy be reserved for more advanced learners (Harmer, 2015).

Another advantage Natasha has that I believe stems from her many years of formal education is her ability to evaluate her own progress and assess her own strengths and weaknesses. (Cont.)

She identified vocabulary words and verb tenses as the trickiest language items she encounters. This self-evaluation would be enormously useful to teachers if all students were able to offer it, but I suspect this specific metacognitive evaluation skill is perhaps peculiar to Natasha's personality and her stated goals for learning English. Even if this self-evaluation is intrinsic to Natasha's approach to education, her effective use of it suggests that instructors can further enhance students' understanding of the language learning process by teaching students to properly evaluate their own progress in major areas of language acquisition such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Lastly, as a learner, Natasha is picky about how she asks for help, basing her decisions on her relationship to the person with whom she's speaking. If she feels comfortable with her interlocutor and that person uses a word Natasha doesn't understand, she'll simply ask for a definition. If does not feel close or comfortable with someone, she will save the new word for later, either using a program like Google Translate or by seeing if she can translate the word from English to French and back to English again. Her comments in this area reinforced the idea, espoused by many scholars, that an ideal language learning context is relaxed and free of judgment (Harmer, 2015; Ortega, 2009).

Natasha's Self-Perception as a Multilingual Speaker

Investigating Natasha's perception of herself as a language user was truly illuminating. I feel that her sense of self as a multilingual speaker is comprised of three main components: parental influence and high esteem for multilingualism in the family, pragmatic functions ranging from immediate safety to a future career in medicine, and a sense of personal pride in being as multilingual as possible. Her sense of pride seems to be a product of her father's encouragement, the attitudes surrounding bilingualism in Cameroon, and a notion of herself as being more capable as she learns more languages. In fact, Natasha has no plans to stop with English. She would like to learn as many languages as possible, and, crucially, emphasized that she wants to *use* all of the languages she will one day know as often as possible. It's as if each language is a proverbial supernumerary appendage she can use to grasp onto more and more things. Ortega (2009) and many other scholars emphasize the consistent use of a language to avoid stagnation in the learning process and to retain what has been successfully learned. Natasha's intention to be a *user* of many languages, not just a *knower* of many languages predicts success in future acquisition endeavors. She also considers hypothetical situations wherein *not* knowing a language might have a negative outcome. For example, she said that, if she becomes a doctor and she and a patient do not speak the same language, she worries that she will not be able to provide effective treatment. Many people who are learning a new language have an ideal L2 self (Ortega, 2009), but I feel it's quite rarer to also have an unideal L2 self. Natasha takes careful stock not only of what she *can* do through acquiring a new language, but also what might happen if she fails. The next language on Natasha's agenda is Spanish, as she immediately noticed that America is home to many Spanish speakers, further evidence that Natasha's awareness of her surroundings continue to serve her daily as a language learner. In order to get an idea of what goes on linguistically inside Natasha's head, I asked her a few questions with the aim of determining how she uses her language repertoire in impulsive or internal settings. As she is a devout Catholic, I asked Natasha which language she uses to pray. She said that has memorized the standard Catholic prayers such as the Our Father and Hail Mary in both English and French, but reverts mainly to Pidgin English when speaking directly to God. When she is sad, angry, or frustrated with another person, Natasha will address that person in a language she knows they will understand. More private moments of frustration, such as dropping and breaking a glass, usually result in an interjection of "Jesus!" which does not designate a specific language, per se, and is somewhat motivated by her religious convictions. I do wonder what other personal or beliefs might be driving similar automatic, extemporaneous utterances. . Interestingly, when Natasha dreams, she reports that she also adjusts her choice of language (Cont.)

speaking with in the dream, just as she does in real life. What was ultimately clear to me, though, was that Pidgin English still plays a major role in Natasha's life and she seems to feel most comfortable when speaking that language.

Finally, I found Natasha's advice to other English language learners to be quite moving and thoughtful. She emphasized the need for patience and advised new learners to focus on their message before worrying too much about the grammatical preciseness of what was said. This attitude is in keeping with a great deal of SLA research, wherein effective communication is often prioritized over morpho-syntactic exactness (Ortega, 2009). Secondly, Natasha encouraged newly arrived immigrants to America not to give up when English language learning becomes difficult, because, while the U.S. has no official language, she feels it's vital to have an understanding of the majority language in any country (Jenkins, 2015). Thirdly, Natasha reminded learners that their progress should not be disrupted by negative interactions with others, saying, "We don't live in a world where 100% of people will like you. No matter how good you are, someone will mock or insult you, so don't worry about it" (Natasha, personal communication, 2/14/2024). I was really struck by the level of self confidence displayed by this comment, and I think it should be shared with all language learners. Natasha encouraged language learners like herself to, "listen, study the environment, catch some words, make friends, and make sure you always speak" (Natasha, personal communication, 2/14/2024). I feel that this comment excellently sums up what a highly motivated learner wants from her teachers and her environment.

Implications for Teaching: Learning from Natasha's Story

In interviewing Natasha, I sought not only to understand her language learning experiences, but also to investigate which of her strategies, habits, and personal traits can be incorporated into English language teaching. As instructors and researchers, we can take cues from Natasha's insights on language acquisition to better understand how to create an effective language learning environment.

There are several factors that make Natasha a "good" language learner, by which I mean she is in an ideal position to acquire more languages. Some of these factors are internal and likely tied to Natasha's outgoing and self-confident personality. Part of her positive feelings about language learning are the result of her parents' influence, which cannot be guaranteed for all learners, but provides an insight for instructors on how to make language learning a less intimidating endeavor for students. Natasha values all knowledge for its own sake and language is, for her, an avenue toward further knowledge. She appears to have a powerful working memory, as she is able to retain unfamiliar language items in her head until she can ask for or look up an explanation later. Her sensitivity to her surroundings is acute and, while it appears that Natasha is capable of taking in a lot of information at once, she is simultaneously selective about which items she wants to incorporate into her personal vocabulary (Ortega, 2009). Natasha takes other learners into consideration and enjoys being able to help her classmates. She is a highly thoughtful learner who has both a practical side and an idealized side when it comes to language learning. She knows who she wants to be, why she wants to be that person, and how English fluency will facilitate those ambitions.

From a teaching perspective, what I found most valuable about Natasha's language learning strategies is her keen awareness of the world around her and the languages she hears and reads in her daily life. As language teachers, we should encourage students to study the world around them and remain curious. We are all surrounded by language items that are new to us, whether it's bilingual signage at a bus stop, foreign chatter at a coffee shop, or the myriad neologisms that pop up on the internet. We should explain to our students that, as native or fluent English users, we encounter unfamiliar language all the time too, thus reminding students that language learning is a lifelong (Cont.)

process and not a singular distant goal to be achieved.

From my personal perspective, of course, I have to admit that I'm envious of some of Natasha's early advantages, such as her parents' intentional decision to build a multilingual household or her access to bilingual schooling starting from a young age. These two facets of Natasha's language learning experience unquestionably set her up for success; however, I cannot downplay Natasha's enthusiasm for learning, which may have budded from her family's attitudes but which are, at this point in her life, truly her own. My experience with language learning has involved a lot of stopping and starting, with this inconsistency yielding a monolingual speaker who can utter a few phrases in about a dozen languages but can't really make herself understood in any of them. Even so, my experience interviewing Natasha has inspired me to recommit myself to learning Spanish. It was a genuinely helpful reminder that I can't and won't please or impress everyone I meet by becoming bilingual, and that sentiment removed a layer of pressure to attain "flawless" Spanish. As Spanish is next up in Natasha's plans, I look forward to the day that my student and I become classmates. I know she'll keep me on track!

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Biographical Statement:

Laura Butler is an adult educator who has been working primarily with HSE candidates for over half a decade. She specializes in English language writing and composition, and works with students both remotely and in person at the Center On Halsted and Howard & Evanston Community Center in the Chicago area. Laura is currently studying TESOL at the graduate level at Concordia University Chicago. She can be contacted by email at: laura.ce.butler@gmail.com or crf_butlerle@cuchicago.edu.

Acknowledgements

CIRT-IG Report — Corpus Corner: Unlock the Potential of the LANA-CASE Corpus

Elizaveta Kuznetsova and Margi Wald

Our recent gathering of the CIRT-IG was a real treat, especially with our guest speaker, **Elizabeth Hanks**, a PhD candidate from *Northern Arizona University*. We kicked things off with a quick refresher on what a corpus is all about, just to get everyone on the same page. Then, we dove into the world of corpora, looking at the different types likespoken and written.

You know, it was pretty eye-opening to see that there are way fewer spoken corpora out there compared to written ones. We had a good chat about why that might be the case—turns out, getting permission from participants, recording, and transcribing speech can be pretty tricky.

But then, Lizzy got us all fired up talking about the LANA-CASE project she's working on with her colleagues from NAU and Lancaster University. They're putting together this awesome corpus of spoken data from all over the US—different regions, ages, and genders. It's a massive undertaking, though, with some real challenges. They're having a tough time getting a good mix of participants, especially folks over 70 and from minority groups or less populated states.

Lizzy also showed us some nifty tools they're using to make transcribing all this data a bit easier. And let me tell you, seeing those transcriptions firsthand was pretty cool. It's like getting a sneak peek into real-life conversations, with all the latest slang and expressions.

One fascinating tidbit that came up during our discussion was about the usage of the word 'like'. It turns out, in the corpus Lizzy shared with us, 'like' wasn't playing the role of a verb as you might expect. Instead, it was often used as a comparison marker or as a sort of filler word to bridge gaps in speech. It's pretty intriguing how language evolves and adapts in everyday conversation, isn't it?

Another thing that really stuck with me was Lizzy's point about how language isn't just about conveying information—it's also about building connections between people. It serves as a bridge, transcending boundaries of culture, geography, and time, ultimately binding us together, no matter where we're from or when we lived.

We wrapped things up with some great questions at the end, and many of us are eager to jump in and help with recording conversations for the project! If you couldn't make it to the Corpus Corner event, no sweat—check out the video recording on YouTube here. And hey, if you're feeling inspired, you can contribute your own conversations to the ongoing research. Your words could become a part of history! Just head over to this link to learn more and get involved. Let's all be a part of this incredible journey together!

Thanks!

Lizzy Hanks eah472@nau.edu
@lana_linguistics

Lancaster University

LANA-CASE project website
http://bitly.ws/wgjh

Recent publication about LANA-CASE compilation
https://bitly.ws/3gDwa

Member Submission IV — Language Exchanges; Beyond Language Development, Fostering Critical Social-Cultural Civic Consciousness

Lorena Garcia, Noemí Castelo Veiga and Kara Mac Donald

 An internet search on how to run a language exchange brings up recommendations such as: i) Set Expectations First, ii) Embrace the Time Limit Struggle, iii) Speak the Target Language Right Away etc. However, mastering logistics to make a language exchange successful to foster proficiency is what most language exchanges may start off as for an objective. Often, unexpectedly a lot more in learned and gained. The authors, as language learners, who joined together to take part in a Spanish-English language exchange with two members located in the Monterey, California area and one member located in Galicia, Spain share their accounts.

Spanish Conversation Sessions – An Emergence of a Language Exchange

The language exchange sprouted off a weekly Spanish Conversation session started mid-summer 2023 between two neighbor friends, Lorena and Kara. Lorena is a heritage speaker of Spanish and grew up in Salinas, just outside of Monterey. Lorena predominantly has used Spanish with her mother, at some family gathering and at work with her Mexico located clients as an accountant from agricultural growers. Outside of those instances, Lorena's main language use is English, as well as in her home with her children. Kara acquired Spanish both informally among expat kids and Spanish-speaking friends as a child and teenager, and later through formal study in a Bachelor's in Spanish Language and Literature. Outside of these occasions, she mainly used Spanish living in Mexico and Spain. Recently, after a long stretch in Austral-Asia/Asia, she has used Spanish from time to time in informal social encounters among her husband's friends/colleagues in the agricultural field.

For varying reasons, Lorena and Kara no longer had use of the Spanish around realms outside of their personal and community spheres, possessing an estimated level with the 2/2+ level realm on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale. See Figure 1 for equivalents for the American Council of Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scales. They wanted to improve their speaking proficiency, as well as their reading and listening as a secondary goal, by engaging with social, political and cultural topics in Hispanic-U.S. Spanish medium media sources and other media from Spanish-speaking countries as relevant.

ACTFL	ILR	CEFR
Novice (Low/Mid/High)	0/0+/1	A1
Intermediate (Low/Mid/High)	1+	A2
Advanced Low	2	B1
Advanced Mid	2+	B2
Advanced High	3/3+	C1
Superior	4+	C2
	**	

Figure 1. Language Proficiency Scale Comparison. (Source: Vadim Udalov, https://www.pinterest.com/pin/how-to-determine-your-language-level--968625832328957392/)   (Cont.)

The Spanish conversation sessions were very successful among Lorena and Kara, meeting regularly and truly enjoying the topics and Spanish language use. To enhance language input and conversational engagement, Lorena and Kara invited *guests* to join sessions, which also expanded the topics of conversations and the overall flexibility of the conversation sessions. In sum, the goal of Spanish language use and development was being met.

The Beginning of a Spanish-English Language Exchange

Noemí Castelo Veiga, an Education PhD exchange student at a California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) from Galicia, Spain, participated in the 2023 CATESOL Annual Conference in Alameda, where she presented a poster session related to her doctoral work, which is also reflected in an article, *Spanish in Spain: Linguistics, Education, and Interculturality* by Noemí and her CSUMB contact Professor, Ondine Gage, in the December Issue (56-4).

Conference *goers* will understand how a simple attendance of Noemí's poster session brought conversations and connections on several levels. Within no time, Noemí was invited to Lorena and Kara's Spanish conversation session one week as the first international guest. From there, a trip to the National Steinbeck Center with Noemí was arranged the day before she left as an opportunity to have learn up close the classic California and American author, John Steinbeck, that she had read and learned about back home in Galicia. The outing was supposed to be in English, but it became a cultural learning event for her as much as a bi-lingual interaction.

Image 1. Noemí Castelo Veiga in front of John Steinbeck's House

From the first international guest to the Spanish conversation session and the impromptu Spanish-English language interaction came the idea to organize a Spanish-English Language Exchange via California, USA and Galicia, Spain.

Noemí wanted to support our Spanish language development, as she was surprised at our proficiency level and commitment to each other. In the process of simple interactions, it was learned that Noemí is not only an academic writer, but she also enjoys poetry and has written so many poems. As a young woman, she considerable insight that she can share with her language exchange partners, preceding her by decades.

(Cont.)

Image 2. Noemí Castelo Veiga at an exhibit at the John Steinbeck Center

The Spanish-English Language Exchange

Each proficiency level consists of a range of language function profiles, as depicted below (Image 3) in the ACTFL proficiency scale representation. Although there are four proficiency bands, within the bands there are variations in the performance of the linguistic criteria ascribe to the level. For the three authors, we were all at a minimum of an ACTFL Intermediate level (i.e., ILR Level 2, CEFR B1), which permitted us to address social topics with regard to describing facts and to varying degrees societal concepts, phenomena and their impacts.

The sessions to a large degree became therapeutic in that we were not only practicing and using the two languages, but we were also required to read, watch and/or listen to content outside of our regular domains to prepare for the language exchange sessions, which expanded our engagement with the world (i.e., moving beyond our routine world). The online discussion sessions expanded out views, as we listened to one another. We at times discussed topics unknown to one or more in the group, due the generational/age differences among the three of us. These topics were welcomed for the expansion of our individual awareness. Some example topics were: stem cell research/genetic modification research, the role of industrialization on consumerism and the environment, globalization and its impact on local development, etc.
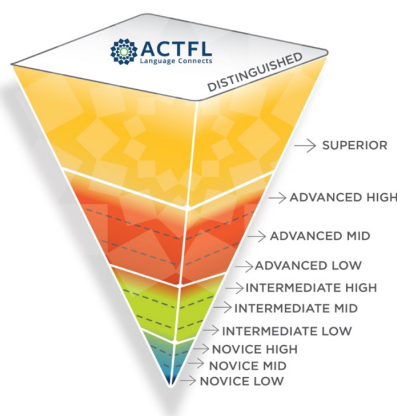

Image 3. ACTFL Proficiency Scale   (Cont.)

The fondness we found in the acquaintanceship at the beginning became a gratitude for the friendship fostered by addressing societal issues that intersected with us reflecting on and sharing our own personal values and beliefs.

Image 4. Screen Capture of an Online English-Spanish Exchange Meeting

Growth Beyond Language Proficiency

Lorena's Account

My purpose for joining the English-Spanish exchange with Kara and Noemi was to increase my fluency in the Spanish language and to share our cultural backgrounds with one another. Our conversations begin on a current event which then, almost always, leads us into sharing our perspectives and opinions on similar topics.

I find the discussions in Spanish challenging as I am learning to use vocabulary that I typically do not use when communicating with my family, close friends, and work associates. This challenge has encouraged me to ask my fluent Spanish speaking relatives and friends to communicate with me (verbally and written) in Spanish. I've noticed that I can "switch" into Spanish a lot quicker now that I've been practicing the language more frequently.

Overall, my online English-Spanish exchange with Kara and Noemi has been a positive learning experience. I'm grateful for the opportunity and for the relationship we have developed. It's a great feeling knowing our meetings are a safe platform for me to express my thoughts in both English and Spanish.

Noemí's Account

I would like to start these lines by thanking my language exchange partners, Kara and Lorena. Thank you for allowing me to be part of this wonderful multicultural and transnational online learning adventure, already started by you months before. Thank you from the bottom of my heart! I had the pleasure of meeting Kara at last year's Fall CATESOL Conference near Oakland (California, USA), through Professor Ondine Gage, whom I appreciate very much. I met Lorena a little later, through Kara, when I was still in the USA.   (Cont.)

Yes, dear readers, I went to the United States, but I am not from there. I am from Spain, from the north, where it rains a lot, by the way. Specifically, I was born in a small town in the Galician community called Ponteareas. I set foot on U.S. soil last year for academic reasons, in order to do an international stay for my Education PhD. With this, you may intuit that I am an educator or that my work is related to education. Yes, you are not wrong. I am a social educator, a profession practically unknown in North America. Social educators work in different areas to promote the integration and inclusion of all members of society. We can work in the prison system, in schools, in homes for the elderly, in adult literacy programs, in the field of disabilities or addictions, etc. In short, our fields and groups of socio-educational intervention are very diverse. Even more so in today's multicultural societies.

Obviously, my profession, like any other, requires adequate and continuous training, beyond a degree or a master's degree. That is why I am not only pursuing a PhD, but I have also made an international stay during the third year of it, in order to broaden my knowledge and enrich my soul. And boy, am I getting it, because in addition to my language immersion experience in the United States, I have other intercultural experiences once back in my country, such as this one. Thanks to this online exchange with Kara and Lorena, both residents of California, I have been able to improve my English level. A matter of great importance for my professional development, since English has become a global language, able to connect people from different parts of the world.

However, with this exchange I have not only obtained linguistic improvements, but much more than that. Through each topic, each conversation, each disagreement, each shared opinion or each laugh I have been able to get to know a little more about my colleagues, to know how they express their cultures through their language, to understand how the topics discussed affect them and, in the encounter with them, I have been able to know myself a little better. These online sessions of intercultural dialogic interaction have made it possible for a shared identity to blossom in my person, while at the same time allowing me to further develop my intercultural competence (knowledge, skills and attitudes), helping me to communicate with the other from a reflexive point of view. Therefore, I can only say, thank you and keep on learning!
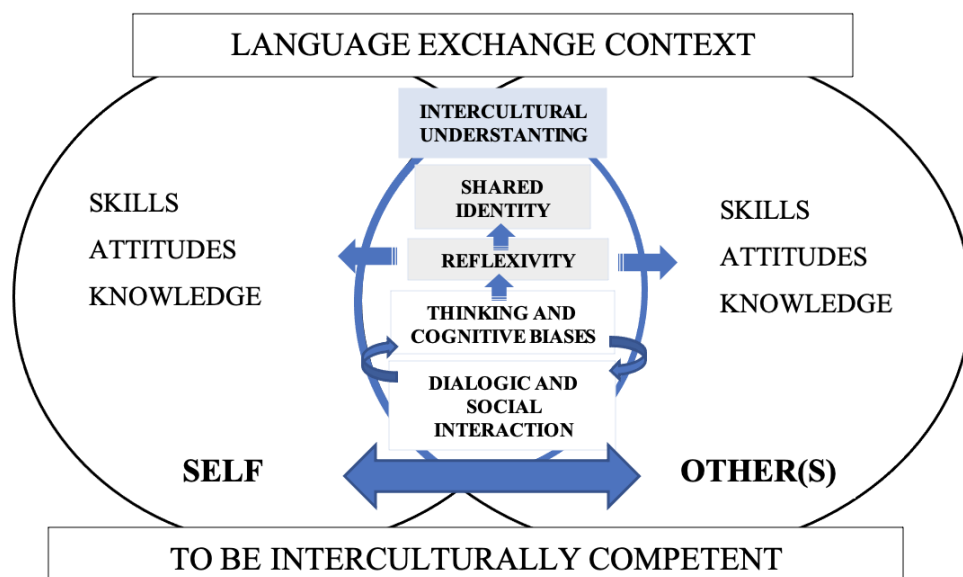

Figure 2. Developing intercultural understanding in language exchanges
Source: Own elaboration based on Einfalt et al. (2022) and Matthews (2020)

Kara's Account

I'm gregarious. I'm a connector, bringing individuals together who can mutually leverage each other's skills. I'm a teacher educator. I'm, so much more, but the English-Spanish language exchange just seemed like a logical opportunity having the connection with Lorena and with Noemí, although through very distinct contexts. The intent, for me, as the exchange organizer was to foster opportunities for each of us to practice and meaningfully use the foreign language (i.e., English or Spanish). The plan was to continue with news articles from Spanish speaking countries and/or communities (i.e., material at the ACTFL - Advanced Low; ILR – 2; CEFR-B1), but with the ability to discuss these events to varying degrees with elements of the next highest level. However, as adults and with understanding of where and/or how individual events intersect with broader social, cultural, or historical contexts, the discussions of news events among us rarely stayed within concrete realms of discussion as we naturally linked them to our social factors, political influences, etc. From there, I shifted the selection of news media content to social issues that could be addressed with a local context, but could also be addressed more conceptually (i.e., concept not linked to a region or country). Naturally, each of us were using our ILR Level 2/2+ (i.e., Advanced Low-Mid, B1-B2) to discuss issues that would be associated with Level 3/3 (i.e., Advanced High, C1).
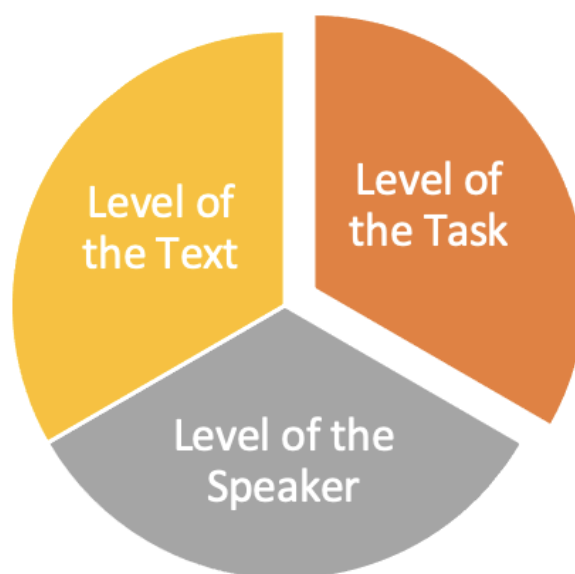

Figure 3: Instructional Considerations

As a graduate student, mother, and teacher, we all know as second language speakers and also learners, we know that we come to any language learning experience or real-world use of the language with all our world knowledge.

I think one valuable factor, among many that created a synergy, that has influenced the success of the language exchange is that we all were able to address topics of interest to us as local and global citizens, that regardless of knowledge of the topic, and/or the lexical and structural components of the language, we engaged as our adult selves with each other. The focus on language become secondary to the discussion of relevant worldly issues and need for each of us to express ourselves, regardless of similar of differing views educators, and researchers from marginalized communities to study language and linguistics. (Cont.)

Member Submission IV (Cont.)

The focus on language become secondary to the discussion of relevant worldly issues and need for each of us to express ourselves, regardless of similar of differing views.

The discussion around the balance between a focus on form (i.e., grammar) and meaning (i.e., communication) is situation and learner dependent. For our language exchange, to some degree form was never a focus. A lexical focus emerged early on, but by the time the exchange began to flourish based on the nature of the content material for discussions, the critical thought of whatever was shared was what was valued (i.e,, sharing of unknown cultural, social, political, historical and geographical information in all forms), with a secondary focus on lexical acquisition for each of our personal needs.

Reflecting on this experience has prompted me to also check in with myself as a pre-service and in-service teacher trainer. Nothing stated above in new to foreign language pedagogy as factors in part for effective instruction. However, being the learner is one specific context offers insight nonetheless.

Image 5: Group Screen Capture of an Online English-Spanish Exchange Meeting

What Makes a Language Exchange Meaningful and Sustainable

We suppose that anyone could google how to set up a language exchange for success, but we offer some recommendations that worked for us. Full disclosure up front, we didn't go into the language exchange with an establish format or set of parameters. They emerged quickly at the outset. We believe that they emerged as they did as we all had a sincere interest to invest our time and to full respect for each person's language ability and personal views. Without explicitly stating it, our language exchanges were a safe space for sharing and a space for risk taking to try language production. We believe that has been the foundation of what made everything else function effectively.

Our recommendations are:

1. **Create a safe space** for different viewpoints and accept all language levels of proficiency as a legitimate and respected form of expression. In doing so, the whole individual is respected and feels respected.
2. **Formally or informally identify a language exchange coordinator**. This role can alternate as the group desires, or not. However, there needs to be a point of contact that will (Cont.)

organize the content and topics for the language exchange and initiate the sessions.

3. **Identify a turn taking pattern** if the group is large. If the group is small, this is less needed.

4. **Establish a meeting time that is the same for all sessions and convenient for all members.** This is very important because in exchanges, especially international exchanges, there may be a time difference between members. For example, in our case there is a 9-hour difference between California, USA and Galicia, Spain.

5. **Develop a sense of mutual commitment to the language exchange.** In order for the exchange to be successful and for the sessions to last over time, it is essential that all members are committed to the topics being discussed (read and research them) and to the people participating (active listening and involvement in all sessions).

The journey's that language/s offer us.

Image 6. Noemí and Kara at an exhibit at the John Steinbeck Center

Conclusion

We are very satisfied with what we have learned from our online English-Spanish language exchange sessions. We have been able to improve our skills in the respective languages, forge the foundations for a beautiful relationship of friendship and form ourselves as global citizens through the development of our critical consciousness. While we are aware that Global Citizenship Training never ends, on the contrary, it is a constant and necessary utopia of cognitive, socioemotional and behavioral learning dimensions (these dimensions have been collected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2014, cited in Byker and Putman, 2018). Either way, in the different sessions, whether to a greater or lesser extent, we believe we have walked through this utopia and its dimensions. We have been able to address global issues from different conceptual and referential frameworks, which has led us to make a critical analysis of global, national and local inequalities not only with our eyes, but with those of others. This has allowed us to develop respect, empathy and improve our intercultural communication skills and participation in each session. Some of us are miles apart, others we have different professions or generations, but we have all felt a common part of something. We have to keep in mind that beyond languages, cultures, religions or countries there are universal values, such as justice or equality. They belong to everyone and it is up to us as citizens to safe- guard them, regardless of where we dwell in the world. (Cont.)

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CATESOL 2024 Annual Conference

Call for Proposals

Empowering Voices: Bridging Communities through Civic Learning and Digital Literacies

This is a Call for Proposals for the **CATESOL 2024 State Conference**, to be held at **California State University Los Angeles** (Los Angeles, CA) on **November 14-16, 2024** (on November 14, we will offer a virtual plenary session and virtual invited workshops and panels; on November 15 and 16, the conference will be fully in-person).

Proposals for the 2024 Annual Conference are due **Sunday, June 30, 2024** at 11:59 pm Pacific.

CATESOL members and nonmembers are invited to submit proposals for presentations.

We expect many submissions, and unfortunately, we cannot accept them all. Please review the guidelines and rubric at https://bit.ly/CATESOLStateProposal2024. We look forward to reviewing your proposals and appreciate your submission.

New to writing conference proposals? Refer to this link for helpful tips on writing one: bit.ly/catesol422-workshop

CATESOL 2024 State Conference Proposal Form
https://mms.catesol.org/members/proposals/propselect.php?orgcode=CTSL&prid=1313329

For any questions, please email: conference24@catesol.org.

Teaching of Pronunciation Interest Group (TOP-IG):[44] Task-based Language Teaching to Promote Oral Communication

Linh Phung

Description

With 1.5 billion English speakers in the world, the status of English as a lingua franca is widely recognized (Ethnologue, 2023). In addition, it's clear that one main goal of many English learners is to be able to communicate internationally as global citizens. However, among the different language skills, speaking is difficult to master especially when there's generally a lack of opportunities for authentic communication inside and outside the classroom in many contexts. While governments, teacher associations, and publishers have been promoting communicative language teaching, there are challenges to implement it for various reasons. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) offers a principled approach to making language lessons and classes more communicative and meaning-focused because tasks may offer learners more compelling reasons to communicate in pairs or in groups. In this webinar, the presenters will introduce the audience to TBLT by introducing the four criteria of tasks (Ellis, 2013), presenting different task types, and sharing specific examples of tasks that she has successfully used in the classroom and in an app. With specific criteria, a systematic taxonomy of tasks, and well-designed materials as examples, teachers will be able to develop their own tasks that are relevant to their curriculum and their students' interests to encourage authentic language use in the classroom.

Bio

Dr. Linh Phung is a dedicated educator, innovator, and bilingual writer. With Eduling, she leads a cross-functional team of IT developers, content developers, and designers in the development of Eduling Speak, an app that connects learners to talk in pairs based on 1200+ communicative tasks and games. She has published a number of academic articles in high-impact journals and presented widely at conferences. Some of her published books include IELTS Speaking Part 2, Four Seasons Together (a picture book), and Spanish Learning Games.

Check the CATESOL website for upcoming IG events!

Did you recently attend an Interest Group (IG) Meeting?

Share the content to keep your IG members up to date by writing an IG report for the CATESOL Newsletter.

Member Submission V & VI—Overview of Diagnostic Assessment in Language Teaching

Hiba Al Ghabra

The following two articles, Member Submission III and IV are by three authors teaching at the same school, where Diagnostic Assessment is a regular part of instructional practice. We share an overview of what Diagnostic Assessment is and how to implement it in your classroom. Understanding that the number of students ELL classrooms are often quite large, and not as small as our classroom, we want to highlight that the practice is most often conducted on students at different points in the course and not all at once. Additionally, this practice is often only conducted on a select number of students for a specific purpose. For example, if a student is performing below the expected level, the process can help specifically identify which elements of the language in each skill or in one specific skills he/she may need to focus on or it may inform how differentiated instruction in the classroom can be implemented to better support that student. It can also, for example, be used on a student that is performing well, but may need to reach a particular score of the TEOFL or IELTS that he/she has not yet been able to meet. The process again can assist the student and teachers to be able to focus in on specific areas to support the student.

Diagnostic Assessment

The authors will share more about what Diagnostic Assessment in language teaching and learning is. Yet as an overview it is an established practice to systematically identify what a leaner can do and can not yet to based on a set criterion (i.e., TESOL, ACTFL, CEFR, ILR standards) to identify the gap of specific language functions the learner needs to attend to in order to reach the next highest proficiency level.

Various forms and approaches of formative assessment are used by ELL teachers. Many may be using Diagnostic Assessment as is a well founded approach in ESL/ELT.

Some Prominent Work on the Topic

> **Towards a Theory of Diagnosis in Second and Foreign Language Assessment: Insights from Professional Practice Across Diverse Fields.** Alderson, J.C., Brunfaut, T., & Harding, L. (2015). *Applied Linguistics*, *36*(2), May 2015, Pages 236–260, https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amt046

> **Cognitive diagnosis approaches to language assessment. An overview**. Lee, Y.W. & Sawaki, Y. (2009). *Language Assessment Quarterly, 6*(3) *172-189.* https://doi.org/10.1080/15434300902985108

> **Cognitive styles in the service of language learning**
> Ehrman, M. & Leaver, B.L. (2003). *System, 31*(3), 393-415. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(03)00050-2

> **ESL Teachers and Diagnostic Assessment: Perceptions and Practices** (2019). *ELOPE English Language Overseas Perspectives and Enquiries, 16*(2):33-48. 10.4312/elope.16.2.33-48

Specifically, we share how a pre-assessment or pre-test that evaluates a learner's strengths and weaknesses in various language skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation can help to identify areas where a student may need additional support or intervention, and to provide feedback and guidance for improved performance.

Member Submission V — Enhancing Language Learning through Diagnostic Assessment: Features and Strategies

Hiba Al Ghabra

What is Diagnostic Assessment?

Diagnostic assessment in language learning refers to a comprehensive evaluation process used to identify a learner's current proficiency, strengths, and areas needing improvement in various language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Unlike summative assessments, which evaluate student performance at the end of an instructional period, diagnostic assessments are typically conducted at the beginning or during the learning process to guide and inform instructors about whether they should adjust their instructions in classroom in order to tackle students' learning challenges.

Key features of diagnostic assessment

Diagnostic assessment in language learning is characterized by several key features. Firstly, if it is done at the beginning of the course, it helps measure learner's initial language proficiency level, and this in turn assist teachers in planning their wholistic future teaching instructional strategies.

Conducting the assessment in the middle of the course helps teachers pinpoints the students' areas of strength and weakness, giving a clear picture of their abilities. The feedback provided following the assessment guides teachers to create personalized instruction tailored to their students' needs and learning styles. Furthermore, it facilitates ongoing monitoring, allowing for continuous assessment and teachers can adjust their teaching methods to ensure effective learning progress.

How to implement diagnostic assessment in classroom

Implementing diagnostic assessment in a language classroom involves several key steps to ensure it effectively informs instruction and supports student learning, both at the beginning and throughout the course. Firstly, it is crucial to clearly identify the learning objectives and the skills that need to be assessed, such as listening, speaking, reading, etc. This assessment can be done in the form of formally like tests or quizzes or informally during class or as part of homework or via self-assessment questionnaires

Keep in mind that these assessments should be administered in a comfortable and non-threatening environment to reduce student anxiety.

Once the initial assessments are conducted, the results should be carefully analyzed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual students and the class as a whole. Using rubrics or standardized scoring methods can assist in this analysis. The rubric should cover the language skills that needs to be assessed (listening, reading, speaking, and writing, and grammar). Based on the results, teachers should devise an action plan to address the learning gaps that were identified and make sure to maintain students' strengths. This action plan may involve tailored homework and tutoring. As for inside classroom, it can involve grouping students by proficiency levels and tailoring instructional strategies according to their linguistic needs.

Throughout the course, ongoing diagnostic assessment should be integrated to closely monitor and support student progress. This can be achieved by using informal assessments, such as quizzes, exit tickets, peer assessments, and classroom discussions. Following the assessment, immediate feedback should be provided to the students. It is done by providing students with specific and actionable advice and encouraging self-assessment and reflection to promote autonomous learning. Mid-course assessments, which are more formal, should also be conducted to evaluate progress and reassess skills initially identified as weak in order to determine any adjustment of their learning plan. (Cont.)

Tracking students' progress should also involve checking the quality of their homework and their class participation. Any development in the students' performance should be document in their file for future references. Besides adjusting students' learning plan, classroom instruction should also be adjusted continuously based on the ongoing assessment results to address any emerging needs. This may involve modifying lesson plans and adding differentiated instruction that cater to different learning styles and proficiency levels.

Things to consider in the process

Creating a supportive learning environment where mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities and encouraging collaboration and peer support can build student confidence and competence. Furthermore, utilizing technological tools such as language learning apps and platforms that offer diagnostic features and track progress over time can enhance the assessment process. Examples include Quizlet, Padlet, and Book Widget. and language-specific software. Finally, having a portfolio for each student, where students keep their work, can help them reflect on their learning journey.

Another vital component in this process is communication. It is best to involve students in discussing assessment results and setting individual goals and action plans together.

We also need to keep in mind that collaboration with our colleagues and fellow teachers is also important, since sharing expertise and strategies can improve the assessment. Lastly, participating in professional development events can help teachers stay updated on effective diagnostic assessment and other pedagogical methods. By implementing these strategies, teachers can create a language learning environment that supports students based on their evolving needs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, diagnostic assessment enables timely interventions and ensures that all academic resources are focused where they are needed most in terms of students' linguistic needs. It also fosters continuous improvement through ongoing feedback, motivating students, and providing clear direction for their learning journey. Ultimately, this creates a more supportive learning environment that pushes students to better their academic performance and deepen their language learning awareness.

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Member Submission VI — Optimizing Language Learning: The Power of Diagnostic Assessments

Ragaa Shenouda & Onsy Shenouda

It is essential that teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs) consistently diagnose their students' strengths and weaknesses as early on as possible when entering a language course (Farhady & Selcuk, 2022). Notably this can be challenging when ELLs come to language and school programs that they will participate in for a variety of lengths of instruction, as well as will varying L1 as English literacy skills.

Nonetheless, the practice of Diagnostic Assessment, whether formal or informal, can significantly facilitate the tailoring of differentiated instruction to grouped or individual needs or, at the very least, aids in planning class activities that align with the general skill levels of the entire class. However, this pedagogical insight is often easier said than done. Many teachers forgo diagnostics as the time and manpower is not available, hoping they will get to know their students' abilities over time.

Definition of Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessment comprises formal and informal assessments designed to identify what students know and do not know. These assessments aim to help teachers pinpoint students' current knowledge and skills in different domains, thus supporting their learning (Jang & Sinclair, 2021). This approach enables teachers to understand students' comprehension levels, allowing them to build on strengths and address specific needs. There are five main types of language assessments: aptitude, placement, achievement, proficiency tests, and diagnostic assessments. Each type plays a crucial role in the educational landscape, empowering teachers to tailor instruction effectively and promote student success. Assessments can range from quick, simple learning checks, such as student questioning, to comprehensive final exams that meet all requirements for awarding a qualification (Jang & Sinclair, 2021).

Theory of Assessment for Learning

The concept of diagnostic assessment is rooted in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), a theory of learning and development proposed by Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist and a pioneer in educational research. Vygotsky defined the ZPD as the distance between the developmental level determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Silalahi, 2019). Essentially, Vygotsky believed that every person has two stages of skill development: one they can achieve independently and one they can reach with the help of an experienced mentor or teacher. The ZPD represents the space between what a learner can do without assistance and what they can accomplish with guidance or collaboration.

Understanding where students are in their learning journey enables teachers to utilize the ZPD concept effectively, moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach to a more time-efficient, customized instructional strategy. This approach aims to maintain high expectations and facilitate maximized growth for every student relative to grade-level outcomes.

Diagnostic Assessment into Practice

Implementing diagnostic assessment theory involves using various tools and strategies to gather information about student's prior knowledge, skills, and misconceptions before instruction begins. This understanding allows educators to tailor their teaching to meet students' needs. Diagnostic assessments can take many forms, including pre-tests, surveys, interviews, and observations. The

data collected informs instructional planning, enabling educators to design learning experiences that build on students' existing knowledge and address areas of weakness. Additionally, diagnostic assessments provide valuable feedback for both students and teachers, promoting ongoing reflection and adjustment of teaching strategies. Ultimately, this approach fosters more personalized and responsive instruction, enhancing student learning outcomes.

Benefits of Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessments offer significant benefits to teachers in the classroom. They enable more effective and targeted instruction by helping teachers understand students' prior knowledge and recognize misconceptions. This understanding allows for personalized learning and differentiation of instruction to meet diverse needs. By informing instructional planning, diagnostic data enable the creation of targeted lesson plans and set clear, achievable learning goals. This approach improves student engagement by making content more relevant and boosting students' confidence through tailored support (Farhady & Selcuk, 2022). Additionally, diagnostic assessments enhance feedback and communication, providing specific, actionable insights for students and parents. They also facilitate classroom management through effective grouping and appropriate pacing of instruction. Continuous use of diagnostics allows for ongoing monitoring of student progress and reflective teaching practices. Practical applications include establishing baselines, designing intervention strategies, rotating flexible groups, and identifying areas for professional development, ultimately creating a more dynamic and responsive learning environment that leads to better educational outcomes.

Conclusion

Incorporating diagnostic assessments in Foreign Language education is crucial for establishing an adaptable and successful learning environment. These assessments offer valuable insights that enable educators to customize their teaching methods to accommodate the varied needs of students. Teachers can cultivate a more inclusive and fruitful language learning experience through ongoing assessment and individualized attention. Ultimately, diagnostic assessments are about gauging proficiency and guiding students toward realizing their full potential in language acquisition.

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From Practice to Publication Tips for Graduate Students and Teachers, Michelle (Soonhyang) Kim as Special Column Series Editor, Receiving Manuscript Feedback Prior to Journal Submission

Melissa Salek

I love to write, but I am not fond of editing my own work. In my imagination, ideas would flow from my mind onto the paper, with the resulting article immediately ready for publication. One draft and done. In reality, writing for publication requires layers of reviews, editing, and feedback. While I understand the importance of editing, I find this process tedious. However, I have grown in my skills as both a reviewer and recipient of feedback during my own publication journey. The purpose of this article is not only to share methods I have used to review my work, but also to provide some lessons learned about receiving feedback.

Benefits of Peer Feedback

When I was in graduate school, I never really thought I needed or had time for peer feedback. After all, the first line of review is self-editing. I was familiar with several different techniques such as reading the paper aloud or challenging myself to see if I can say the same thing in fewer words: something that is difficult for someone like me who tends to rely on long sentences. I wrote well enough to pass my classes, and I did not always leave enough time to have others read my drafts. However, self-editing has some limits. For example, while I thought I thoroughly reviewed my paper by reading it several times, my submitted paper would be returned with plenty of errors circled in red or green ink. I often would miss simple typos, even though I had thoroughly reviewed my writing. I still remember how mortified I was to realize I had written *collage* in the title of the essay on why I wanted to attend *college*. Also, I would feel like I was clear with my wording, only to be disappointed that the other reader had no idea what I was talking about. I thought my manuscript was done, only to find out how much more work was needed. I would often feel defensive about what I had written, not as receptive as I should have been to other's constructive criticism. Upon reflection, however, I can now see the gift that feedback can be.

I have discovered that receiving and revising based on feedback is an essential part of preparing a manuscript for publication. One benefit of having peer feedback is that I gained perspective from the readers' points of view. An additional benefit was to have someone to help me think through my ideas. For example, sometimes I struggled to understand or make connections with information I read in journal articles while doing my research. My reviewers helped me to identify errors or different points of view and brainstormed with me how to best integrate, assimilate, and communicate what I had discovered through the research process. As echoed by other writers, I found that my peer reviewers provided an invaluable service to me that truly was a gift (Hirst et al, 2019; Syeda et al, 2020). They provided me with an objective perspective that widened my point of view, improved my writing skills through constructive feedback, and challenged me to produce quality work.

Receiving Peer Feedback

I understand how beneficial feedback is to my success as a writer, being open to that feedback is something I have had to work on over time. While I appreciated my reviewers' time and effort, it was not always easy to hear what they had to say. On one hand, if feedback was delivered with harshness or if I was not mentally prepared to receive extensive or critical recommendations, I felt defeated, especially if I had given a good effort. On the other hand, reviewers who provided me with a blanket statement praising my writing may have boosted my ego, but proved to not be helpful. Without specific feedback, I did not know what to correct or how to best make the revisions. There were times when the feedback left me so discouraged that I wondered if I should continue to pursue publication.

Revising a manuscript to get ready for submission is something I still struggle with; however, I decided that it is well worth the risk to seek feedback from others. As Hirst et al (2019) pointed out,

> Fear that the writing is not good enough for publication, fear that others might think less of the writer, or fear of rejection are reasons for delays in writing and publication success. Successful writers learn that when it comes to writing, criticism is a "kindness." Those hoping to publish should find the "kindest" colleagues possible to obtain their feedback. Responding appropriately to honest, helpful feedback on content, style, and clarity greatly increase the possibility that a manuscript will be accepted by reviewers and subsequently published (p.12).

Following what Hirst said, I have also found that this feedback has been invaluable for me as a novice researcher, and I am grateful that I have found a writing group in which I have found "kind" peers who provide the honest feedback I need to grow as a writer.

Finding Peer Reviewers

Finding peers to review my papers was easy in graduate school when the professor set up review groups and required classmates to participate. Now that I am out of school and into the professional world, it is not as easy to find people who are willing to help me review my manuscripts. However, reviewers do not have to be classmates. A reviewer is simply anyone who is willing to help, even if they are not familiar with your subject. For example, I drafted friends or family members to read my compositions aloud while I listened. I could hear when the cadence of a sentence sounded off and could then make the appropriate correction. I also benefited when I read my research aloud to my husband. While he was not familiar with the subject, he helped me to write in a way that could more easily be understood.

Sharing your ideas with peers familiar with your subject also is valuable, though as a novice teacher, I was at first unclear how to find someone who would be willing to assist. I discovered that asking a colleague at work was a good place to start. On-line groups, such as the writing group I have been working with on this series of articles, are an additional option. Professional associations and training are another way to find peers who have similar interests who may be interested in participating in a one-on-one or group research or writing forum.

Presenting at a conference is another way to facilitate discussion of and feedback for your ideas. I have been fortunate to have been able to participate in conferences both as a workshop presenter and in research poster sessions. Unfortunately, the research poster sessions were not well attended, especially when the conferences had to go virtual due to Covid; however, it was still useful to prepare the poster. Condensing and consolidating information onto the poster and preparing a two-minute accompanying presentation forced me to be concise in my wording and ideas. I found the presentations to be much more helpful and fun as I could build in time for intentional interaction with the attendees through questions and discussions. I especially benefited from small research-specific conferences such as my presentation with the Australia and New Zealand Association for Research in Music Education (Salek, 2021). In this format, I was given twenty minutes to present to other music education students and researchers, with ten minutes for discussion. I remain grateful for the invigorating and challenging discussion that ensued, pushing me to critically analyze my conclusions by incorporating compelling points of view. Apart from the interactions with my editor, which will be shared in a subsequent article, participating in this conference was one of the most valuable ways that I received feedback on my research.

Creating a Safe Space for Feedback

No matter who you choose as your peer reviewers, trust and a safe environment form the foundation of a successful peer review experience. It may take some trial and error to find peer reviewers with whom you can work in a mutually beneficial way. Several authors recommend ways in which peer review groups work best. First, there must be mutual trust between participants, with interactions that build the relationships of trust that set the stage for future manuscript review interactions and support groups. When I feel safe to express my ideas in a group, I can better understand that feedback is for the intention of improving the final product, and is "not a personal attack" (Nolan & Rocco, 2009, p. 268). Second, the initial discomfort in giving and receiving feedback is worth the reward. For example, students who had their manuscripts critiqued in front of their class found this to be a valuable experience as they learn not only to see their own mistakes, but also be able to identify how to make the corrections in both their own and their peers' work (Nolan & Rocco, 2009). This in turn built their own skills as critical reviewers, which "helps novice authors see their own work through the eyes of a reader" (ibid, p. 270). Last, participation in a peer review group provides a "scaffolding process of learning to write in a scholarly fashion" (Chittum & Bryant, 2014, p. 475). In a successful peer review group, we are not only learning when we receive feedback, we are building our skills by proving well thought through criticisms of our peers' manuscripts. Perhaps the most important aspect of a peer review group is a sense of community, where we mutually respect and encourage each other along our publication journeys.

Revising my class projects for journal submission challenged me to go beyond self-editing to a much more collaborative approach. The process of upgrading my manuscript for publication required me to "develop reflective writing skills" (Nolan & Rocco, 2009, p. 267), but sharing my ideas and writing with peers enabled refinement of these skills. By being open to feedback, I gained support and encouragement. Review sessions became something I looked forward to as it not only provided insight on my critical writing skills, but also a sense of community and friendship. By ascertaining the benefits of peer and professional feedback, I also found myself more reflective in my teaching observations and a more effective teacher as I analyzed and implemented relevant improvements in my classroom, an idea that I may explore more in the future. This connection between editing feedback and teacher feedback encourages me to consider sharing my experience in an additional article in the future, which will inevitably mean that I would receive the gift of critical feedback.While writing may seem like a solitary activity, I have found that it takes a village to produce my best work. It is my hope that you may also find a sense of mutual support and community with your village of peer reviewers.

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Biography
Melissa Salek, MM, MPA, MME, is a California State University Long Beach alumni and recent graduate of the University of North Florida. She is the 2021 recipient of the international ANZARME Doreen Bridges Award for Post-Graduate Research and has presented workshops and poster sessions at state, national, and international conferences. Her research has been published in *Research Perspectives in Music Education* and the *Sunshine TESOL Journal*. She is an arts administrator and beginning band director at a private K-12 school and was previously an elementary general music teacher.

CATESOL 2024 State Conference November 14-16 at CSULA

SAVE THE DATE!
CALL For Proposals
June 30, 2024

Empowering Voices: Bridging Communities through Civic Learning and Digital Literacies

This is a Call for Proposals for the **CATESOL 2024 State Conference**, to be held at **California State University Los Angeles** (Los Angeles, CA) on **November 14-16, 2024** (on November 14, we will offer a virtual plenary session and virtual invited workshops and panels; on November 15 and 16, the conference will be fully in-person).

Proposals for the 2024 Annual Conference are due **Sunday, June 30, 2024** at 11:59 pm Pacific.

CATESOL members and nonmembers are invited to submit proposals for presentations.

We expect many submissions, and unfortunately, we cannot accept them all. Please review the guidelines and rubric at https://bit.ly/CATESOLStateProposal2024. We look forward to reviewing your proposals and appreciate your submission.

New to writing conference proposals? Refer to this link for helpful tips on writing one: bit.ly/catesol422-workshop

CATESOL 2024 State Conference Proposal Form
https://mms.catesol.org/members/proposals/propselect.php?orgcode=CTSL&prid=1313329

Student Voices — Student Socio-Cultural Knowledge and Intercultural Competence Development through Online Cross-Country Language Learning (OCCLL)– Part I

Kara Mac Donald, with Jieun Chung and Hye Ryn (Lynn) Noh

I first became acquainted with Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) when I, as editor of the CATESOL Newsletter, invited a colleague and CATESOL member, Ondine Gage, in 2021 to contribute a piece of her interest to an upcoming issue of the newsletter (Issue 54-3, pp.10-13). I was familiar with the term COIL but learned more about the rationale and foundations for connecting students and educators in higher education across different cultures, countries and languages to foster collaborative projects and discussions. As an educational approach it has become increasingly common (Kastler & Kyle, 2020) within higher education to expand and internationalize the universities' curriculum, while fostering students' intercultural competence (Rubin, 2017). Through this colleague and CATESOL member, I also became acquainted with the State University of New York (SUNY) COIL developed in the early 2000s, as well as subsequent work on the framework (Kawai, 2021). My experience and knowledge were also raised when I was invited to contribute an introductory chapter for a book on COIL (forthcoming) edited by Ondine Gage.

These experiences got me interested in COIL and how it may inform the field's future practices for teaching and learning, and possibly my own.

Overview of Collaborative Online Learning (COIL) in Higher Education

With the globalization of the world economy in the 1990s, so followed the opportunity for an internationally connected academic community to communicate and collaborate not only more easily but more readily. Simultaneously, web-based platforms for learning (i.e., Blackboard, etc.) were also being launched, which was followed by research and guidance within the field regarding instructional practice guidelines in the online environment (Rubin, 2017). These advancements permitted overseas student enrollment in a U.S. university and vice versa. However, the initial platforms did not permit collaboration among all participants. The dissemination of information was one way: access to course content as a recipient of information as a student in an online course. As technology progressed and Web 2.0 and beyond platforms were introduced, this prompted and permitted some academics to establish international online collaboration among academics and their students. Initially, these endeavors were not formally incorporated within university instructional programs and frameworks. They were managed and operated outside of the formal procedures of international offices on campuses (Rubin, 2017).

There have been different terms to refer to similar practices at different times. O'Dowd (2018) referred to it as Online International Education (OIE) but began as telecommunication in the 1990s. Guth & Helm (2011), post pandemic, has termed the practice as Virtual Exchange or International Virtual Exchange (IVE). The later, IVE, being utilized to distinguish international students enrolling in an in-house virtual classroom. The precursor frameworks to the COIL framework developed by the SUNY COIL Center (2006) and much more information about the evolution of collaborative leaning across international boundaries online can be found in Rubin (2017).

Distance Education Is Far from New

Just to take a step back from the online developments since the 1980s and 1990s, distance education has been prominent in the U.S., the U.K. Australia since the mid 1800's or early 1900's depending. I, myself (first author), taught distance education foreign language courses in the early 2000's to students in remotely located communicatees in the far outback and desert of Australia. (Cont.)

The interactions and discussion among the oldest, Hye Ryn, also Lynn, prompted some creative ideas and discussions. Hye Ryn has always been interested in foreign language, literature and history since she was very young, and has always done well in school. She has always been an avid reader even as a young learner.

This spring Hye Ryn was enrolled in a boarding school as an 8th grader, but the academic rigor in many respects disappointed her. In fact, she asked for her parents to disenroll after about only two months. They did, and she will do home schooling to prepare for university and the associated national exams So Hye Ryn, as before when in elementary school, is looking to engage herself in extracurricular academic activities, and especially around learning and practicing foreign language. Her interests beyond foreign language are history, politics and the intersection of these and as they are expressed in literature.

Hye Ryn shared that she has found it challenging to connect with speakers of these foreign languages. So, I suggested that I work to set up an initial round of meetings in Zoom with speakers of these languages for her to practice her language skills and develop her cultural and historical competences associated with her foreign languages of interest.

Image 1: First Day Entrance into a Boarding Academy

Online Cross-Country Language Learning (OCCLL) Project Initiated

COIL is a specific instructional approach in higher education based on collaboration between instructors in both countries as well the student/s, as well as other factors. In essence the practice is based on a social-constructivist educational approach of collaborative learning and with focus on social interaction to promote learning. With this as social-constructivist lens, I coordinated with Hye Ryn's mother (Jieun Chung), also a foreign language educator, to construct a framework that would offer Hye Ryn the opportunity to interact with native and non-native speakers of the target languages of interest not based in South Korea via zoom, but overseas with objective of foreign language practices and target language (TL) specific socio-cultural content (i.e., literature, current events, history, etc.) and communicative appropriateness (i.e., cultural, social and interactional. The project is not a COIL framework at its core, yet the project does address the factors of collaborative learning through intercultural interaction and communication online. For the description of this project and the sharing of its outcomes, we have termed it *Online Cross-Country Language Learning* (OCCLL).

(Cont.)

Planning the project and the execution of the project this summer has been discussed and we have committed, even Hye Ryn, to making this be successful. Hye Ryn, in fact, is integral to process as much as the educators (i.e., her mother and me). I have identified foreign language educators overseas for the languages of interest: Russian, French, German and Chinese, in her order of interest. Hye Ryn has shared what topics in general she wishes to discuss with the language partner, after general introductions, etc. This is a critical part of the process, so that Hye Ryn is able to discuss social, cultural, and literary topics with the language she has. She wants to get to a *meaty* topic and ask questions and discuss and learn.

The following table below (Table 1) outlines the planned schedule for Stage One of the 2024 Summer project. The specific topics of each session are being finalized now and are not listed. The names or pseudonyms of the instructors are not listed as well, as they will play no part in the reflective student piece to follow this article.

Month and Week	Language Session	Session Time
June Week 1	French	1 Hour
June Week 2	Chinese	1 Hour
June Week 3	Russian	1 Hour
June Week 4	German	1 Hour

Confirmation of sessions with different target language speaking individuals for Stage Two (Table 2) of the summer project are being investigated. Again, the specific topics of each session are being outlined now.

Month and Week	Language Session	Session Time
July Week 1	French	1 Hour
July Week 2	Chinese	1 Hour
July Week 3	Russian	1 Hour
July Week 4	German	1 Hour

In total, Hye Ryn will have 8 hours of online collaborative learning with speaker of the target language outside of Korea over a 9-week period. She will have two hours of practice and interaction with respect to each of the four-target language. n August, all three involved in the project will reflect in the experiences they had, with a particular focus on Hye Ryn's experiences, learning and feedback.

Language Proficiency Frameworks

As readers in the U.S. and Korea are familiar with the TESOL and CEFR frameworks, we offer these as a reference point to note Hye Ryn's language proficiency in each language.

However, the authors only present these framework for readers, as the objectives are for proficiency for Hye Ryn's goals and needed language functions in each language. She is not being assessed formally nor summatively at the end of this summer project. Hye Ryn is assessing herself based on the goals she has for herself, which will generate her autumn academic objectives.

Table 1. TESOL and CEFR Proficiency Level Categories

For speaking proficiency, Hye Ryn is relatively fluent in English (i.e. CEFR B2 Vantage). Her Russian is between low to mid intermediate (i.e. A1 Breakthrough high to A2 Waystage). She has elementary proficiency in French, German and Chinese, with varying proficiency (i.e., CEFR A1 high Breakthrough to A2 Waystage).

With a few hours of interactional foreign language use, Hye Ryn is not going to attain any significantly identifiable level of linguistic proficiency on the stated scales. Such spoken linguistic performance is built overtime systematically. What Hye Ryn desires in meaningful and realistic interaction in the foreign languages. Through discussion of specific topic areas she is interested in discussing, the objective is to develop her social, cultural, and literary topics related to the language she is interested in with her existing proficiency levels.

This will assist in setting her up in part for achieving the next overall language proficiency level.

Conclusion—Implications for ELT and ELLs

The purpose of the project is to informally explore the effectiveness of developing foreign language proficiency of an adolescent via distance education via an online platform (i.e. OCCLL) regarding socio-cultural knowledge and intercultural competence development through a *quasi*-case study experiment.

Based on the experiences and feedback from Hye Ryn, the three authors will develop a second piece, Part II of the article series, that will offer the project's outcomes and recommendations for ELT instructors conduct similar small OCCLL projects to support ELLs in California. As with this piece, Hye Ryn will be an integral part to the discussion, planning, drafting a revision of the article. In the processes, she acquires not only foreign language proficiency, but also a social voice and understanding how to leverage it through publication and community affairs.

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CATESOL Web Manager Communication — **Member Profile Update**

Marsha Chan

Hear ye! Hear ye! CATESOL Members, new and old!

Our Member Profile has undergone a significant improvement, allowing members easier and more direct communication with members who have similar interests, areas of expertise, and physical proximity.

View and edit your new and improved profile

Please log into www.catesol.org with your username and password. If you can't remember your password, click "Forgot your password?" and enter a new one.

After signing in, you will see your **Member Menu**.

On the right you'll see what's already entered in the section **My Profile**.

On the left, in the section **Member Dashboard**, under **Member Information**, click **Change Contact/Profile Info**.
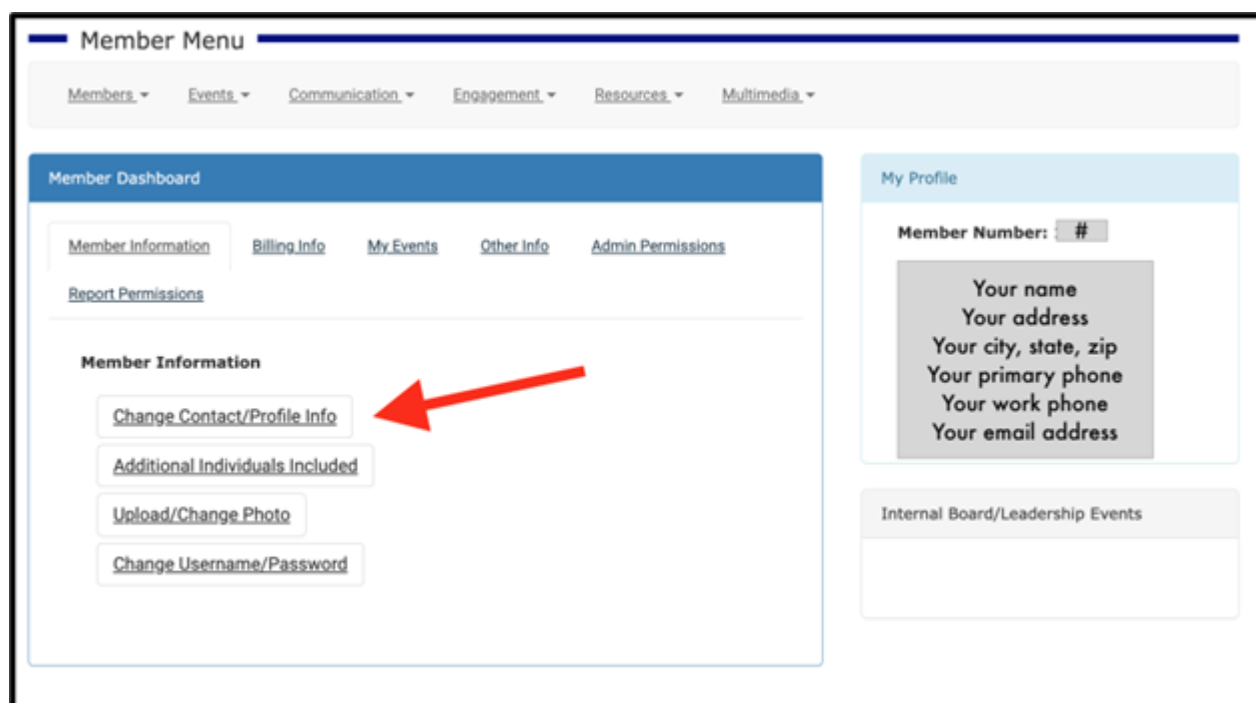
1. Please complete or update your personal and contact information.

2. Indicate your professional position(s) and key in your school or affiliation.

Next select one or more (unlimited) of each of the following categories:

- Levels

- Interest Groups

- Regional Chapters

**Your choices reflect what Message Board messages you get**

Selecting a group in any of the three categories–Levels, Interest Groups, and Chapters–will auto-matically connect you to peers in the identically named **Message Board**, a feature of the associated project/committee (the term used by Memberleap, our association management software). (Cont.)

CATESOL Web Manager Communication—Cont.

In your **Member Menu**, under **Communication**, you may choose **Message Boards** to read, reply to, and begin a new topic in any open CATESOL message board.

In our new and improved set-up, you no longer need to access a message board in this way in order to opt into a group. From now on, it is best–and easiest–to do all of your selections in your Member Profile. At any time, you may access your profile to make changes and update your choices.

"In our new and improved set-up, you no longer need to access a message board in this way in order to opt into a group."
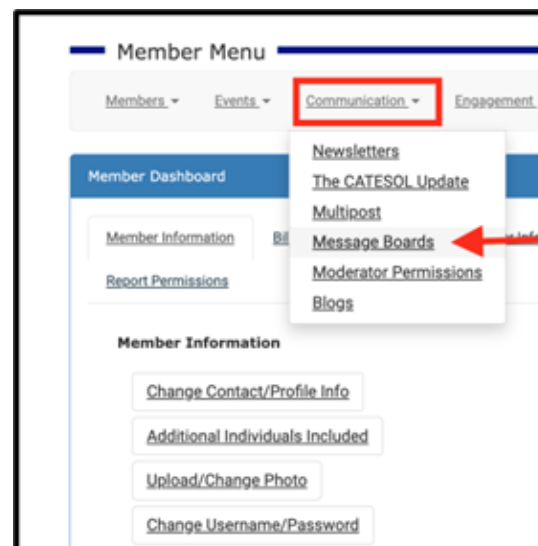
CATESOL Webinar Events—A Lot is Going On

The CATESOL calendar has been packed with recent events in November and December.

Write up an Chapter or Interest Group Report for the March Issue of the CATESOL Newsletter. Let you members know what you are doing and attract more members.

Upcoming Chapters and Interest Group Planned Events for 2024

Write up a short brief for an upcoming Chapter or Interest Group event to advertise events you have planned in 2024. Let you members know what you have planned so they can mark it on their calendar and attract more members.

All Submissions Welcome!

newsletter@catesol.org

Member Submission V—Enhancing the Abilities of ESL Learners[60] Through the Implementation of Differentiated Instruction

Ragaa Shenouda & Onsy Shenouda
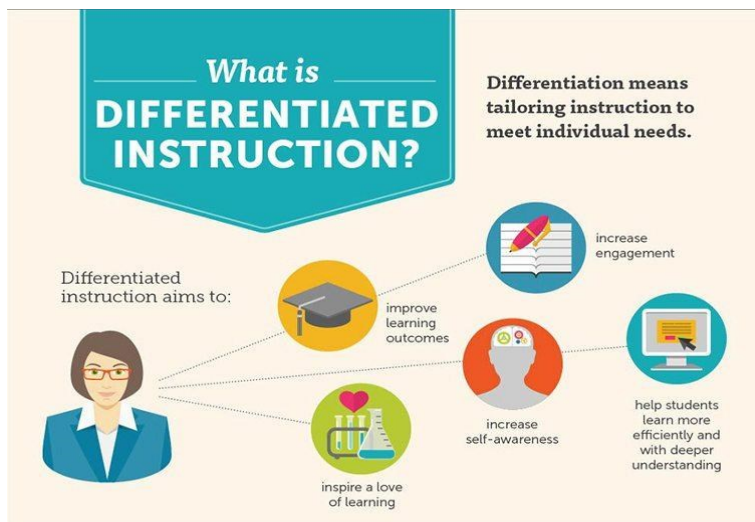
What is Differentiated Instruction?

According to Abbati (2012), differentiated instruction is a deliberate strategy for adapting the classroom's teaching and learning processes to meet all learners' various needs. Tomlinson (2017) also emphasized that a differentiated classroom transcends a one-size-fits-all model, providing varied pathways for acquiring content, processing ideas, and developing products. This comprehensive approach ensures that each student can effectively grasp the concepts being taught.

According to Professor Lilian Katz's insightful statement, "When a teacher tries to teach something to the entire class at the same time, chances are, one-third of the students already know it; one-third will get it, and the remaining third will not. So, two-thirds of the children are wasting their time" (Suwastini et al., 2021). This demonstrates the inefficiencies of a one-size-fits-all teaching strategy, and as instructors, we constantly observe varied learning profiles in our classrooms. It becomes clear that some students need help to keep up with instructional information, whereas others easily understand it. This remark is supported by a study undertaken by Pozas et al. (2020), which emphasizes the necessity of responding to students' particular needs and abilities.

Magableh and Abdullah (2020) indicated that students differ significantly regarding cultural backgrounds, prior knowledge, educational levels, language proficiency, personality types, learning styles, preferences, interests, and age. Teachers emphasize the importance of embracing diverse and tailored teaching strategies. This approach is crucial to address the unique needs of each student effectively.

Why Differentiated Instruction?

Differentiated instruction is not a singular strategy employed by teachers, but rather a flexible framework that allows educators to implement a diverse range of strategies catering to the unique needs of all students (Kupchyk & Litvinchuk, 2020). The overarching goals of differentiated instruction encompasses maximizing learning and success for each student, fostering a love for learning, enhancing student engagement and motivation, promoting efficient learning, cultivating learning autonomy, increasing self-awareness, and ultimately improving students' results and learning outcomes. This approach recognizes and addresses students' diverse characteristics and abilities, providing a comprehensive and tailored educational experience to meet individual learning needs.


What Areas Can Be Differentiated?

Teachers can differentiate at least three areas of classroom instruction (Andersen & Sitter, 2006) as follows:

- **Content**—refers to the material that students are expected to learn or the means through which they acquire information. In other words, it delineates what students should be

taught during a lesson.

- **Process** — refers to the activities in which students participate to comprehend or master the content. In simpler terms, it outlines how students should approach and complete learning tasks.

- **Products** — refer to culminating projects that require students to practice, apply, and expand upon their learning from a unit. These projects demonstrate students' understanding and mastery of the material learned.
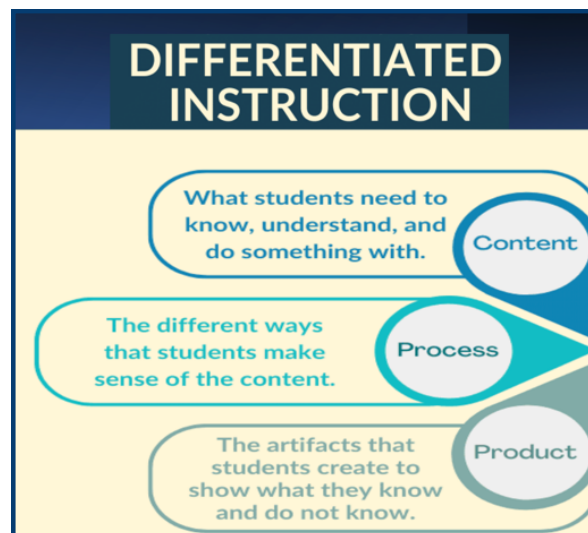
Strategies for Differentiating Instruction

1. Strategies for Differentiating Content.

To effectively differentiate content for diverse learners, it is essential to acknowledge and cater to varying learning styles, encompassing visual, aural, read/write, and kinesthetic modalities (Xu, 2012). While individually tailoring materials for each student may be impractical in large classes, designing content that appeals to multiple learning styles ensures inclusivity. For instance, teachers can have students read in groups to accommodate visual and auditory preferences, while videos should be supplemented with text subtitles. Additionally, content should align with students' current skill levels, as per Bloom's taxonomy, ranging from remembering to higher-order thinking skills like analysis and application. Observing students' abilities allows for tailored activities, such as variated worksheets covering the same topic but targeting different skill levels. This approach ensures that all students are adequately challenged and supported in their learning journey.

2. Strategies for Differentiating Process.

Teachers must cater to diverse learners to ensure that every student in the classroom receives the best education possible. One way to achieve this is by grouping students based on their abilities and dedicating time to support those struggling. Grouping students based on their knowledge or skill levels can be beneficial in many ways (Andersen & Sitter, 2006). It allows teachers to tailor content to each group's specific needs, creating a more comfortable learning environment and facilitating peer support. When students of similar skill levels work together, knowledge transfer occurs naturally, enhancing understanding and promoting a sense of camaraderie among peers.

Moreover, teachers can explain concepts at a level that resonates with all students within a group, ensuring comprehension and engagement across the board. This approach maximizes learning potential and promotes inclusivity within the classroom. On the other hand, when teachers plan for their lessons, they need to allocate time specifically to assist struggling students, recognizing that some may require extra support to complete tasks (Xu, 2012). Additionally, while creating tasks for the lesson, teachers should consider incorporating extension activities to challenge advanced students who finish early. These activities could include supplementary worksheets with incentives for completion or engaging tasks to maintain their interest while assisting struggling peers.

3. Strategies for Differentiating Products.

Teachers can use a rubric to evaluate different levels of abilities when assessing students' work (Tomlinson, 2017). Rubrics are tools that help assess competencies. They are usually presented as tables or grids that display all the different degrees of expertise for a given ability. By utilizing rubrics, teachers can better understand their students' skills and identify which students may   (Cont.)

require additional support with a particular skill or concept.

In summary, while differentiated instruction can effectively address classroom challenges, it is most beneficial when applied proactively rather than reactively. This proactive approach involves teachers anticipating situations where differentiated instruction may be necessary rather than waiting until students encounter difficulties. By assessing students' prior knowledge and skills before designing lessons, teachers can determine when and how to implement this approach effectively. Furthermore, teachers should routinely inquire about students' characteristics, such as prior knowledge, reading/writing abilities, learning styles, behavioral considerations, and special needs, to ensure that instruction meets diverse learning needs.

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The CATESOL Newsletter is here to promote your Chapter events!

Have an upcoming Chapter event or a regular monthly Chapter meeting? Use the CATESOL Newsletter to advertise your events. Submit the banner that has been created for the event on the CATESOL website or if you are not that far along in the event set up, submit a brief event summary with an image to accompany it and an ad will be created for the upcoming issue of the newsletter. **Submit to** newsletter@catesol.org

Co-Editor Article Series Submission IV — Transferable Skills & Career Pivoting in the TESOL Field: Final Thoughts

Amy Sleep

When I wrote my first submission for the CATESOL Newsletter at the end of 2023, I had arrived at the CATESOL Newsletter because I needed TESOL back in my life in a significant way.

After completing my MATESOL from American University in DC, I moved across the country to Los Angeles. Early 2022, 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 DC from LA, but felt disconnected from the community of TESOLers I had come to know during my two years in grad school.

During a period of reflection and evaluation, I made it a mission of mine to worm my way back into the TESOL world. By the end of the summer 2023, I was actively seeking ways to re-integrate into the world of TESOL. However, in doing so, I knew I wanted to find new and interesting ways to engage with the TESOL world while maintaining my curriculum developer role.

Since I took on this mission, here's what I've been up to:

- I became an instructor for an English conversation club for Glendale Community College's non-credit ESL students. This allowed me to get to know the school, the staff, and the learners. From this experience, I was invited to teach a class at GCC.

- This spring, I taught a once-a-week class on Friday mornings for GCC's Noncredit ESL division. I will continue to teach there once a week in addition to working in the conversation club.

- I got hired last fall as a per diem substitute for USC's International Academy where I substitute on occasion

- Within my full-time curriculum development position, I am leading the development of an ELL program for multilingual hospital workers.

- I reached out to CATESOL to get more involved in the newsletter with the hopes of connecting to the broader TESOL community. I met with Kara Mac Donald, editor of the newsletter, who welcomed me with open arms. Not only did I begin assisting with the editing of the CATESOL Newsletter, but Kara also suggested I write a four-part series for the newsletter.

Across these various activities, I am working with different learning populations and teaching/learning environments and working among peers with a shared interest and understanding. I am also more involved in more research, reading, and professional development related to ELT. TESOL has become my world again. I've found new titles for myself, while also finding ways to reconnect with past titles, such as that of a teacher, researcher, TESOL practitioner, peer, and writer.

As I reflect on this series, I realize that perhaps what this series was really about was the opportunity for me to reclaim the title of a writer. During grad school, I considered myself an accomplished academic writer. Alas, we know how it goes. Once there were no longer deadlines, I didn't have a reason to write, so I stopped writing.

Additionally, I suffer from the pressure to write something "perfect" — something groundbreak-

-ing, inspired, insightful. When Kara first told me to write a four-part series, I reacted with a bit of panic — what would I write about and who would care what I wrote about. Kara told me, "Just write something."

This newsletter is the perfect space for us to explore and share our explorations. The newsletter invites any and all to contribute something. It provides a space and platform for us to write with a purpose and an audience in mind, without the pressure or the high stakes.

For me, the newsletter was also a shove to start writing again. Writing is demanding and difficult — it requires practice and discipline. At times, I found it really difficult to sit down and write these articles. In fact, I almost didn't write this last piece.

Since I've started writing these pieces, I've found myself jotting down ideas for future research and study, areas of interest, and reflections, all which may one day be future articles for publication.

So, I think it's safe to say my most current pivot in my TESOL career has been in writing, publishing and editing. This series has been my first step back into finding something to say, and finding the words to say them. Let's see where it takes me!

I've learned to be open to the opportunities to transition and pivot that present themselves through TESOL. I am continually trying new things, learning what I enjoy or don't enjoy, challenging myself, but also finding the simple joy in things — all of which helps me determine what I want to do next. Within TESOL, the avenues are endless.

For now, as a CATESOL newsletter co-editor, I look forward to continuing to learn from all of you and broadcasting your voices to our TESOL community.

What CATESOL Offers You! Membership Highlights – 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.