

CATESOL NEWSLETTER

SERVING TEACHERS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE



Letter from the CATESOL President

Dear CATESOL Family,

Happy Summer! Whether you plan to travel, work, or do both, I hope you get to unwind and rest.

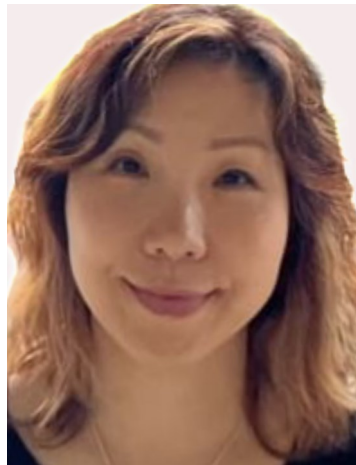
CATESOL was busy this past spring hosting the TESOL 2025 Convention & Expo in March. It was a time of professional growth and intentional stretching of the pedagogies and practices. I was grateful to see so many of you volunteering, attending, and presenting at the convention.

Here is a list of our current action items:

CATESOL Election: The nomination forms were due May 31. There are still open leadership positions. Please [submit your nomination form](#) if you are interested in running for the CATESOL's Board of Directors positions.

CATESOL 2025 State Conference- Stronger Together: Community, Empowerment, Collective Action: This year's state conference will be in person from October 17 to October 18 at Chabot College in Hayward, California. [Proposals are due](#) Sunday, June 15, 2025 at 11:59 pm Pacific Time

CATESOL Disaster Relief Fund: CATESOL Education Foundation (CEF) has been actively working to support CATESOL members affected by the wildfires in Los Angeles. As the fundraising arm (Cont.)



CONTENTS

Letter from the President

CATESOL Current Action Items

Words from the Editor

Feature & Articles this Issue

Feature Focus

Personalized Learning for Group Learning

Guest Author Submission:

Impact of Attending TESOL 20025 on Students' Digital Learning

CATESOL Journal:

Call for Submissions & More

Member Submissions:

Two Articles on Language is Negotiated & Student-Centered Learning

And Many More Articles & Info.

of CATESOL, the Foundation has played a vital role in supporting CATESOL members in numerous ways. If you are looking for ways to donate, please consider CEF and [make your tax-deductible donation](#).

Lastly, as we conclude this academic year, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to CATESOL members and leaders for your focus on students and their voices during this challenging time. Let us work together to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in our classrooms and workplaces.

With much appreciation,

Song Hong,

CATESOL President 2023-2025

Words from the Editor

Kara Mac Donald

The [Feature article shares the opportunities and activities around CATESOL hosting the 2025 TESOL Conference](#), followed by a Focus Feature article, exploring personalized learning to overcome the challenges of generic instruction in group-based learning. There is a Guest Author contribution sharing her experience at TESOL 2025, cohosted by CATESOL in Long Beach, CA, sharing its impact on her as educator and her students' digital literacy development. In the Teachers a Language Learners column, three teachers describe how they see their L2 proficiency at differing levels offers insights for language teachers. The issue has two Member Submission pieces, with one addressing how language is negotiated and the other, exploring how to bridging the gap between student-centered and language-centered methods. An Activities for the Classroom article shares thoughts on authentic materials in FL and ELL teaching and learning. Additionally, throughout this issue you will find information about the 2025 CATESOL State Conference on October 17-18, 2025 at Chabot College in Hayward, CA. The theme is Stronger Together: Community, Empowerment, Collective Activism. The CATESOL fund raiser to support CATESOLers displaced by the LA fires is still going on. Please look for information on how to donate in this issue or on the CATESOL website. Additionally, there is information on how to contribute to CATESOL publications throughout the issue.

On a final note, Amy Sleep, a co-editor of the newsletter for almost two years will be stepping down. I, and the CATESOL community, thank her for her support in publishing the CATESOL Newsletter.

Thank you. Kara Mac Donald and Amy Sleep, Co-Editors of the Newsletter and Copy Layout Proof Reader, Siyi (Lois) Gao.

***Focus Feature*-Personalizing Language Learning: Overcoming the Challenges of Generic Instruction in Group-Based Classes**

Bushra Wilkins

Language learning in group-based settings often fails to address the diverse needs of adult learners. A generic, one-size-fits-all approach can undermine the motivation and progress of students, particularly when their proficiency levels, learning styles, and personal goals vary widely. This article explores the challenges of generic instruction in adult language classrooms and emphasizes the need for personalized, differentiated instruction. It discusses the limitations of group-based classes, the benefits of tailored learning experiences, and practical strategies to implement personalized instruction, such as differentiated teaching, technology use, and formative assessments. The article concludes with recommendations for improving group-based language classes by fostering individualized learning environments that support adult learners' unique needs.

Introduction

Language learning in group-based settings is a fundamental aspect of many adult education programs. These classes provide an opportunity for learners to engage with peers, which can enhance motivation and foster a collaborative learning environment (Brown & Lee, 2022). However, group-based settings often fail to meet the diverse proficiency levels, learning paces, and individual goals of learners, especially in adult education contexts. Adult students frequently bring varied life experiences, motivations, and educational backgrounds, and generic instruction may not effectively address their unique needs (Jones & Harrington, 2023). The lack of personalized instruction, coupled with a one-size-fits-all curriculum, can hinder students' ability to engage meaningfully with the material and realize their full potential. This article explores the challenges of group-based classes and the importance of providing personalized instruction to improve learning outcomes.

Adult learners face specific challenges such as balancing educational commitments with family, work, and other obligations (Cavanaugh & McKay, 2020). This complexity can make standardized, group-based instruction less effective, highlighting the need for a more flexible, tailored approach to ensure that learners not only grasp the material but also remain engaged and motivated throughout their language acquisition journey. The following sections address the limitations of group-based classes, the significance of personalized learning, and the practical solutions that can enhance the learning experience.

The Reality of Group-Based Classes

Group-based classes are a widespread model in language education, especially for adult learners, who often face unique challenges due to their diverse backgrounds and learning experiences. While these settings offer an efficient way to reach a larger number of students, they often struggle to account for the wide array of needs present in the classroom. In language programs, learners come with varying levels of prior knowledge, diverse learning styles, and individual motivations that complicate the learning process (Brown & Lee, 2022).

Adult learners, in particular, have distinct and sometimes very specific language learning goals, often shaped by their personal or professional needs. For instance, one student may be focused on improving speaking fluency for job advancement, while another might aim to improve writing skills for personal growth. These unique goals can be challenging to address in a traditional group setting, where the instructor is generally tasked with focusing on the broader needs of the class as a whole. Grouping students based on general proficiency levels, such as beginner, intermediate, (Cont.)

Feature Focus - (Cont.)

or advanced, may provide a framework for organizing classes, but it fails to accommodate the personal and diverse needs of each learner. It does not consider the differences in prior knowledge, motivations, and learning strategies, which can significantly impact how students engage with the material (Zhao & Li, 2021).

Moreover, the varied pace at which students learn complicates the group-based approach. While some learners may progress quickly, others may struggle with certain aspects of language acquisition. For example, an advanced student might grasp grammar rules quickly but struggle with listening comprehension, while a beginner might need more time to understand the basics but excel at speaking and conversation. In such situations, the more advanced learners can become disengaged or bored, as the material is not sufficiently challenging, while slower learners might fall behind and lose confidence (Martin, 2021). As Jones and Harrington (2023) note, "students who learn at different rates or have different objectives may struggle to stay motivated in a group environment" (p. 315). This lack of individualized attention can hinder both groups of students – those needing extra support and those seeking more challenging material.

The challenge extends to the instructors as well. In a group-based class, teachers are tasked with managing a diverse set of learners, each with different needs and learning styles. In some cases, certain students require more intensive, one-on-one support, while others may benefit from less direct instruction. Balancing this disparity can overwhelm instructors, particularly when they have limited time to engage with students individually. Additionally, adult learners often juggle multiple responsibilities, such as work, family, or other commitments, which may affect their ability to devote the necessary time and attention to language learning. These challenges can lead to feelings of frustration and disengagement, particularly when learners feel their specific needs are not being addressed (Cavanaugh & McKay, 2020).

The Challenge of Generic Curricula

A critical issue in group-based language classes is the reliance on generic curricula designed to meet the needs of the "average" student. While these curricula are typically well-structured and comprehensive, they often lack the flexibility needed to accommodate the diverse and specific needs of all learners. A generic curriculum typically covers the fundamental language skills – reading, writing, listening, and speaking – equally. However, not every student needs the same level of focus on each area. For example, one student may excel in reading comprehension but struggle with speaking, while another may find speaking relatively easy but have difficulties with writing (Zhao & Li, 2021).

In such cases, the one-size-fits-all approach of a generic curriculum becomes problematic. Students may either be under-challenged or unsupported in the areas where they need the most help. For advanced learners, the standardized curriculum might not provide enough challenge, leading to boredom or a lack of motivation. Conversely, beginners or those struggling with certain aspects of the language may find themselves overwhelmed by the pace and complexity of the material, which can lead to frustration and disengagement. As Hughes (2020) points out, "Generic approaches to language instruction often fail to provide the necessary flexibility to address the specific needs of learners" (p. 58). This lack of flexibility can ultimately hinder students' progress and undermine their confidence.

Another significant limitation of generic curricula is the lack of personalized feedback, which is particularly essential for adult learners. Feedback provides students with critical insights into their strengths and areas of improvement, helping them identify specific skills that require attention. Without individualized feedback, students may remain unaware of their weaknesses, making (Cont.)

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it difficult for them to make meaningful progress. Moreover, the absence of actionable, specific feedback leaves students without a clear path for improvement. Without this guidance, they may become frustrated, lose motivation, or even disengage from the learning process altogether (Martin, 2021).

Additionally, generic curricula often fail to account for the diverse learning preferences and goals of students. While some learners might benefit from structured grammar exercises or listening activities, others might thrive with more conversational practice or project-based tasks. A standardized curriculum does not typically offer students the autonomy to pursue learning in a way that aligns with their personal goals or learning styles. This disconnect between what is taught and what students need can create a barrier to effective learning, further reinforcing the need for more personalized instruction in language programs.

The Importance of Personalized Instruction

Personalized instruction is a transformative educational approach that adapts content, teaching methods, and feedback to meet the distinct needs of each student. Unlike traditional one-size-fits-all methods, this approach allows instructors to create a learning environment that is both responsive and adaptable, which is especially crucial in language acquisition. In language learning, students often have varying levels of proficiency, different learning preferences, and unique challenges. For example, one student may struggle with listening comprehension, while another may need help with written expression. Personalized instruction enables instructors to tailor lessons to address these specific areas of need, fostering a more engaging and effective learning experience (Jones & Harrington, 2023).

A significant benefit of personalized instruction is its ability to promote a more interactive, student-centered classroom. Rather than a teacher-centered approach where the instructor dictates the pace and content, personalized instruction emphasizes active student involvement. By customizing support, instructors can guide students through areas where they face the most difficulty, such as improving speaking fluency, enhancing listening comprehension, or mastering complex grammatical structures. As Cavanaugh and McKay (2020) emphasize, "personalized feedback is key to helping students understand their strengths and weaknesses, offering clear steps for improvement" (p. 13). This feedback not only helps students identify areas for growth but also empowers them by providing a clear path toward mastery. Moreover, personalized instruction supports inclusivity by ensuring that students with different abilities and backgrounds receive the attention and guidance they need to thrive in a language learning environment.

In addition to fostering inclusivity, personalized instruction also contributes to higher levels of student motivation. When students perceive that their individual needs are being met, they are more likely to remain engaged and invested in the learning process. By adjusting the pace of lessons, offering relevant resources, and providing targeted feedback, instructors can create an environment where students feel confident in their ability to succeed. As a result, students are more likely to persist through challenges, which is particularly important in language learning, where sustained effort and practice are essential to mastering new skills.

Practical Applications

To create personalized learning experiences within group-based language classes, instructors can implement a variety of strategies. These strategies not only help cater to individual learner needs but also ensure that all students receive the support they require to reach their full potential. (Cont.)

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1. **Differentiated Instruction:** Differentiated instruction is a cornerstone of personalized learning. This strategy allows instructors to adjust the content, process, or products of learning based on students' proficiency levels and learning preferences. For example, advanced learners may be provided with more challenging tasks, such as deeper discussions or advanced grammar exercises, while struggling students might receive additional scaffolding, such as simplified materials or more practice opportunities (Brown & Lee, 2022). Differentiated instruction allows instructors to maintain the engagement of all learners, regardless of their initial skill levels.
 2. **Use of Technology:** Incorporating technology into language instruction can significantly enhance personalization. Adaptive learning platforms, such as language learning apps or online programs, allow students to work at their own pace, reinforcing areas where they need more practice and advancing in areas where they are more proficient (Hughes, 2020). These platforms can track progress and offer targeted exercises, which can help reinforce classroom learning and provide students with additional opportunities to practice skills outside of class.
 3. **Formative Assessments:** Regular formative assessments, such as quizzes, surveys, or informal check-ins, provide ongoing insights into student progress and highlight areas that require additional focus. These assessments allow instructors to make data-driven decisions about instructional adjustments, ensuring that each student receives the appropriate level of challenge and support. For instance, if formative assessments reveal that a particular group of students is struggling with listening comprehension, instructors can tailor lessons to include more listening exercises and related practice (Martin, 2021).
 4. **Small Group Activities:** Breaking students into smaller groups based on proficiency levels offers more opportunities for personalized instruction. In smaller groups, instructors can provide targeted feedback, address specific student needs, and create a more comfortable environment for learners to practice. For example, advanced students can work on more complex language tasks, while beginner students can focus on mastering foundational skills. This segmentation allows for more focused, individualized support and helps to ensure that no student is left behind (Zhao & Li, 2021).
- Peer Learning:** Encouraging peer collaboration is another effective strategy for fostering personalized learning in a group setting. Peer learning provides students with opportunities to reinforce their understanding by teaching one another, sharing knowledge, and offering feedback. This approach also allows students to benefit from different perspectives, as peers often explain concepts in a way that resonates more with each other (Jones & Harrington, 2023). Additionally, peer learning can boost confidence and provide a support network that encourages risk-taking in language use.

Recommendations

To enhance the effectiveness of personalized instruction in group-based language classes, the following recommendations are proposed:

Invest in Professional Development: To successfully implement personalized instruction, instructors should receive regular training in differentiated teaching methods, providing personalized feedback, and integrating technology into language learning. Professional development opportunities can equip instructors with the tools and strategies necessary to adapt their teaching styles to meet the needs of diverse learners (Brown & Lee, 2022).

Utilize Adaptive Learning Technologies: Instructors should incorporate adaptive learning technologies, such as language learning apps or online platforms, that allow students to engage with the material outside of class at their own pace. These technologies can supplement classroom instruction, provide additional practice opportunities, and offer instant feedback, helping to reinforce personalized learning (Hughes, 2020).

Increase One-on-One Support: One-on-one meetings with instructors can provide (Cont.)

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Targeted support that addresses each student's unique needs. These personalized interactions allow instructors to provide specific guidance, answer questions, and offer constructive feedback that might not be possible in larger group settings. Additionally, individualized meetings can help build stronger relationships between instructors and students, fostering a more supportive and trusting learning environment (Martin, 2021).

Encourage Self-Directed Learning: To further personalize their learning experience, students should be encouraged to take ownership of their language acquisition journey. This can be achieved by providing students with self-study resources that cater to their interests and proficiency levels. When students are empowered to direct their own learning, they are more likely to stay motivated and take proactive steps to improve their language skills (Zhao & Li, 2021).

Foster a Growth Mindset: Promoting a growth mindset, where students view challenges as opportunities for growth, is essential in creating a personalized learning environment. By encouraging students to embrace setbacks as part of the learning process, instructors can help build resilience and persistence. A growth mindset not only boosts student motivation but also enhances their capacity to engage with challenging material, leading to improved outcomes (Jones & Harrington, 2023).

Conclusion

The absence of personalized instruction in group-based language classes can present significant barriers to student success, particularly for adult learners. Traditional, one-size-fits-all approaches to language instruction often fail to accommodate the diverse needs and learning preferences of students. Without individualized feedback or differentiated content, students may feel disengaged, frustrated, or overwhelmed, which can hinder their language development and confidence. Furthermore, the absence of personalized support often means that learners do not receive the tailored interventions they need to address specific challenges, whether they are struggling with speaking fluency, reading comprehension, or complex grammar.

However, incorporating personalized instruction—through methods such as differentiated teaching, the use of adaptive learning technologies, and regular, individualized feedback—can drastically improve the learning experience. By responding to the unique needs of each student, personalized instruction fosters a more inclusive and supportive environment that maximizes engagement and promotes deeper learning. For instance, by using technology to supplement classroom instruction, students can practice at their own pace, reinforcing areas where they need additional help, while instructors can offer more targeted support during class. Similarly, differentiated instruction enables instructors to provide appropriately challenging tasks to advanced learners, while offering more accessible resources to those who need extra assistance.

Moreover, personalized instruction helps students feel valued and supported in their learning journey. By providing regular, individualized feedback, instructors can offer students clear guidance on their strengths and areas for improvement, fostering a sense of accomplishment and motivation. As students progress through their language learning experience, this personalized feedback helps them stay focused and engaged, boosting both their academic performance and their self-confidence. It also helps students develop metacognitive skills, allowing them to assess their own learning and take ownership of their progress.

As the field of language education continues to evolve, it is crucial to ensure that personalized instruction becomes a foundational element of language programs. This involves not only adopting teaching strategies that cater to individual needs but also creating a culture of continuous professional development for instructors. Educators must be equipped with the tools and knowledge to implement personalized instruction effectively, from utilizing adaptive learning technologies to (Cont.)

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to engaging in differentiated teaching practices. Additionally, fostering a growth mindset in students is essential to creating a learning environment where challenges are viewed as opportunities for growth, helping to build resilience and perseverance.

Ultimately, personalized instruction has the potential to transform language learning for adult students, enabling them to achieve their full potential. By embracing strategies that cater to the diverse needs of learners, language programs can enhance student success, increase motivation, and build confidence. With these efforts, adult learners can overcome barriers, thrive in their language learning journeys, and acquire the skills necessary for both academic and professional success. Personalized instruction is not just an ideal; it is a vital approach that can lead to meaningful and lasting improvements in language proficiency, creating more empowered and capable learners.

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We invite you to be part of the CATESOL 2025 State Conference to be held at **Chabot College** (Hayward, CA) located in the San Francisco Bay Area on **October 17-18, 2025**. The conference will be fully in-person with sessions and workshops from 9 am - 5 pm on both Friday and Saturday.

Talley Caruso & Tammy Wik
CATESOL 2025 State Conference Co-Chairs

[More Information Here.](#)



Guest Author: My 2025 TESOL Conference Experience- Impact on Me as Educator and My Students' Digital Literacy Development

Catherine Njau

2025 TESOL Conference, Long Beach, CA

Catherine, in the Fulbright scholarship in Chico and TESOL convention in Long Beach California I learned different ways that teachers can integrating tech tools in the classroom, after attended in these platform I feel that in our class our students are ready to integrating tech -tool in their learning especially English language and others , after my returned I started a girls club in the nearby school and girls were able to learn tech tools such as Kahoot, Padlet blogger and Nearpod and google docs all these tools enable to make a club to be active and enjoying learning English when they use that technology, in my school I started working with boys and be able to familiarized with search engine and browsers, I give them assignment of writing short stories by using comic pictures. Students were able to use a laptop and engage with material and be able to see their work from the laptop that I used with them in the classroom.

The Tanzania Kilimanjaro Region,

Digital literacy initiatives in Tanzania's Kilimanjaro Region, where I am from, are gaining momentum (i.e., Tehamika's Digital Literacy Programs (Tehamika, 2025); Asante Africa Foundation's Teacher Training (Asante, 2024) driven by collaborative efforts between government agencies, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations. These initiatives aim to bridge the digital divide and empower communities through technology. However, fostering digital literacy goes beyond the scope of the classroom for learners, and English learners. In 2022, Huawei, in collaboration with Tanzania Telecommunications Corporation (TTCL), provided high-speed internet coverage in the Mount Kilimanjaro region (Huawei, 2022) to supports tourism and improve connectivity for local communities. However, in some sectors there is low digital literacy, due to limited training, access to needed resources, and the physical location of the school and its funding resources.

My Classroom and My Students

In my class I divided students in groups of 7 and each group has ten students, so I use one laptop to rotate to all groups in the classroom. The first thing I do is to ask students to write short comic stories in their groups while they're discussing the English structure of a topic taught in that lesson. Secondly, I ask my learners to present what they have discussed in the groups, the first group to present they are going to write their work on the laptop, the same applies to the rest of the class. Finally, I display the written works in the paper on the wall and then the work written on the laptop is projected in the next session. So, the students develop interest of thinking very fast, responding to the questions so that their work can be displayed on the wall and through the projector, these increase collaboration, motivation and critical thinking in my classroom.



Digital Literacy in My Classroom and for My Students

As an English teacher with access to just limited technology resources and internet (i.e., cell phone/s, a laptop), I still make significant contribution in building my students' digital literacy where meaningful. In my low-resource teaching environment, what I wish is to increase the devices at least one device per two to three students this will enable my students to gain better access (Cont.)

Guest Author – (Cont.)

digital tools. As an English teacher the limited ability to effectively utilize digital tools not only hinders my instructional delivery but also restricts my students' exposure to essential 21st century skills.

As the world is moving very fast to digital learning, the gap to my digital proficiency presents a significant barrier to adopting innovative and learner-centered approaches. Also in my professional development session, it enabled me to assist my fellow teachers especially in basic computer skills, educational app and digital content creation, together with my students I will be able to make learning more interactive and engaging and prepare them for the 21st century world. Also by engaging teachers in these skills, it will empower them and is the first step toward transforming the classroom into a more inclusive learning environment. By engaging different educational stakeholders and good people from outside, we can be able to transform this new generation and feel comfortable when learning English language as their third language; this will increase motivation to learn and innovation of different aspects of learning English in their levels, by doing so we will increase the number of students' performance in their final examinations.

Sample Images from a PowerPoint Project on Modal Verbs

The images below reflect the instructional material slide in PowerPoint and two final slides produced by students in groups to practice modal verbs using PowerPoint to display the dialogues they created. The top left is an instructional overview slide produced by me. The top right and center bottom images are captures of students' work.



Conclusion

The Kilimanjaro Region is witnessing significant strides in digital literacy, with initiatives spanning education, agriculture, and community development. While progress is evident, continued collaboration and targeted interventions are essential to ensure inclusive digital empowerment for all residents.

(Cont.)

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CATESOL Education Foundation

CATESOL Disaster Relief Fund

Support CATESOLers displaced by the LA wildfires.

Experts agree that the best approach to providing support for recovery efforts is giving dollars, not large bags of miscellaneous items.



With your help, CATESOL and the CATESOL Education Foundation (CEF) plan to do just that.

Dear Members:

On behalf of the CATESOL and the CATESOL Education Foundation leadership, we are writing to show our support for the people who have been displaced by the devastating fires in LA county. We want to help provide the resources our members need in this crisis.

To those affected, all we can say is that we are grateful you are safe. But we can also help by gathering donations to assist you. Please let us know if you have been displaced by emailing us at catesol@catesol.org.

To those of you looking for a way to help those in need, please consider donating to CATESOL's Disaster Relief Fund. The CATESOL Education Foundation (CEF) will ensure that all proceeds go directly to the families/individuals CATESOL is sponsoring.

We cannot replace what people have lost, but we can help people regain a sense of belonging and show our members that they are not alone.

Sincerely,

Song Hong, CATESOL President

Susan Gaer, CEF President

[DONATE](#)

Teachers as Language Learners - How L2 Proficiency at Differing¹² Levels Provides Insights for Language Teachers

Noemí Castelo Veiga, Soondeuk Lowney, and Kara Mac Donald

As teachers, our roles go beyond simply teaching language and culture. It entails numerous duties in and outside of classroom instruction. One multifaceted task involves understanding the learning process from the student's perspective. Students in our classrooms come with a variety of personal and education experiences that inform how they perceive learning English. When language teachers themselves are also participants in a language learning journey, they gain valuable insights into the challenges, strategies, and cognitive processes that students experience. This personal experience with language acquisition not only enriches their teaching but also fosters empathy, enhances classroom dynamics, and informs their pedagogical approaches.

In this article, we explore how teachers who are language learners can bring a unique, informed perspective to their teaching practices. By reflecting on

their own language-learning experiences, teachers can adopt more effective, student-centered approaches that cater to the diverse needs of their learners. From understanding the frustrations of grammar rules to the thrill of mastering new vocabulary, the journey of a language learner provides invaluable tools for teaching.

The first author shares her experiences of learning English as a second language (L2) and foreign language (FL), and having achieved a level suitable for everyday tasks, academic studies and some work-related interactions. The second author shares insights as an advanced English speaker for professional purposes. The third author shares insights around both mastery of a FL, but also how experiences of being a low-level language learner bring insight to her teaching and learning.

Insights on Learning from an Enthusiast Intermediate English User & Learner

Noemí Castelo Veiga

Enthusiasm for knowledge. How curiosity opens doors to new learnings.

Since I was a child, I have always been curious to learn new things, a curiosity that has increased as I have grown older, as has my passion for writing and poems. What would this world be without poetry?

Likewise, I have always been interested in meeting new people, from other countries, with different cultures, with diverse linguistic codes... I consider it one of the most enriching things in life. Perhaps this is another reason that has led me to study English as a FL, as it has become the global language of the 21st century (van Rooy, 2023); although I have been lucky enough to speak more than one language since I was a child, as I was born in Galicia, Spain, so in addition to Spanish, the language of my country, I can also communicate in Galician, the specific language of my Autonomous Community.

(Cont.)



Teachers as Language Learners – (Cont.)

Therefore, in my case it could be said that motivation, especially intrinsic motivation, has significantly boosted language study (González-Peiteado, & Rodríguez-López, 2017). In turn, this has brought me benefits of mobility and international collaboration, as well as greater intercultural awareness, communicative competence, and cognitive flexibility (Fox et al., 2019; Gómez-Parra et al., 2021).

My personal experience

My first contact with English as an adult was relatively recent. Specifically, in the last quarter of the year 2023, when I did a research stay at California State University, Monterey Bay (California, United States). Even though I had studied English as a first FL at school for some years, the teaching had focused too much on vocabulary and grammar, and too little on speaking and listening skills, so my level of English was not the best, especially considering the fact that I had never left the country before, except for Portugal, where I had no problem with the language due to the linguistic proximity of Galician to Portuguese.

Evidently the challenge was there, multiple accents, multiple linguistic varieties... Asians, North Americans, Africans, South Americans, Europeans... all spoke English in their own way, with their own style. The multiculturalism and linguistic diversity of the United States were evident and made me even more interested in the language. I soon met wonderful people and established academic contacts, collaborations, and friendships.

Friendships, collaborations, and academic contacts that continue today, two years later and being already in Spain: virtual exchanges on historical and social issues and international news, virtual book clubs on various academic books, friendly virtual chats about everyday things, enriching learning collaborations in congresses and publications.

Insights for Instruction

Currently I continue studying English with the same enthusiasm as at the beginning, with a backpack of rich experiences that expand every day and help me to improve as a person and as an education professional. I would like to highlight two aspects that I have extracted from my experience as an English student and that can be useful in the process of teaching and learning a language.

The first aspect concerns the consideration of artistic methods (e.g., a multilingual poetry workshop) and the importance of creativity development in the teaching and learning of additional languages, L2s, or FLs, which is in line with Albuquerque and Moore (2024), Kharkhurin et al. (2023), and Piccardo (2017).

I love poetry, as I have reflected above, so I have resorted and resort to it often to learn English. Not only by reading poems in English, but also by writing my own. Below is an acrostic that I have written in English, that is, a poetic composition in which the initial letter of each verse forms a word. In addition to personifying emotions such as joy, in the poem I also play with cultural context and color symbolism. For example, in the Anglo-Saxon world, blue is generally used to reflect sadness or dejection ("feeling blue"). (Cont.)

*Not only by reading poems in English,
but also by writing my own.*



For people with sad eyes and blue smile:
Remember that there are more colors to draw emotions.
Imagine, dream, live, live, live every day.
Early, early, do it early, because, you know,
Nothing is truer than the ephemerality of life.
Dance, dance with “Joy”, at least more often, and listen to that
Song you love so much, may it be waltz, pop, salsa,
Hip hop, or flamenco, whatever, but enjoy the music.
Invite “Hope” to nest in your heart, in order to
Paint with it illusions to live for (look for them, you will find
some).

Source: Own elaboration

In turn, creativity in general and creative performance in particular are facilitated by cultural self-efficacy, that is, by the confidence and beliefs that an individual has to manage multicultural situations, especially when working in human contexts with people from different cultural backgrounds (Camargo et al., 2020). Likewise, multicultural experience, intercultural interaction management, and intercultural interest are factors that contribute to creativity, having a predictive value for various components of divergent thinking, which focuses on the search for information and the generation of various novel, and alternative solutions to a problem whose approach could be done in multiple ways (Kharkhurin et al., 2023).

This has led me to the second aspect, which refers to the importance of developing intercultural competence (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) in the teaching and learning of alternative languages, L2s, and FLs, both on the part of teachers and learners. Culture, a dynamic concept intimately related to people and communities, plays a fundamental role in any language learning process, being impossible to teach a language without teaching the culture that encompasses it (Ramirez et al., 2018).

It is thus in the cultural context that words acquire their meaning and value. For example, as van Rooy (2023) recalls, in Indian matrimonial advertisements in English the words “boy” and “girl” can be used to refer to an adult person approaching even 40 years of age, as long as he/she is not married, because of the cultural view that full adult maturity is acquired with marriage. Hence, the lack of cultural learning may be reflected when a learner makes use of the additional language acquired and realizes that his or her grammar, vocabulary, and linguistic skills are insufficient to represent the implications of the meanings. Which results in an incomplete teaching and learning process, needing to be supplemented with appropriate knowledge of the target language culture (Jawas, 2020).

The interest in the development of intercultural competence in language teaching and learning is a recognized issue and is included in the international academic literature through materials, innovative methodologies, experiential learning, assessment tools, the analysis of cultural elements in L2 or FL textbooks, and the connection with Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), especially telecollaboration or intercultural virtual exchange processes (Albuquerque, & Moore, 2024; Barili, & Byram, 2021; Carmona et al., 2019; Casoli-Uvsløkk, & Brevik, 2023; Chimeva, & Trenchs-Parera, 2024; Cuartas, 2020; Dooly, 2022; Fernández, 2019; Garcia-Esteban, & Colpaert, 2022; Gómez-Parra, 2020; Gürsoy, & Özcan, 2022; Hoang, & Vien, 2019; Hsu, & Beasley, 2019; (Cont.)

Teachers as Language Learners – (Cont.)

Kuteneva et al., 2021; Lee, 2018; Lin et al., 2020; Masterson, 2020; Murray, 2022; Nuñez-Pardo, 2018; Peng, 2018, 2021; Quispe-Morales, 2022; Shah, & Elyas, 2019; Shen, 2021; Simões, & Sangiamchit, 2023; Tleubay et al., 2020; Tran, & Duong, 2018; Vajak et al., 2021; Vargas, & Ávila, 2018; Villegas-Paredes et al., 2022).

In this regard, in my personal experience I have discovered the potential of journalistic texts and international news on diverse and controversial matters related to injustice, stereotypes, religious fanaticism, and gender inequality in different social and cultural contexts. By doing so, I have not only been able to improve my English, but also increased my effective learning and critical intercultural awareness of certain issues. The same way, I have realized the power of fiction and non-fiction literary texts, especially those related to multicultural issues, to facilitate both my English reading skills and my metalinguistic awareness. In addition, I have been able to experience how case methodology, i.e., reflection and discussion on a practical problem, has helped me develop independent thinking and improve my intercultural competence as a learner of English as FL or L2. These findings obtained in my experience yield similar results to the studies of Eide et al. (2022), Gómez (2018), Heggenes (2021), Kim et al. (2019), Leal (2019), Temirgalinova et al. (2021), and Villegas-Paredes (2018) on language learning and teaching.

Insights on Learning from an Advanced L2 English Language Speaker

Soonduek Lowney

My Experience

I possess advanced proficiency in English as a second language, which I use daily in professional contexts both within and beyond the classroom. My area of academic work is language assessment, although I was a language teacher for many years. Additionally, my academic and formal experiences around English have been focused on major standard varieties. So, when asked to offer insight on how my experiences as an advanced speaker of English would provide insights for language teachers of students aiming at reaching this level, it felt natural to draw on a recent collegial experience around a book on varieties of English.

Prior to joining the collegial book club in the winter of this year, I had encountered the concept of World Englishes, but it had not been a focal point in my academic or professional considerations. Again, my primary area of engagement is Korean as a foreign language (KFL) education in the United States, while one of my American colleagues specializes in foreign language teacher training, also within the U.S. context. The remaining book club participants are involved in English as a foreign language (EFL) education in South Korea, though none are Korean nationals. What unites us is our shared investment in foreign language education, albeit in varied geographical and institutional settings.

Upon learning that the book club would focus on World Englishes, I was immediately intrigued. Although I had previously heard of the term, I had not explored it in depth. My longstanding interest lies in the interaction between languages, particularly the influence of English on Korean.

My Learning and Insights

Among the concepts explored, Kachru's Three Circles model proved especially impactful. The model challenges the notion of a singular, standardized global English, instead positioning English as a collection of context-specific, localized varieties, each possessing its own linguistic legitimacy. The accompanying discussion on different forms of colonization—especially exploitation colonization—further prompted critical reflection on the intersections of language, power, and pedagogy. (Cont.)

Teachers as Language Learners – (Cont.)

For example, the historical imposition and institutionalization of English in former British colonies such as India provided a lens through which to examine language spread as a socio-political process.

As a native Korean speaker, I found the exploration of English's impact on contemporary Korean society particularly compelling. English has influenced not only the lexicon but also educational practices, media discourse, and social norms. English-derived expressions are increasingly integrated into everyday Korean, especially within domains such as business, fashion, technology, and popular culture. One illustrative example is the English acronym "TMI" ("too much information"), which has been widely adopted in Korean popular media to denote trivial or excessive detail. These borrowings are often recontextualized to reflect uniquely Korean usage, a phenomenon commonly referred to as "Korean English" or "Konglish." While such linguistic hybridity signals Korea's global interconnectedness and the symbolic capital of English, it also raises concerns regarding linguistic purity and intergenerational communication challenges.

Insights for Instruction

Bear with me for a moment. I will address my experience with KFL and then, share my thoughts on the English language classroom. Given my involvement in curriculum and assessment development for KFL instruction, I have begun to critically consider whether Korean English should be represented in educational materials. Since Konglish is a salient feature of contemporary Korean language use, should it be incorporated into instruction to better reflect real-world usage? If so, to what extent? Conversely, would it be more appropriate to adopt a more prescriptive approach, emphasizing only "standard" Korean? These questions inevitably lead to broader considerations of what constitutes "authentic" materials in language education when linguistic hybridity is part of the lived linguistic landscape. The answers are complex and context-dependent, shaped by educational objectives, learner profiles, and sociolinguistic realities.

Engaging with World Englishes has significantly deepened my understanding of English as a dynamic and pluralistic global language. It has also prompted ongoing reflection on how language education might be rendered.

In considering ways to make the English language classroom more inclusive, reflective of contemporary linguistic realities, and responsive to local contexts, I am drawn to the concept of translanguaging. This teaching approach embraces the flexible, dynamic use of a learner's full linguistic repertoire—including multiple languages—within a single communicative or learning context.

I see the treatment of languages as separate systems can be reductive at times. There are times and instructional contexts for 100% target language use, but I respect that translanguaging views language practices as fluid and integrated, allowing multilingual to draw on all their linguistic resources to make meaning, learn, and communicate effectively. I also find it important to explore the pedagogical value of exposing students to non-standard North American varieties as well as diverse World Englishes, based on the students' contexts, learning objectives and future realities.

Insights on Learning as an Intrepid, and at time Intermittent, Novice and Advanced Speaker of L2s

Kara Mac Donald

Beginners Can Do A lot

One of the most significant insights I have gained is how even beginner students can engage with language in practical ways within controlled and semi-controlled contexts in and out of the (Cont.)

Teachers as Language Learners – (Cont.)

classroom. These contexts provide an essential space for learners to practice and experiment with language in manageable, low-pressure environments, fostering confidence and fluency.

My Experiences as a Beginner Doing A lot

When I lived in Australia in the early 2000s as a postgraduate student, the downtown area where my university was located presented a linguistic landscape full of Chinese and Japanese language publicly available for international students, tourists and heritage language communities that lived there. With the background in Romance languages and connected mainly to Western Europe and South America in the childhood and adolescence none of the scripts were familiar to me as a young post graduate student. I wanted to know what those scripts said, whether it be a restaurant sign or it be something written on the menu or wherever. I was fascinated by the linguistic landscapes of Sydney, Australia.

So, I took two semesters of Japanese and one semester of Chinese. It was rewarding to be able to decode and/or understand high frequency words I would encounter in public places. After finishing my doctorate, I accepted a job at a Korean university and so, took three semesters of Korea at universities in Seoul while I was working. I have essentially achieved at those times and have been able to maintain my beginner levels in Japanese and Chinese, and my low intermediate level in Korean.

My basic level of Japanese came to serve me ten years later when I married a Japanese American and found how much I could do with all four skills of the language with family members that do not read/write Japanese but speak it and those that do not speak English. I found my basic study of Chinese has served me over time in acquiring Korean for Sino-based words. I have found that my minimal elementary Chinese served me well in supporting students of Chinese when in an academic support role for such language learners. I found that while living in Korea, I was able to do all routine daily tasks independently in Korean.

Insights for Instruction

Classroom activities most often offer controlled contexts where teachers provide structured exercises with specific language forms and vocabulary, so beginners can focus on mastering basic language elements, such as sentence structure, grammar rules, and vocabulary.

Semi-controlled contexts, however, offer learners a bit more freedom to apply what they've learned in a more creative way. This is maybe more akin to beginner learner using the language in a real-life context, as not all parameters are controlled. In such activities, students can use the language in sentences that they construct themselves, but with some guidance or prompts. Student can move beyond practicing a dialogue in a specific context using new vocabulary or form sentences around a topic of interest with a set structure provided by the teacher. The activity can remove some level of scaffolding to foster students' motivation and proficiency development. The balance between structure and creativity allows students to gain confidence in applying the language while still receiving support in developing accuracy.

What I learned most from my experience as both a teacher and a language learner is how activities with less scaffolding allow beginner students to actively use language and notice how much can be achieved. Even if their vocabulary is limited or their grammar isn't perfect, they can express themselves, engaging in simple conversations, and understanding basic messages. It's empowering to see how, even at the beginner stage, students are capable of communicating meaning.

Conclusion

Despite the recognition of the importance of culture in international research for the learning of additional languages, L2s, and FLs, teaching is still mostly based on a monolingual perspective and monoglossic ideology, excluding plurilingual practices among speakers, commonly considered non-competent users of the target language, and hindering the linguistic development of people who want to communicate in a wide range of codes. In other words, language is still taught as a fixed system of formal structures (Esquicha, 2022; Ramirez et al., 2018). Furthermore, even though teachers and prospective teachers consider culture and intercultural competence important in language teaching, and tend to develop positive attitudes towards multicultural learners, most of them have not received special training in intercultural communication, and have difficulties in planning and implementing intercultural activities in their classes, persisting in monolingual teaching practices (Esteban-Núñez, 2021; Hoang, & Vien, 2019; Köşker, & Gülmez, 2018; Kustati et al., 2020; Lorenz et al., 2021; Żammit, 2021).

In this sense, aware of the importance of the role of L2s and FLs teachers as facilitators of an effective and relationally enriching learning environment that can nurture the plurilingual identity of their students (Nigar, & Kostogriz, 2024), we hope to have contributed, with our own experiences as additional language learners, to increase critical personal reflection and teacher identity development in language teachers for effective teaching and learning (Shank et al., 2022). A teaching and learning where technology plays and will continue to play a pivotal role (Park, & Mac Donald, 2022), with the pedagogical challenges associated with its implementation needing to be addressed (Lee, 2018). Most importantly, our reflective exploration highlights how teachers, as language learners, can bring a distinct and informed perspective to their instructional practices. By critically reflecting on their own language-learning journeys, we are well positioned to implement more empathetic, student-centered approaches that address the diverse needs of their learners. Not only our, but also your, firsthand experiences, from navigating grammatical complexities to experiencing the satisfaction of linguistic progress, offer valuable insights that can enhance both teaching effectiveness and learner engagement.

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Member Submission I – Language is Mediated Globally and Generationally: Four Illustrations

Roger W. Anderson

As a world language educator and extracurricular language learner, I am always attentive to the language that people use.

Four recent anecdotes reminded me of the complexities of language, and of learners' need to moderate their language depending upon their interlocutor. In sharing them, I hope they serve as reminders for language educators of these complexities, even within English.

Monterey is a hack to California.

A 24-year-old man originally from another state recently told me this. I am a 40-year-old resident of Monterey, also originally from another state. "Say what?", I asked him. He repeated verbatim his idea. "A *hack*?!", I said, clearly getting defensive. He clarified what he meant: Monterey is an abbreviated version of the entirety of California: visiting the city affords visitors a small tour of the whole state, as it is a geographic microcosm of all California environments to him: mountains and forests, sand dunes and desert, and lovely ocean waters.

Without his clarification, I was adrift, if not on edge. To me, a "hack" invokes a "political hack", meaning a person of little substance who is willing to do the bidding of more powerful political forces. Or, a "hack" is also what sent my credit score into the toilet, with a malicious person having stolen my identity and linked their phone bill to a phony South Carolina home address linked to my social security number.

To my interlocuter, who belongs to a younger generation than mine, a "life hack" was the most readily-invoked collocation, a phrase used in YouTube videos (and elsewhere, I'm sure) in which people demonstrate simple home remedies or tricks they have uncovered to solve small but annoying obstacles of one's daily life.

Both of us being native speakers of English from the Eastern part of the United States. We were sharing the same vocabulary but not the same connotation.

The conversation immediately felt me feeling old.

Next *next* Saturday

On Saturday mornings, I participate in an online Mandarin Chinese class. Our instructor taught us the the expressions for "last month, next month, last week, next week". Having read ahead in our textbook, I knew how to express "the week after next". I shared with the class that as a former ESL instructor, I always got a chuckle hearing my L1 Mandarin speaking students talk about this idea by repeating the word "next" before saying the day. My instructor, a friendly Taiwanese-American veteran instructor, said, "Oh, is that not how you say it?".

We all had a good laugh, and I explained that saying "next *next* Saturday" would not impair my intelligibility so long as I knew (had sufficient cues) that the speaker's L1 was Mandarin Chinese. If however, an L1 Arabic speaker said the same expression, I may not have understood, as "next next (day)" is not a common collocation in Arabic dialects with which I am familiar. While the first hit on Google yielded a castigation of this expression as "Chinglish", which should be "avoided" (Dreyer Coaching, 2025), I suspect that most well-intentioned English speakers in a work setting would be able to deduce the meaning and not find it offensive.

Don't release anything!

A French-teaching colleague of mine left feedback to a student in English. Using a direct (Cont.)

Member Submission I – (Cont.)

translation of French, she wrote, “don’t release anything!”, which could also be translated as “Release nothing!”. In American English, this has no comprehensible meaning. It does not convey encouragement. A more socio-culturally mindful interpretation (per WordReference.com) is to “keep on trying”, or “never give up” (Wordreference.com, 2025). I am sure the student was confused upon reading the interdiction on releasing... something.

I always remind my students when encountering idiomatic expressions that languages are not mathematics: in any world language, it is sometimes the case that $1 + 4 = 16$. Becoming increasingly comfortable with this deceptive aspect gets easier after the initial bitter taste.

The thirty-second test

Dr. Sarah Payne is a professor at the U.S. Naval War College. Her pithy videos on YouTube intersperse her discussions of historical antecedents to today’s geopolitical conflicts with imagery and video of the subjects she is discussing. So insightful, so consumable, I can binge watch a dozen in one sitting.

In one video, the interviewer asks her how inquisitive students of history can tell the difference between worthwhile books on history and books of lesser quality. The telltale sign of historical works without merit and should be avoided, she said, are those books about a particular region whose reference lists cited in the book contain no or little sources in a language of that region. She calls this “the 30 second test”. She questions her (presumably English-speaking) audience, “How many of you would be interested in reading a book that says to know everything about the United States, and there’s not a single English language source cited in it?” (Dwarkesh Clips).

In this way, Dr. Paine positions monolingualism as antithetical to expertise in historical and international relations.

The Take-Away

Language learning entails the re-wiring of the brain in a new way. Language use itself can be complex, even amongst native speakers! Differences exist in vocabulary between generations, between native and non-native speakers, which may or may not impair intelligibility. Verbatim translations from one language to another may confound more than communicate. And yet, bilingualism, and thus language learning and maintenance, are of critical importance in understanding others, and claiming to possess such an understanding with a modicum of validity. Language learners must learn these lessons, one way or another, if they are to progress into proficiency second language users.

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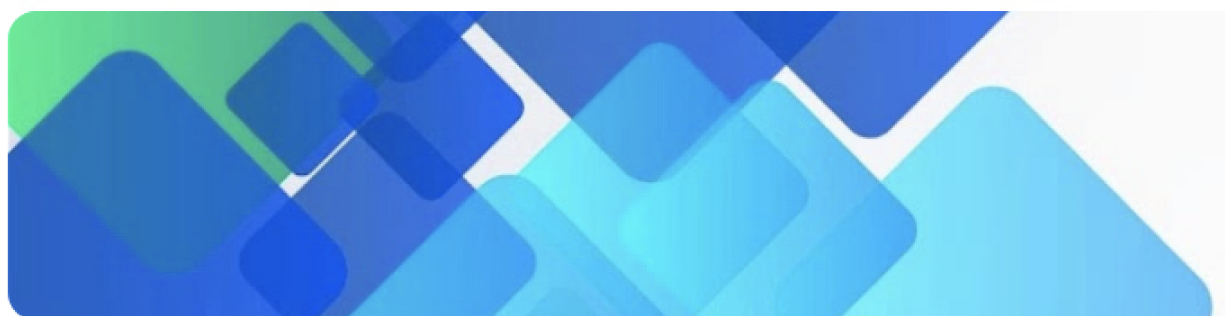
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Member Submission II: Cognitivism in Language Learning: Bridging the Gap Between Student-Centered and Language-Centered Methods

Ragaa Shenouda & Onsy Shenouda

Educational theorists have long contributed to our understanding of how students learn best. Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory is especially influential, offering valuable insights into how learners process and internalize information over time. Although Piaget's work initially focused on children, his theories are equally applicable to adult education, particularly in structured settings like second language instruction. This article explores the relevance of Piaget's theory in second language acquisition, examining its impact on instructional strategies and classroom dynamics.

Understanding Cognitivism

Cognitivism shifted the focus from observable behaviors to the internal mental processes that govern learning, emphasizing how learners acquire knowledge and comprehend the world (Scholnik & Abarbanel, 2016). This theory positions learners as active participants, engaged in perceiving, remembering, learning, thinking, and problem-solving. In the context of second language acquisition, cognitivism suggests that learning a new language involves active mental processes rather than just habit formation. Learners build understanding by drawing on prior knowledge, recognizing patterns, making inferences, and applying rules (Schmidt, 1990).

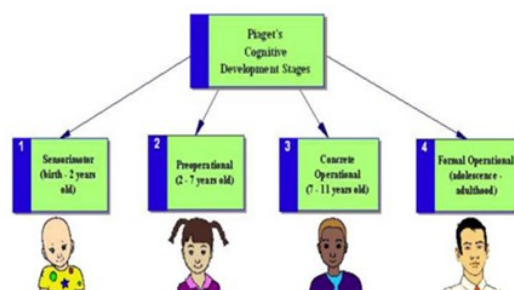
Effective language instruction should support these mental processes by offering meaningful activities, promoting active thinking, and fostering metacognitive awareness. Cognitivism, which influences contemporary teaching methods, underscores that language learning is an active mental effort rather than a passive practice.

Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development outlines four sequential stages, each characterized by increasingly sophisticated cognitive abilities (Piaget, 1973). The theory stresses that these stages occur in a fixed order, which educators must consider when designing age-appropriate instruction (Heo et al., 2011) as follows:

1. **Sensorimotor Stage** (birth to 2 years): Knowledge is gained through sensory experiences and motor actions. Infants develop concepts like object permanence and the foundation of language.
2. **Preoperational Stage** (2 to 7 years): Memory, imagination, and language emerge, but thinking is still egocentric and limited.
3. **Concrete Operational Stage** (7 to 11 years): Logical operations can be applied to concrete objects, but abstract thinking is still developing.
4. **Formal Operational Stage** (12 years and up): Abstract thinking and systematic reasoning develop, allowing for deductive reasoning and hypothetical scenarios.

Figure 1: Stages of Cognitive Development



The Cognitive Challenges of Effective Teaching

Effective teaching requires understanding the cognitive processes involved in learning. Educators face challenges such as addressing students' diverse mental mindsets, promoting skills like metacognition and self-regulation, and fostering an environment of trust and engagement. Additional barriers include students' prior knowledge gaps, misconceptions, and in-

ineffective learning strategies, all of which complicate knowledge transfer to new contexts. Awareness of these cognitive challenges is essential for creating a learning environment that encourages deep understanding (Chew & Cerbin, 2021).

Instructional Activities Aligned with Cognitive Theory

In the language classroom, cognitive theory can be applied by designing activities that engage students' minds at different stages of language development. Early activities may include hands-on methods, repetition, visual aids, and contextual clues to help solidify vocabulary and grammatical structures (Wirag & Zhang, 2022). Activities that promote deeper cognitive processing, such as summarizing texts, comparing linguistic structures, and engaging in debates, are key as learners progress. Further, strategies that require students to manipulate and organize information, such as using graphic organizers or solving real-world problems in the

target language, enhance active language construction (Castro-Alonso et al., 2021). In addition, recent research supports the "i+1 principle," which provides comprehensible input slightly above the learner's proficiency level to stimulate cognitive engagement and support language acquisition.

Student-Centered vs. Language-Centered Approaches

In language education, two main instructional approaches – student-centered and language-centered – offer distinct methods for fostering linguistic proficiency (Wirag & Zhang, 2022). The student-centered approach emphasizes learner autonomy, collaboration, and the active construction of knowledge. It encourages students to take ownership of their learning through meaningful, real-world tasks. In contrast, the language-centered approach focuses on mastering linguistic forms such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation through structured practice and explicit instruction. Both methods have their merits, and a balanced application can address both communicative competence and linguistic accuracy, depending on learners' needs and stages of development.

Student-Centered Approach Activities

Student-centered learning places students at the core of the educational experience, encouraging autonomy, creativity, and collaboration, helping learners develop both language skills and interpersonal abilities. Key activities include:

Role-Play Simulation: The teachers design the scenario (e.g., a press conference, political debate, interview show). Then, they assign or allow students to choose roles (journalist, politician, citizen, etc.). They also should provide background information, relevant vocabulary, and sample question prompts, and demonstrate a short example of how the role-play might proceed. Students take on roles (e.g., journalist, politician) to enact real-world scenarios. This activity aims to develop authentic speaking skills, creativity, and critical thinking.

Project-Based Learning (PBL): The teachers present a broad, open-ended topic or driving question (e.g. "How can we promote environmental sustainability in our school?"). Then, they organize students into groups and clarify project expectations, timeline, and assessment criteria (rubric). Students should collaborate in teams to divide research responsibilities, gather information from credible sources, and synthesize findings. This activity strengthens research, collabora-

(Cont.)

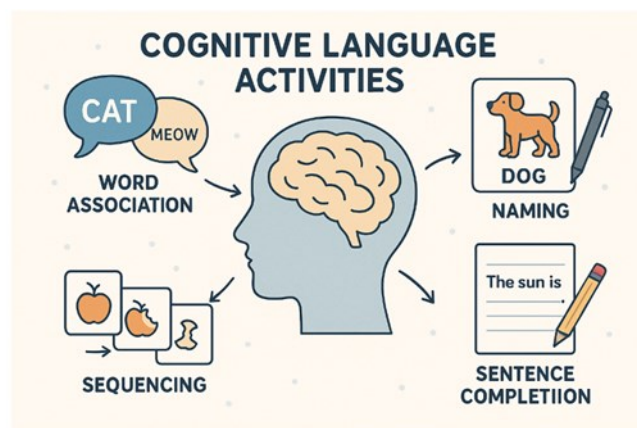
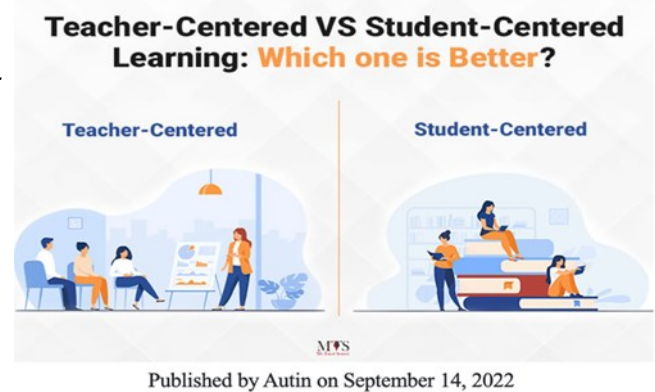


Figure 2: Generated by ChatGPT

Peer Teaching: The teachers assign or allow students to choose language topics (grammar points, idioms, writing structures, etc.). Then, they provide guidelines and examples for creating mini-lessons (e.g., a short explanation, an example, a practice activity). This activity deepens understanding of language topics while building leadership and communication skills.

Interactive Story Building: The teacher sets the story's initial theme or opening line (e.g., "It was a dark and stormy night when..."). Then, they ask students to clarify rules (e.g., each student must add 2-3 sentences, respect previous story parts, keep the story coherent). Learners collaboratively create a story, enhancing imagination, creativity, and language negotiation skills. This activity enhances creativity, collaboration, and spontaneous language production.



Language-Centered Approach Activities

The language-centered approach focuses on mastering the technical aspects of the language. These activities prioritize accuracy and mastery, equipping students with the necessary linguistic tools for effective communication. Activities include:

Drill and Repeat: The teachers select a target sentence structure and model the correct pronunciation and stress by saying the sentence slowly and clearly. Then, they ask students to repeat the sentence as a group several times, followed by individual repetition. This activity aims to improve students' pronunciation, stress patterns, and grammatical accuracy.

Gap-Fill Exercises: The teachers prepare a short text, paragraph, or set of isolated sentences with strategically omitted words (verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, etc.). Then, they ask students to fill in the blanks individually or in pairs. This activity aims to reinforce vocabulary usage and grammar structures through active recall.

Error Correction Races: The teachers create a short passage or list of sentences containing intentional grammatical errors. They then divide students into small teams and challenge each team to race to find and correct as many errors as possible within a time limit. This activity sharpens students' editing skills and promotes team-based critical thinking.

Dictation: The teachers choose or create a short text (100-150 words is a good length). Then, they read the text aloud at a moderate pace while students listen and write down what they hear. Afterwards, students compare their versions to the original text, correcting their mistakes. This activity strengthens listening accuracy, spelling, punctuation, and grammar awareness.

Conclusion

Cognitivism provides significant insights into the mechanisms of second language learning, highlighting learners' proactive involvement in knowledge construction. By comprehending and implementing Piaget's phases of cognitive development, educators can more effectively customize their teaching strategies to align with their students' cognitive capacities, regardless of whether they utilize a student-centered or language-centered approach.

The student-centered approach promotes learner autonomy, creativity, and collaboration. It enables students to assume educational responsibility through meaningful, real-world tasks. In contrast, the language-centered method emphasizes the mastery of linguistic structures, guaranteeing

(Cont.)

that learners establish a robust foundation in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Both methodologies possess advantages, and a judicious amalgamation of the two can foster an ideal educational setting that caters to cognitive advancement and linguistic competence.

The essence of effective language instruction is the acknowledgment of the cognitive mechanisms involved in learning and the creation of activities that foster active participation, analytical reasoning, and practical application. Educators can improve students' language acquisition by connecting pedagogical practices with cognitive concepts, rendering the learning process more effective, pleasurable, and significant.

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The CATESOL Journal recently published its most recent Special Theme issue, Interactive, and Intelligent Uses of Technology in Multilingual Classrooms, with Lis Kamhi-Stein and Sharin Jacob as issue editors. Take some time to explore the articles for your enjoyment, instructional practice and professional develop. [HERE](#).

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Volume 35.1

Editor's Note

Introduction to the Special Theme issue "Innovative, Interactive, and Intelligent Uses of Technology in Multilingual Classrooms"

Kamhi-Stein, Lía; Jacob, Sharin

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The CATESOL Journal is the official journal of CATESOL. It is a refereed academic journal published twice a year. The CATESOL Journal is listed in Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts (LLBA), and the full text is available through the EBSCO's Education Source database. Articles in The CATESOL Journal focus on theory, research, pedagogy, and educational policy related to the teaching of English to speakers of other languages, including US-born bilinguals, Generation 1.5 students, immigrants, and international students. Articles may focus on any educational level, from kindergarten to university, as well as on adult school and workplace literacy settings.

Activities for the Classroom: Authentic Materials in FL ³⁰ **and ELL Teaching and Learning**

Sun Young Park & Kara Mac Donald

In an ESL environment, ELLs live in an L1 English speaking context, so it could be assumed that they have constant exposure to real-world English – whether it's through signs, advertisements, interpersonal-social interactions, social media or news media sources. These authentic materials can serve to help ELLs bridge the gap between classroom learning and daily, real-life language use. Additionally, it could be understood that they help ELLs navigate their environment by learning the language that is used in real, practical contexts, making the learning process more immersive. So, some may argue that authentic materials to varying degrees based on the ELLs' level may not be as vital for learners in the ESL context as they are in the EFL context. Although the way they are used may differ based on the learners' needs, environment and exposure to English, they also serve an essential instructional material to develop learners' skills for real-life use and serve to foster motivation and sustain interest in the ESL context.

The authors explore the use of authentic materials in the language classroom in the distinct contexts of L2 language learning in a L1/native speaking context compared to learning the L2 in one's home country context (i.e., learners' L1/native language context). To do so, they draw on action research (hereafter Study 1) examining the use of the authentic materials in the FL classroom (i.e., Korean) in a university context in California, where the learners' L1 is English (i.e., representative of an EFL context for ELLs), and an case study reflective project (hereafter Study 2) of a learner of Korean as an L2 in a university context in Korea, where the learner's L1 is English (i.e., representative of an ESL context for ELLs). Study 1 examined the perspective of teachers' use of authentic materials in their classroom instruction, and Study 2 examined the perspective of a learner around the value of authentic materials in classroom instruction. Although understandings from the outcomes of each study are from distinct perspectives, they serve as complimentary information to advocate for the use of authentic materials for ELLs in an ESL context.

Benefits and Challenges in Using Authentic Materials

Authentic materials are created to convey information to target language (TL) speakers for real-world communication, rather than for educational purposes (Thomas, 2014). Because these materials are not deliberately structured to review previously learned concepts – such as vocabulary, grammar, thematic content, or cultural context students must interpret unfamiliar elements in context. This process requires them to use higher-order thinking skills and apply reading or listening strategies to comprehend the material efficiently. Early exposure to authentic content in a course helps students begin developing and using these strategies effectively (A.E., n.d.).

Additionally, since the presentation of authentic materials allows students to engage with language in an authentic way in extracting meaning from a text, rather than to recognize memorized vocabulary and structures in textbook content to assess mastery of those forms (Villegas Rogers & Medley, 2008).). As a result, instead of assessing comprehension of textbook material through a purely summative activities through comprehension questions of finite information authentic materials can be leveraged to text's content, implications, etc. The same can be done with textbook material, but the nature of curriculum development and textbook use is that students may not always be addressing the most timely and salient issues (Srinivas Rao, 2019).

Lastly, TL authentic material is readily available and easy to find online. The use of a variety of genres and text mediums (i.e., TV shows, radio broadcasts, songs, podcasts, photographs, (Cont.)

Activities for the Classroom-(Cont.)

train schedules, blogs, etc.) offer students from very long levels to advanced levels access to authentic TL content that communicates social, cultural, historical, political, etc. topic relevant material (Febrina, 2017; Joraboyev, B. B. O. (2021).

Challenges in Using Authentic Materials

Authentic materials often contain complex language, less common vocabulary, and culturally specific references, which can be difficult for language learners to grasp. However, these are just a few of the many challenges involved in using authentic materials in the classroom. One significant issue is that these materials are situated within a broader target language context and often exhibit intertextuality, that is, their meaning is shaped by connections to other texts. Additionally, the content and purpose of such texts may involve multiple modes of communication (e.g., orientational, instructive, evaluative, or persuasive) (Child, 2008), making it harder for learners to discern the intended message.

Moreover, authentic texts can include linguistic and cultural elements that span more than one ILR Skill Level Descriptor (Interagency Roundtable, 2021), introducing further complexity in both language and cultural comprehension. As a result, teachers often need to dedicate considerable time to finding materials that are appropriate for their students' proficiency levels or to modifying existing content. Yet, modifying an authentic text compromises its authenticity, as it has been tailored for instructional use. While there are instances when adapting a text is necessary or beneficial, it is important to acknowledge that the text is no longer truly authentic once altered.

If the goal is to expose students to authentic materials to enhance their language development, then it becomes the teacher's responsibility to carefully select level-appropriate texts, provide necessary scaffolding, and equip students with strategies for navigating challenging content. Additionally, instructors must be mindful of potential copyright concerns, depending on how the materials are used.

Insights from Study 1 - Teachers' Perspective in Teaching Korean in the US

All 17 Korean instructors in one department in the Korean language schools at a university in California responded that using authentic materials was essential in teaching. 94.2% of respondents said that authentic materials would make learning more meaningful for students and be essential for language learning respectively. Respondents mentioned that use of authentic materials encouraged students' active participation in learning (88.2%), increased students' cultural understanding (94.2%), and enhanced real-world application (94.2). 82.3% of respondents replied that authentic materials suit the standard of current curriculum. Regarding the role for test preparation, 70.6% strongly agreed that authentic materials are critical for test preparation, 5.9% agreed with the statement, and 17.6% were neutral on their role of test preparation. The findings indicated that the participants acknowledged that using authentic materials in class had a range of benefits and was critical for course learning objective and real-world use.

However, the participants acknowledged challenges in using authentic materials. 35% expressed that finding appropriate authentic materials was one of the major challenges, and 24 % reported time constraints as a challenge, followed by workload (18%), complexity of materials for students' level (12%), students' resistance (6%), and other factors (6%).

Nonetheless, they stated that they use authentic material hourly (18%), on a daily basis (71%) and on a weekly basis (12%). 64.28% stated they use authentic materials from early in Beginner level instruction, including in some case for textbook/curriculum topic presentation. 21.42% shared that they wait until learners are advanced beginners and intermediate, and beyond, to use authentic materials in instruction.

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Activities for the Classroom – (Cont.)

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Insights from Study 2 – Learner’s Perspective in Learning Korean in South Korea

The learner observed that during their studies, which included two semesters at one university, one semester at another university, and one semester at a city government language center, the use of authentic materials in the classroom was severely limited. Instruction primarily followed the textbook. Learning Korean in a Korean language immersion setting can be overwhelming, as the learner reported a focus primarily on language content necessary for routine tasks and daily functioning, although an immense amount of authentic language was available (i.e., signs, advertisements, interpersonal-social interactions, social media or news media sources). Encounters with low-frequency tasks were typically addressed through preparation, with an emphasis on language use and interaction relevant to those specific situations.

In retrospect, the learner reported feeling highly competent in performing daily tasks and engaging in social interactions with both international students and Koreans. However, through the case study project, the learner recognized that their basic fluency in all language skills, particularly within familiar or adapted settings for foreign language students, hindered their ability to engage with and fully recognize the wealth of authentic material available outside of the classroom. With the goal of communicative ability for immediate needs, there was not a conscious awareness of slow growth in language due to functional ability, and the ability to use L1 (i.e. English) community support with Korean English bilingual speakers in varying situations of need.

FL Study 1 and Study 2 Implications for ELLs in the ESL Context

ELLs live, study and/or work in English speaking California communities. They are K-12 students, university students, hold service and skilled professional employment, and have families they support in distinct ways (i.e., a parent to a child, a child to a sibling, and/or a grandparent to a grandchild). This is stated to suggest that although exposed to a wealth of authentic materials outside of the classroom, possibly ELLs across varying demographics may become comfortable in what they can do with English, because life is busy, and may need/have come to rely on community and family for English language support.

Like the Korean teachers in Study 1, there may be a large use of authentic material introduced into classroom instruction with early Beginner level learners, but we also saw teachers in that study reserving authentic materials for farther advanced learners. This was also reflected in the Korean learner in Study 2, where it appears instruction was guided predominantly by the course textbook. This is not to suggest that other instructors at those three institutions did not use authentic materials to a larger degree across a variety of instructional levels.

From the comparison of the two data sets, highlights that language teachers acknowledge the value in using authentic materials, even from early in the learners’ level of proficiency. The reluctance of teachers’ use of authentic materials until later proficiency levels is noted as well as the challenges in identifying level appropriate authentic material and the design of instructional scaffolding associated with such content. However, drawing on the data from the language learner it was stated that once functional needs in the target language community/society were fulfilled there was only incidental learning from authentic materials in the target language context, as instructional was limited to curriculum and textbook deemed level-appropriate topics developed or adjusted for learners. (Cont.)

Activities for the Classroom – (Cont.)

Such instruction alone does not fully meet the needs of ELLs in language classroom who are living and building a personal, family and/or academic or professional reality and future in California. Facilitating students' learning process with authentic materials requires teachers' solid knowledge of curriculum, individual students, and instructional strategies as teachers need to determine dimensions and types of instructional scaffolding. Teachers should expand as appropriate various scaffolding methods, going beyond the provision of key vocabulary and background information, to address diverse needs and expectations of students.

Conclusion

While the importance of authentic materials in both ESL and EFL contexts is comparable, the context of use differs slightly. In ESL, learners have more opportunities for immersion and authentic language use in their daily lives, while in EFL, authentic materials serve as a vital link to language use outside the classroom, helping learners bridge the gap between classroom knowledge and real-world communication. In both cases, authentic materials foster language acquisition, cultural understanding, engagement, and practical skills, making them a fundamental tool for learners.

References



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CATESOL Blog Update – Two Book Review Formats Available³⁵ for 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 an introduction to the overall book chapter summaries, as well as a Conclusion to the overall book review. The length 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 an 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 not 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 text may be new to a recent TESOL graduate entering the field. Or a long used faithful book 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-

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.

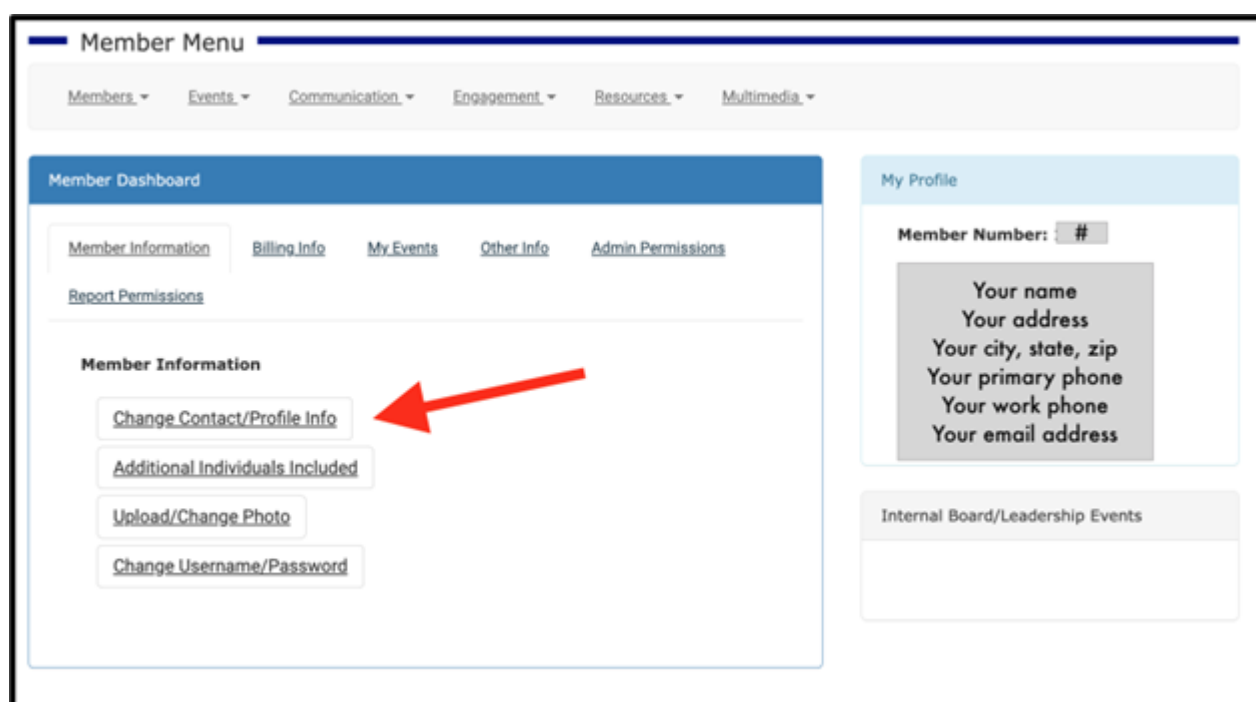
View and edit your new and improved profile

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

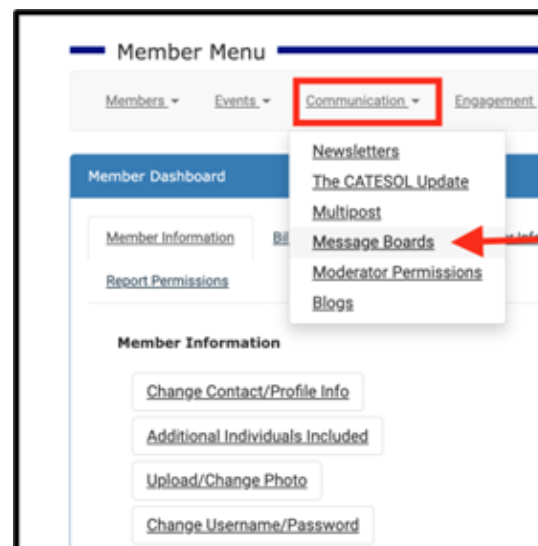
Selecting a group in any of the three categories—Levels, Interest Groups, and Chapters—will automatically connect you to peers in the identically named **Message Board**, a feature of the associated project/committee (the term used by Memberleap, our association management software). (Cont.)

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 2025

Write up a short brief for an upcoming Chapter or Interest Group event to advertise events you have planned in 2025. 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

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2-Pack for \$40

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CATESOL-branded bottle

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

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
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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.

