December 2025 VOLUME 58 ISSUE 4

CATESOL NEWSLETTER

SERVING TEACHERS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Letter from the CATESOL President

Dear CATESOL Family,

As we get closer to celebrating this holiday season and preparing to welcome 2026, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your dedication, your spirit of volunteerism, and your unwavering commitment and support to the English Language Learners and the communities we serve. I would also like to thank you for electing me and for giving me this very unique honor and privilege to serve as the President of CATESOL. I will do everything I can to justify your trust in me. This holiday season invites us to pause, reflect, and recognize the extraordinary work ESOL educators do every single day—often quietly, often behind the scenes, yet always with profound impact.

The 2025 CATESOL State Conference (Stronger Together: Community, Empowerment, and Collective Action), held at Chabot College in Hayward, clearly demonstrated what is possible when passionate educators come together with a shared purpose. I thank the conference organizers for their very hard work and the conference attendees for their support and active participation. You have collaborated across schools, libraries, colleges, and universities; you have mentored new teachers, supported multilingual learners, and advocated for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, thereby demonstrating your commitment to excellence in education. Whether you presented at conferences, engaged in professional development, contributed to committees, or served at your local (Cont.)

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chapter, interest group, or level, you strengthened not only our organization but also the future of education.

As we look to the New Year, I remain optimistic despite the financial strains imposed on educators and the education system. Together, we will continue to expand our programs, elevate teacher voices, deepen our commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and create innovative pathways that empower educators and learners alike. Our collective strength lies in our shared mission and in the extraordinary people who make up this association—YOU, CATESOLERS!
May this holiday season bring you peace, joy, and well-deserved rest. May the New Year open new doors, spark new ideas, and bring renewed energy to the important work we do. And may we continue to stand together—as colleagues, as advocates, and as a community committed to shaping a brighter future for all learners.

Thank you for your service, thank you for your passion, and thank you for your partnership. Wishing you a wonderful holiday season and a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

Best Regards, Sedique Popal
President California Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

Words from the Editor

Kara Mac Donald

The 2025 State-wide Conference was an amazing event. We have various submissions from CATESOL Education Award Winners and CATESOL presenters/attendees. In this issue we have several Member Submissions addressing a variety of topics. The newsletter is a success due to you as members. Thank you and when you have something to share, please think of the CATESOL Newsletter. Send submissions and article inquires to newsletter@catesol.org Thank you. Kara Mac Donald and Christina Masuda, Co-Editors of the Newsletter and Copy Layout Proof Reader, Siyi (Lois) Gao.

Happy Holidays to All.

CATESOL Chapters & Interest Groups

The CATESOL Newsletter

A great place to share

your activities and to foster member involvement.

newsletter@catesol.org

*Feature-*Stronger Together: 2025 Award Recipients

Coordinated by Tammy Wik and Talley Caruso, with Emily Wong

At the 2025 CATESOL Conference, the CATESOL Educational Foundation recognized several members for their exceptional contributions to the field. In this issue's Feature Article section, we are pleased to highlight select pieces from a few of these award recipients, showcasing the insight, innovation, and dedication reflected in their work.

Article #1: Humanizing Teaching, Learning, and Professional Community: Notes from the CATESOL Conference

Steffi Kaizer

When I attended the October 2025 CATESOL conference at Chabot College, I was struck not only by the vibrant energy of the participants but also by how many people contributed quietly and generously to making the event a success. I am not merely thinking of the plenary speakers and presenters who offered inspiring talks and well-researched sessions. Equally powerful were the small, steady, and unexpected acts of support happening everywhere. I saw colleagues carrying trays of food, handing out awards, photographing poster boards, ushering latecomers into rooms, and cheering one another on. Even in the weeks beforehand, the detailed and patient registration emails demonstrated the dedication of busy educators and administrators who gave their time to ensure attendees felt well supported. These acts sometimes go unnoticed, especially when things run smoothly, but are essential to the conference's success.

As one of the recipients of the CATESOL Education Foundation's Rick Sullivan Graduate Student Award this year, I was moved to reflect on the many students, educators, mentors, and peers who have shaped my growth over the years. This feeling was deepened by the joy of running into professors, colleagues, and graduate school classmates who continue to inspire and help sustain my teaching and pedagogy. Meeting my fellow awardees and the volunteers who accompanied us through the process underscored for me, once more, the collaborative labor that underlies both an event like this and our professional field as a whole. Rather than feeling like an individual achievement, the award highlighted how learning and education are relational and a public good. It is made possible through the guidance and generosity of so many who give their time and attention.

In a similar spirit, I was grateful to present my recent project, "*Empowering Educators: Professional Development Toward Humanizing, Actionable Pedagogy.*" This presentation focuses on the intersection of community-building, advocacy, and social justice through a liberatory lens, informed by approaches that challenge and transform the conditions shaping our English language learning curriculum, classrooms, and teacher training. Conversations sparked by this work reinforced for me how humanizing pedagogy can guide not only equitable classroom practice but also professional development, ensuring that educators, as well as learners, are encouraged and granted agency. Standing in front of the poster board, my colleagues and I exchanged generative ideas and thoughtful reflections, many of which I hope to carry forward into my own practice.

This sense of relational learning and collegial advocacy at the conference resonated with a recent discussion in my adult English language learning class. After a lesson on professions combined with comparative and superlative grammar, students debated which job they considered most important. One student, a trained electrician who had earlier helped me solve a classroom technology issue, called out, "The teacher is most important because the teacher teaches all of us." The class did not hesitate to agree wholeheartedly. I suggested that teachers depend on electricians, especially (Cont.)

especially when classroom technology must function reliably so that they can deliver their lesson. The electrician smiled, and in the end the class conceded that we need every individual's skills and that every effort matters for a collective to succeed.

Classroom moments like this remind us that we are interdependent and shaped by what each of us contributes.

Along similar lines, when a student became anxious about an upcoming oral presentation, hoping to ease his frustration about not learning English fast enough, I jokingly remarked that teachers need students as much as students need teachers. If everyone already knew everything, teaching jobs would cease to exist. The tongue-in-cheek comment had its desired effect, eliciting spontaneous laughter, and more importantly, helping the student relax enough to deliver his presentation successfully. This classroom scene exemplifies and is rooted in the principles of mutuality. It helps illustrate the idea that teaching and learning are shared endeavors, built on patience, vulnerability, and trust. It rests upon and is sustained by a humanizing approach to creating spaces where individuals are championed and empowered to engage as their whole selves.

These classroom experiences were very much with me throughout the conference. As I moved between thoughtfully prepared sessions, connected with colleagues, and observed dedicated volunteers at work, the same principle of collaboration was unmistakable. This sense of relationality was established from the very beginning, when the conference opened with a powerful land acknowledgment led by an Indigenous community member, a call to enter the space with an awareness of our positionality. Just as humanizing pedagogy emphasizes relationships, respect, and collective effort in the classroom, I saw these values expressed in the ways presenters, organizers, award committee members, and attendees shaped the conference. The leadership team, too, modeled this spirit, emphasizing that professional

community-building is a joint responsibility and providing members opportunities to imagine and to actively co-construct the culture of our professional space.

As a result, the conference became far more than a sequence of information sessions but it emerged as a space for genuine dialogue and connection among members from across California. I left feeling grateful for those launching new initiatives, such as the mentorship program, and for the many individuals who continue to make CATESOL a supportive and dynamic professional home. At a time when ESOL students and educators are increasingly positioned at the brunt of political, cultural, and institutional attacks, the need for collective care and communal action feels especially urgent. The conference was a clear reminder that our field thrives not because of any single person's endeavor but when we show up for one another and keep humanizing approaches at the center of what we do. Our profession is grounded in human connection across linguistic, cultural, racial, religious, and educational differences. Together we can ensure that our classrooms, board rooms, and other professional settings remain places where our shared commitments to respect, equity and justice for all are nurtured, celebrated, and lived.

Steffi Kaizer was the Recipient of the Rick Sullivan Award

Feature- (Cont.)

Article #2: From Award to Action: Reimagining Professional Development for Adult ESL Educators at SDCC

Ivonne Aguila Achard and Janet Foster

How the Sam Price Family Foundation Award Helped Us Build Practical Professional Development, Community Connection, and a Vision for a More Digital Future.

Presenting: Janet Foster, Elissa Claar, & Ivonne Aguila Achard

Accepting the Sam Price Family Foundation Award: Janet Foster & Ivonne Aguila Achard

When we learned we had been selected as Sam Price Family Foundation Adult Level Professional Development Awardees for the 2025 CATESOL Conference, we felt honored, humbled, and charged with responsibility. Like many adult ESL instructors at San Diego College of Continuing Education (SDCCE), we work with immigrant and refugee students who carry enormous strengths—and often enormous challenges—into the classroom.

Many of our colleagues teach at multiple campuses, juggle evening classes, parent-teacher responsibilities, community obligations, and endless preparation demands. We knew immediately that this award was not simply a chance for us to attend a conference; it was an opportunity to uplift our entire ESL teaching community.

Our commitment was clear:

"We will attend, learn, and bring it all back—clearly, respectfully, and in formats that honor teachers' time."

Tech-Enhanced Learning: Empowerment and Challenges in ESL Computer Labs

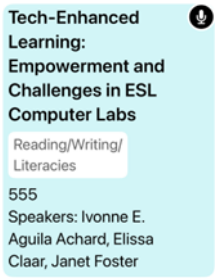
We were excited and pleased to share our knowledge and experience with successfully facilitating diverse multi-level ESL computer labs at the conference. Some of the issues we discussed in our presentation included: conducting labs with multi-lingual, multi-cultural, various ages, different technological skill levels, varied education—high levels of education to low-literacy, different learning styles, financial difficulties, and varied attendance among students.

What follows is the story of how our award-funded CATESOL experience has grown into a larger movement of accessible PD, community rebuilding, digital literacy advocacy, and curricular transformation at SDCCE.

GOAL 1: Why CATESOL Mattered for Our Teaching and Our Students (Cont.)

Feature- (Cont.)

That sentiment guided everything we did when we returned home.



GOAL 2: Our Outreach Plan — Designed for Busy Teachers

Before the conference even started, we submitted a PD-sharing plan as part of our Sam Price Family Foundation proposal. Our promises were:

✓ Quick-Share Handouts Via QR Codes

One-page summaries of techniques, tools, or lesson ideas.
Easy to print. Easy to save. Easy to use.

✓ Coffee-Break or Pronto Micro-Sessions

A "PD that fits in your commute or lunch break" approach.

15–25 minutes.
One strategy.
No pressure.
Bring your coffee and your curiosity.

✓ Lesson Plan Swap Event

A community-building gathering where teachers bring a favorite lesson and leave with many more.

These ideas were designed around a core truth:

Adult educators have enormous hearts and minimal time. Good PD must respect both.

GOAL 3: Returning Home — And Facing an Unexpected Change

When we returned from CATESOL—still energized and excited—
we encountered a big and unexpected shift:

Our computer labs were not scheduled for Spring 2026.

This meant no dedicated space for digital literacy instruction, no structured lab support for students, and no regular digital practice embedded into the program for the upcoming semester.

We realized immediately that:

all the digital tools we learned at CATESOL

all the strategies for mobile learning

all the low-tech and no-tech digital literacy ideas

(Cont.)

Feature- (Cont.)

…suddenly became not just relevant, but *critical*.

It felt like the conference had prepared us for a challenge we didn't know was coming.

One colleague shared:

"I rely on those labs. I'm worried about my beginning-level students. How will they learn to type? How will they learn Canvas? How will they prepare for job applications?"

We felt that worried too.

But we also felt possibilities.

Because just days after hearing this news, we were invited to be part of the **Course Outline revision team**, specifically helping design a **new Digital Literacy course**—one that could *revitalize and restore the computer labs in a more intentional, equitable, and sustainable way.*

The timing could not have been more meaningful.

GOAL 4: Building PD While Building Community

Because we want our PD to reach **the entire ESL faculty**, we initiated the formal process to schedule our **30-minute online workshop** through our Flex & Professional Development Coordinator.

✓ Our goal is to present in late January or early February 2026

This will allow the presentation to be in alignment with Flex week and the start of the Spring term.

✓ The purpose of the workshop:

share high-impact strategies we learned

demo 1–2 low-prep tech tools

distribute handouts

share links to videos, effective learning sites, and a progress tracking system

invite colleagues to our Spring Lesson Plan Swap

We are designing it to be concise, meaningful, and respectful.

As one instructor told us in a hallway conversation at the conference:

"If you give me one good idea I can use tomorrow, that's the best PD."

That message stayed with us.

GOAL 5: The Email Campaign — Spreading Awareness and Encouragement

While waiting for the official Flex approval, we didn't stay idle.
We wrote and sent an informative email to our dean to initiate sharing with our faculty:

CATESOL Education Foundation opportunities

Sam Price Family Foundation Award details

links to membership resources

highlights from our conference sessions

PD activities we are preparing (swapping lessons)

upcoming January/February workshop

(Cont.)

Feature- (Cont.)

We believe strongly in demystifying opportunities for our colleagues:

"If we can win this award, others can too—and our students benefit when more teachers are empowered."

Sharing information, opportunities, and lessons matters. They build community. They build hope. They build momentum.

Why Faculty Engagement Matters in Adult Education

Many adjunct instructors teach at multiple campuses

Most have little or no paid prep time

Many manage family responsibilities alongside teaching

PD should help—not overwhelm

Bite-sized PD honors time and strengthens practice

GOAL 6: Putting Our PD Tools Into Practice

Here are the four PD strategies we promised—and how they grew after attending CATESOL.

1. Quick-Share Handouts

These handouts covered such information as:

Trauma-informed warm-up routines

Culturally sustaining conversation tasks

Low-literacy vocabulary scaffolds

"Tech Lite" digital activities using students' phones

2. Coffee-Break Sessions (In-Person & Pronto)

We will launch short informal gatherings where:

One strategy is shared

Teachers ask questions

Teachers share variations

Energy stays light and friendly

3. The Lesson Plan Swap

This is our most exciting element.

We are preparing: i) a shared Google Drive; ii) a simple template; iii) a physical binder in faculty mailrooms; iv) instructions for contributing lessons; v) a once-per-semester or academic year swap event.

This idea—praised by the Sam Price Family Foundation judges—creates community and collaboration without overwhelming anyone.

Strengthening Local Connections: Attending the San Diego CATESOL Chapter Meeting

(Cont.)

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As part of our follow-up to the 2025 CATESOL Conference, we also attended the **San Diego CATESOL Chapter meeting**, which allowed us to continue the professional conversations we began at the conference. This chapter gathering provided a more intimate space to reconnect with presenters, learn about regional initiatives, and share how we planned to bring our conference takeaways to SDCCE. We had the opportunity to share what we learned at the conference with instructors from different districts. Participating in our local chapter reinforced the idea that professional growth does not end when the conference closes; it continues through ongoing community engagement, shared practice, and regional networking that strengthens our entire Adult Ed ecosystem.

GOAL 7: How CATESOL Changed Our Teaching—and Our Vision

CATESOL gave us more than strategies. It gave us direction.

Here are the biggest shifts:

✓ We think differently about low-literacy learners.

We now incorporate more repetition, more visuals, and more "small wins."

✓ We approach trauma-informed teaching with more confidence.

A presenter said:

"Safety and rhythm come before grammar."
We bring that into every lesson now.

(Cont.)

Feature- (Cont.)

✓ We feel empowered to advocate for digital literacy.

Losing the computer lab classes made us fierce defenders of digital equity.

✓ We see curriculum through a broader lens.

Joining the COR (Course Outline of Record) revision team helped us connect CATESOL's ideas with long-term program planning.

✓ We feel more connected to the statewide adult ed community.

It's comforting to know:
We are not alone in this work.

Goal 8: Looking Toward 2026 and Beyond

Thanks to the Sam Price Family Foundation Award:

We attended a transformative conference

We brought back accessible PD

We built new connections at SDCCE and beyond

We contributed to curriculum change

We found renewed passion for the work we do

Our expected January/February 2026 PD workshop is just the beginning.

We hope to expand our work into:

regular lesson plan swaps

collaborations with digital literacy instructors

multi-campus community-building events

mentorship opportunities for new instructors

And of course, we hope more colleagues will apply for CATESOL Education Foundation opportunities.

"When teachers grow, programs grow. And when programs grow, students thrive." (Cont.)

Feature- (Cont.)

Conclusion

The Sam Price Family Foundation Award has been a catalyst—not just for us, but for our faculty, our students, and even our college's future digital literacy development. It reminded us that professional development doesn't have to be long or complicated to be powerful. When it is practical, empathetic, and grounded in the realities of adult education, it enhances classroom instruction.

We are deeply grateful to:

The Sam Price Family Foundation

The CATESOL Education Foundation

Our SDCCE ESL & Citizenship Program Dean & Faculty

Our Flex & PD Coordinator

Our colleagues

The students who inspire every step of our work

We carry this award with pride and purpose, and we look forward to continuing the work it has begun.

Sam Price Family Foundation Adult Level Professional Development Awardees:

Recipients: Ivonne Aguila Achard & Jane Foster,

Rick Sullivan Awardees:

Recipients: Or Barzilay, Steffi Kaizer, Abigail Rogers, Linda Molin-Karakoc, Leidy Sanchez & Lydia Lu

Article #3: Linda Molin-Karakoc's Rick Sullivan Award Reflections

Linda Molin-Karakoc

Attending the CATESOL 2025 Conference at Chabot College in Hayward was a meaningful and uplifting experience. As a PhD candidate awaiting my defense and newly relocated to California, I approached the conference from a dual perspective: as a newcomer to the California TESOL landscape and as a long-standing TESOL professional. I hoped to connect with the local community, learn about emerging trends in teaching and research (especially those related to AI) and seek guidance on navigating the academic job market in my new context.

One of the most memorable aspects of the conference was the strong sense of community I experienced through volunteering. Volunteering at registration and welcoming attendees allowed me to meet people early on and see the thoughtful behind-the-scenes work that sustains the conference. Working alongside dedicated people such as Talley Caruso, Tammy Wiik, Anthony Burik, and Belinda Braunstein—among many others—was both fun and rewarding. Their professionalism and warmth reflected the ethos that makes CATESOL such a special organization. I felt this same spirit last year with Bahhiye Hardacre and Natasha Guerro, and it was motivating to experience it again. Volunteering gave me a way to contribute while connecting with people whose commitment is genuinely inspiring. I recommend this practice to anyone interested in meeting new people and understanding CATESOL as an organization.

Another valuable aspect of the conference was how networking emerged naturally. I appreciated conversations with seasoned educators who offered practical advice on transitioning into academic or professional roles during coffee or lunch breaks. I also had the chance to reconnect with some other early-career scholars navigating the job market as soon-to-be or recent graduates. One lunchtime conversation with a recent PhD graduate, Onur, whom I had met previously through shared networks was particularly unforgettable. We exchanged job-search strategies, compared experiences with hiring processes, and shared ideas about building professional visibility in California. These moments reminded me of the value of solidarity during times of transition. Meeting Emily Wong, the award coordinator, and other Rick Sullivan awardees was another special moment and conference highlight that added a layer of camaraderie and continuity as I build my professional network in a new context. Although I was unable to attend the ceremony itself due to a family emergency, I am deeply honored by the recognition.

My experience at the conference was further elevated by the many high-quality sessions that I attended. Choosing between overlapping presentations was difficult as always, yet I found that each offered something valuable for my research, teaching or possible career pathways. The opening keynote by Jeff Hutcheson from the TESOL International Association was both sobering and uplifting. Hutcheson's overview of policy challenges and funding cuts in English language education was a powerful reminder of the need for ongoing advocacy and his metaphor of quicksand, capturing the struggles and resilience of English educators, stayed with me. I especially appreciated his focus on teacher well

Feature- (Cont.)

myself included, are navigating uncertainty.

The session on "Creative TESOL Career Pathways", led by Kevin Wong and Ana Guzman, was equally impactful. Their message about embracing evolving professional identities and envisioning meaningful work beyond traditional boundaries felt timely as I near the completion of my degree. Their encouragement to share effective teaching practices with wider audiences also inspired me to think more broadly about disseminating my research, making it available beyond academia.

Another standout session was "AI for Assessment Design", presented by Sherry Schafer and Edgar Zardaryan. Their demonstration of an AI-supported design framework aligned with Bloom's Taxonomy and course objectives was both practical and clear. I especially valued their emphasis on AI as a tool to enhance teachers' reflective decision-making, not replace it. This aligns closely with my dissertation findings on how teachers are best supported when designing mobile-assisted language learning activities for refugee-background students. Moving forward, I plan to incorporate their framework into my practice when designing AI-supported assessments.

The presentation "Enhancing Equity and Belonging Among Newcomer Students", by Patricia Segura and Laura Einhorn, was similarly illuminating. Their presentation offered deep insights into newcomer programs in California, and many evidence-based strategies they shared, such as caring teacher attitudes, learner agency, and trauma-informed approaches, resonated with my own experiences working with newcomer students in other contexts. Collectively, the sessions reminded me that adaptability, creativity, and reflective practice are core strengths of English language educators. They helped me reflect on my own growth, values, and the kind of educator-researcher I aspire to be.
Looking back, I am deeply grateful for the Rick Sullivan Award, which made my conference attendance possible. I am equally thankful for the many meaningful conversations and connections that CATESOL 2025 enabled. I look forward to meeting more wonderful people next year and becoming even more involved in this generous and inspiring community.

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The Annual State-wide Conference is Your Event.
The CATESOL Education Foundation Exists to Serve You.
Chapter and Interest Group Exist to Serve You.
Take Advantage of all that CATESOL Offers you.

Conference Workshop Highlight- Microlearning Workshop For Teaching Pronunciation

Ingrid Bosetti

After attending many sessions at the 2025 CATESOL Conference, it was clear that AI emerged as a popular and common theme throughout the event. Therefore, I did not anticipate a large attendance for my session, but I was pleasantly surprised. [The accompanying photo shows attendees at my workshop including those seated, standing, and even sitting on the floor. Unfortunately, many who sat to the left of me are not included in this photo – my apologies for that oversight].

The beauty of conferences like CATESOL's lies in the shared community spirit and the exchanging of ideas and experiences, which is exactly what I encouraged during my session on Microlearning for Teaching Pronunciation. As the facilitator, I defined, described, and contextualized the concept of microlearning as a teaching strategy, providing examples of how to implement it into concise 10-minute lesson plans. I also offered handouts that included microlearning lesson plans and a list of online resources. Everyone recognized that microlearning is an effective instructional strategy suitable for all skill levels.

Throughout the workshop, the pronunciation teachers offered energetic, enthusiastic, and positive feedback. Many shared insights about their typical classroom set-ups, student demographics, and skill levels. Following a Q&A session, engaging discussions ensued, often generating new thoughts and ideas. For example, in addition to utilizing 10-minute microlearning lesson plans for segmental and suprasegmental features, we discussed using them for warm-up and/or wind-down exercises.

I felt honored to share my knowledge of microlearning as a teaching strategy with fellow pronunciation teachers. Everyone acknowledged the relevance of using microlearning in classes with varied skill levels and expressed enthusiasm about implementing the instructional approach in their own ESL classes. As the hour ended and participants hurried to their next sessions, I was deeply moved by the number of people who approached me to convey their thanks and appreciation for the workshop and the topic. My measurement for a successful teaching workshop includes a consistent flow of ideas, sharing of experiences, positive energy, and a relaxed atmosphere where humor can thrive. I would say that this CATESOL workshop was a significant success.

Member Submission I - Translanguaging, Peer Learning, and TZPD: Building Literacy in Bilingual Storytimes

Tamara Collins-Parks and Anita Arias

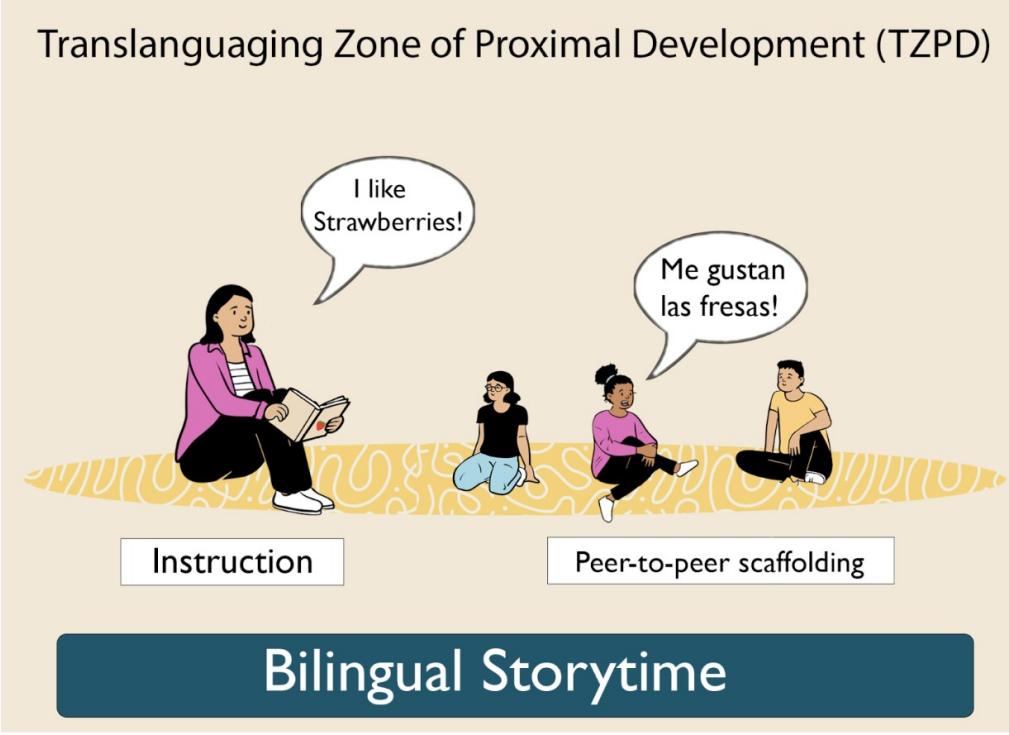
Introduction

By definition, English Language Development (ELD) classrooms aren't just about English. Because students enter them with another language of their own, all ELD classrooms contain multiple languages. Bilingual storytimes are a good way to capitalize on this resource. Bilingual storytimes include two or more languages for stories, songs, play, and peer interactions. They are more than shared readings; they are culturally sustaining spaces where multilingual children develop language, literacy, and identity (Naidoo, 2014). These moments can illustrate the *Translanguaging Zone of Proximal Development (TZPD*), a space where children learn with and from each other while using their full linguistic repertoires. These moments show us the power of translanguaging and peer learning in building early literacy and community, especially for the emergent bilingual learner. They operate in the Translanguaging Zone of Proximal Development.

What is the Translanguaging Zone of Proximal Development (TZPD)?

Vygotsky (1978) describes how children learn with the support of others. Knowledge or skills that they can achieve with this support are in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Ofelia Garcia's (2009, 2014) work on translanguaging shows how bilingual learners flexibly use all their languages to make meaning and learn. By combining these frameworks, the Translanguaging Zone of Proximal Development (TZPD) highlights how bilingual children use translanguaging with peers to scaffold each other's learning during literacy activities, allowing bilingual children to co-construct knowledge, build confidence, and strengthen cultural identity during storytime.

In Figure 1, the Translanguaging Zone of Proximal Development (TZPD) illustrates how translanguaging and peer scaffolding intersect within the ZPD to support bilingual children's literacy and learning. A good space to observe this process is during storytime.



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Member Submission I - (Cont.)

Figure 1
Translanguaging Zone of Proximal Development (TZPD)

Why Storytime Matters
Bilingual storytimes in community settings like preschools or libraries are powerful, low-barrier spaces for emergent literacy (García & Wei, 2014; Kress, 1997; Rogoff, 1990). They:

- Encourage children to use their full linguistic repertoires (often including multiple languages or dialects) while building language and literacy (García & Wei, 2014).
- Foster peer-to-peer learning and scaffolding (play, gesture, and storytelling), aligning with the ZPD framework (Rogoff, 1990).
- Build and support cultural connections and emergent literacy through culturally meaningful stories (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984).
- Enable multimodal engagement through gestures, movement, and dramatic play during storytelling (Kress, 1997).

All of these and more are visible during storytimes. These storytimes create environments where language, identity, and community can thrive.

Reflections from Bilingual Storytimes
Based on 20 years of observing and facilitating community bilingual storytimes in Southern California, we have noted the following strategies in action.

- Peer correction and modeling: Children support one another in learning new words, demonstrating ZPD in action (Rogoff, 1990).
- Story retelling and co-narration: Peers help each other remember and engage with stories.
- Spontaneous translanguaging: Children shift fluidly between languages, deepening comprehension and participation (García & Wei, 2014).
- Multimodal engagement: Children embody stories through gesture, movement, and dramatic play, enriching literacy development (Kress, 1997).
- Cultural connections: Children connect story content to home and family life, aligning with culturally sustaining pedagogy (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984).

These patterns show how storytime can serve as a living laboratory of literacy, identity, and community-building within the TZPD framework.

Practical Takeaways for Educators
Educators who want to take advantage of the ZPD to develop literacy during storytime with young multilingual learners should:

- Encourage bilingual storytimes at libraries.
- Let children translanguage naturally during classroom storytime.
- Use stories that invite participation, gestures, and sound play.
- Observe and encourage children helping each other with words and meanings through peer-to-peer learning moments.
- Recognize that translanguaging is not confusion; it is a tool for deeper learning and connection.
- Recognize that translanguaging is not confusion; it is a tool for deeper learning and connection.

(Cont.)

Member Submission I - (Cont.)

Closing Reflection

When we honor bilingual children's voices and languages, we create spaces where they can learn with and from each other. Through intentional practice, educators can transform storytime into a powerful site, whether in a classroom, a library, or a community setting. These small moments are building blocks for literacy, belonging, and joyful learning.

Have you observed moments of translanguaging and peer learning during your storytimes or in classrooms? We would love to hear your reflections.

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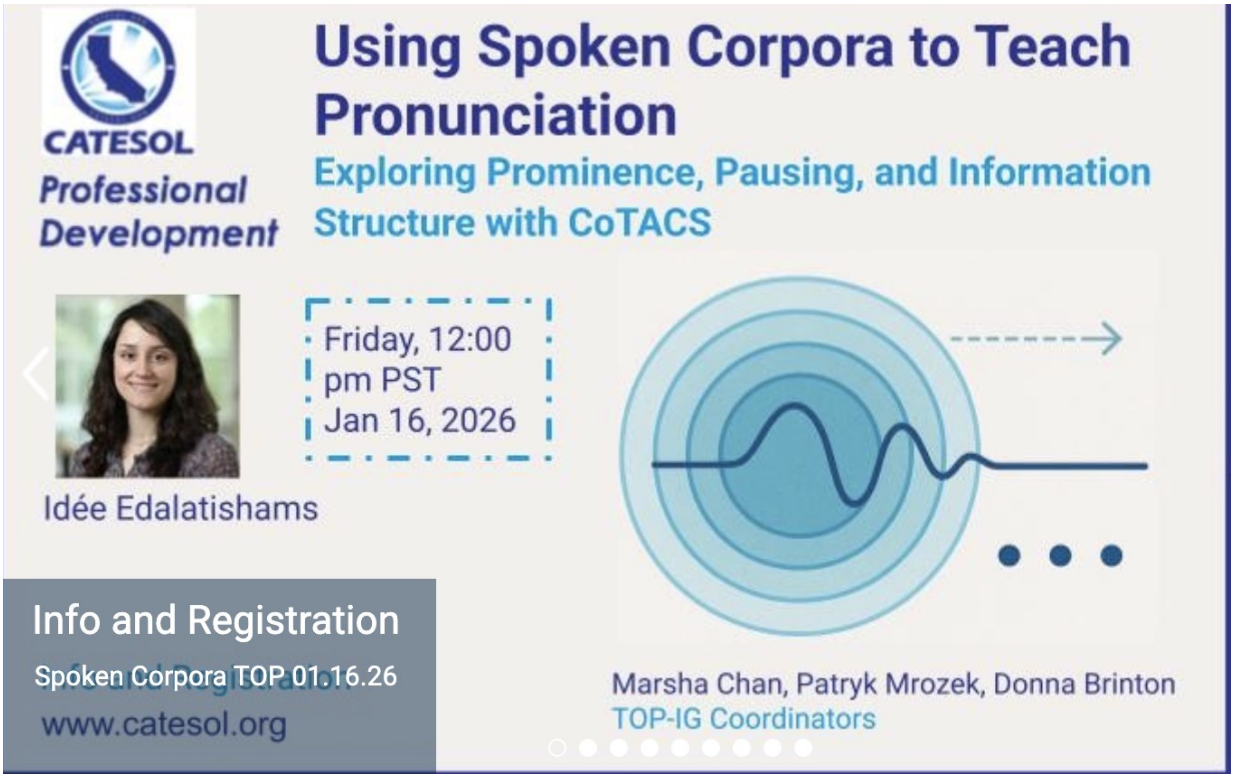

Guest Author: The Power of Reflection: Cultivating Teacher-Researchers in Language Classrooms

Habib Soumahoro

Abstract:
Reflective practice is a cornerstone of effective language teaching, allowing educators to continuously improve pedagogy, understand learner needs, and develop as teacher-researchers. This article explores practical strategies for integrating reflection into any language classroom, emphasizing inquiry-based approaches, collaborative reflection, and classroom-based research. Concrete examples illustrate how teachers can systematically analyze their practice, adapt instruction, and foster learner engagement across contexts, including hybrid and online learning environments.

Keywords: reflective practice, teacher-researcher, action research, professional development, language education, hybrid learning

Introduction

Language teaching is inherently complex, demanding attention to linguistic accuracy, cultural competence, and learner motivation. Beyond these technical requirements, teachers must also be self-aware practitioners, capable of critically analyzing their own teaching to improve student outcomes. Reflective practice transforms educators into teacher-researchers, combining classroom experience with systematic inquiry (Farrell, 2015; Schön, 1983).

Reflection is not merely introspection. It is a structured, iterative process in which teachers observe, analyze, and act on classroom experiences. In doing so, they develop evidence-based strategies, adapt pedagogical choices, and cultivate professional growth.

Reflection as a Tool for Teacher and Student Development

Research shows that reflective teachers are better equipped to:

- Identify learner needs and challenges.
- Adjust instructional strategies based on evidence.
- Foster learner autonomy and engagement.
- Contribute to professional knowledge through classroom-based research.

Student Impact Example: A teacher notices low participation in discussion-based tasks during online sessions. By reflecting on lesson pacing and scaffolding, the teacher introduces short breakout discussions, guiding questions, and visual prompts. Within two weeks, student participation rises from 40% to 85%, demonstrating the direct link between reflective practice and learner engagement.

Strategies for Cultivating Teacher-Researchers

1. Structured Reflection Cycles

Inspired by Schön's (1983) reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, teachers can use journals, observation checklists, or video recordings to reflect systematically. A simple cycle includes:

- **Observation:** Record a lesson or student interactions
- **Analysis:** Identify patterns, strengths, and challenges
- **Action:** Modify lesson plans or teaching strategies
- **Evaluation:** Assess the impact on subsequent lessons

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Guest Author Submission I – (Cont.)

Example: In a hybrid Spanish class, the teacher notices students struggle with gender agreement in written exercises. Reflecting on instructional sequencing, they introduce color-coded materials and brief peer-check activities. Over four weeks, error rates decreased by 30%.

Sample Reflection Template:

Date	Lesson Focus	Observation	Analysis	Action	Student Impact
10/02	Listening	Students confused by fast speech	Pre-listening vocabulary insufficient	Add pre-listening vocabulary sheet	Participation improved, comprehension scores +15%

2. Collaborative Reflection and Peer Observation

Reflection is often more powerful when shared. Teachers can collaborate in:

- Peer observation
- Professional learning communities
- Reflective discussion groups

These practices encourage dialogue about teaching choices, learner outcomes, and instructional innovations. Collaborative reflection strengthens teacher confidence and promotes shared solutions (Larrivee, 2000).

Example: Two French teachers observe each other's oral communication lessons. Through discussion, they discover that introducing cultural context before role-plays enhances student spontaneity and reduces anxiety, increasing oral participation by 50%.

3. Action Research in the Language Classroom

Action research involves identifying a problem, implementing a change, and evaluating results systematically (Burns, 2010).

Example: An English instructor notices students struggling with idiomatic expressions in writing. The teacher designs a mini study, introducing idiom journals and weekly peer review. After six weeks, students demonstrate improved idiom usage and confidence, showing the practical classroom benefit of research-driven reflection.

4. Integrating Reflection into Daily Practice

Reflection should be continuous, not limited to formal research. Simple strategies include:

- End-of-class notes
- Brief student surveys
- Self-assessment checklists

Example: After each lesson, a teacher writes: "Which activity engaged students most? Which concept caused confusion? What will I adjust next?" Over a semester, this creates a rich evidence base for instructional improvement, especially in online or hybrid settings.

(Cont.)

Benefits Across Contexts

Reflective practice is universal: it applies to K–12, adult education, higher education, and any language taught. Key benefits:

- Enhanced teacher autonomy, confidence, and adaptability
- Increased learner engagement, motivation, and outcomes
- Creation of a professional knowledge base for sharing best practices

Current Trend Connection: In hybrid or online classrooms, reflection helps teachers adapt to technological challenges, student disengagement, and diverse learning styles, ensuring quality instruction regardless of modality.

Conclusion and Call-to-Action

Reflection transforms language educators from practitioners to teacher-researchers, empowering them to make data-informed decisions and improve learning outcomes. Teachers are encouraged to:

- Implement structured reflection cycles
- Collaborate with peers for shared insights
- Engage in action research for problem-solving
- Document small reflections daily to guide long-term improvement

By embracing reflective practice, teachers not only refine their own instruction but also contribute to the broader educational community, preparing learners to thrive in increasingly complex, multilingual, and multicultural environments.

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Member Submission II - Language as Identity: Navigating Self and Culture as a Saudi Bilingual

Ibrahim Alshabi

1. Introduction

In recent years, linguistics researchers and theorists have regarded identity as a central focus of study (Mahmoodi-Shahrebabaki, 2018). Defining the concept of identity is surely not an easy task, nor is comprehending its intricate relationship with language. However, Bucholtz & Hall (2005) define identity as "the social positioning of self and other" (p. 586). They purposely use this broad definition as it is rather open-ended and acknowledges the dynamic and socially constructed nature of identity.

Language, according to Ortega (2009), is more than a means of communication; it is a tool for expressing cultural heritage, social belonging, and personal identity. Researchers, throughout history, have examined this connection using different lenses, including multilingualism, code -switching, linguistic capital, and language power dynamics (e.g., Blommaert, 2010; Bourdieu, 1989, 1991; García & Wei, 2014; Heller, 2020). Specifically, exploring how language shapes and is shaped by individual and group identities is considered a fundamental aspect of debate.

Therefore, given the intriguing interplay between language and identity, this paper attempts to shed light on how my linguistic journey influenced my identity. I will explore identity as a dynamic and socially constructed phenomenon, shaped through my engagement with languages and sociocultural contexts. Through an analysis of my personal experiences, I aim to examine how linguistic capital, multilingualism, and code switching shaped not only my linguistic self but also my cultural being.

2. My Language and Identity

Language serves as a fundamental indicator of identity (Edwards, 2009). It is a point of intersection for identity, self and social perception, and culture. My journey as a bilingual speaker of Arabic and English has shaped my identity in ways that go beyond simple language acquisition. It has influenced how I see myself, how others perceive me, and how I partake in the world. Reflecting on my experience, it vividly exemplifies multiple areas of debate, particularly linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), Multilingualism, and Code-switching. However, it has also exposed me to tensions between cultural belonging and linguistic privilege, emotional expression across languages, and the broader power dynamics of English as a global language.

2.1 Identity and Linguistic Capital

One of the most defining aspects of my linguistic identity has been how my English proficiency shaped my social standing. According to Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital, fluency in a prestigious language can grant individuals social mobility, professional success, and symbolic power. In Saudi Arabia, English is often associated with education, modernity, and upward mobility (Al-Seghayer, 2015).

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Member Submission II - (Cont.)

My ability to speak English fluently has positioned me within academic and professional spaces that value English language proficiency, which, in turn, reinforced my identity as an educator and intellectual. Bourdieu (1989, 1991) identified multiple forms of capital including economic (financial resources and material assets), cultural (expertise and competencies legitimized through education), social (social connections and networks), symbolic (status, prestige, recognition, and acknowledgment), and linguistic (language skills and linguistic knowledge). For instance, Bourdieu (1991) exemplified linguistic capital by highlighting how, in the nineteenth century, professionals such as doctors, teachers, and priests who spoke the Parisian dialect were associated with higher prestige and social standing in French society. This linguistic capital granted them symbolic power and facilitated their climbing into higher social positions.

However, Bourdieu neglects to address that this privilege may come with social and cultural costs. While English has elevated my professional and academic standing, it has also led to perceptions of cultural disconnection. In some circles, I have been labeled as someone who is a "foreigner" and "westernized" at the expense of Arabic linguistic traditions. Someone who let go of his language, beliefs, and culture, and hence, identity in pursuit of the modernity and globalization of the West. Research by Lee et al. (2010) concludes that fluency in a global language can sometimes be perceived as a betrayal of one's cultural heritage, particularly in societies where linguistic identity is deeply tied to national identity. This tension has forced me to constantly negotiate my linguistic identity, in order to balance between my linguistic advantages and the need to remain culturally rooted.

2.2 Identity and Multilingualism

Multilingualism is deeply intertwined with identity; it shapes how individuals perceive themselves, engage with the social world, and are positioned by others, while also influencing their sense of belonging and legitimacy (Block, 2006; Norton, 2013). Historically, the term bilingualism was more commonly used, but scholars have shifted towards multilingualism to account for the complexities of language use beyond two languages, recognizing linguistic repertoires rather than neatly separating them (Romaine, 1995, 2006, cited in Ayres-Bennett & Fisher, 2021).

A constant debate in multilingualism research is how proficient a speaker must be in order to be considered multilingual. Some linguists adhere to a maximal definition, in which they regard multilingualism as native-like fluency, while others take a minimal perspective, arguing that any use of more than one language, even at a basic level, qualifies as multilingualism (Bassetti & Cook, 2011, as cited in Ayres-Bennett & Fisher, 2021). Additionally, the field has shifted away from viewing languages as isolated systems, instead recognizing that multilingualism is dynamic and context-dependent, shaped and constructed by social interactions (Block, 2006). This perspective underscores the "multilingual turn" in language studies, which emphasizes that people's linguistic identities are shaped by social interactions, mobility, and power dynamics rather than being fixed and static (Meier & Conteh, 2014).

The emotional experience of multilingualism/bilingualism is also tied to identity formation, influencing how individuals perceive themselves and how others perceive them (Fisher et al., 2022). Bilinguals frequently report feeling like different people when switching between languages (Dewaele & Nakano, 2013).

Cont.

Moreover, Pavlenko (2005) stated that multilinguals construct multiple linguistic selves, with emotional intensity and expressiveness that shift depending on the language used. This depicts my experience as a Saudi bilingual. In emotionally charged situations, despite having the capacity to express such situations in English, I find myself defaulting to Arabic, as it feels more instinctive and natural. In contrast, English sometimes feels emotionally distant, a phenomenon highlighted by Koven's (2007) findings that bilinguals may feel more emotionally constrained in their second language. This is likely because people tend to feel more emotionally grounded and connected in their native language.

2.3 Code-switching and Identity Negotiation

Anyone acquainted with bilingualism/multilingualism, whether through personal experience or professionally, is likely familiar with code-switching (Niño-Murcia & Rothman, 2008). Code-switching (CS) refers to "the use of several languages or dialects in the same conversation or sentence by bilingual people" (Gardner-Chloros, 2009, p. 4). It serves social, functional, and identity-related purposes. Gardner-Chloros explains that CS is a natural feature of bilingual speech, often occurring unconsciously but also strategically in specific contexts (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). Auer (2005) highlights that CS extends beyond a mere linguistic practice; it serves as a marker of social identity, shaping interactions and reinforcing cultural ties. He states that bilingual speakers use CS to signal their belonging to multiple social groups, a phenomenon particularly relevant to Saudi bilingualism, where English is associated with prestige, culture, and education.

In my case, switching to English in professional settings signals expertise and aligns with the expectations of my students and colleagues. However, in societal and community interactions, reverting to Arabic is highly essential to maintaining cultural belonging and showing respect, especially and mostly among elders. This illustrates Myers-Scotton's (1983) rights and obligations model (Markedness), which posits that language choice conveys implicit social meanings. This means that the languages involved in CS bring with them specific sets of rights and obligations, which are triggered whenever they are employed in conversation.

While CS is a valuable communicative tool, some researchers advise against oversimplifying its link to identity (Auer, 2005). For instance, Auer (2005) warns against equating hybrid language use with hybrid identity, arguing that such assumptions ignore the nuanced ways bilingual speakers navigate multiple cultural spheres. In my experience, CS does not signify a conflict between identities but rather a negotiation of different linguistic and social expectations. However, I have noticed concerns among older generations in my town, who view frequent English use as a potential threat to the preservation of Arabic and our local dialect. The increasing role of English in education raises concerns about the gradual erosion of a certain language's proficiency, in my case Arabic, among younger generations, which is a challenge discussed by Wentker & Schneider (2022). So, while CS might not be inherently tied to a hybrid identity, it can surely be influenced by broader social concerns, such as the potential attrition of language proficiency, which is evident in the anxieties within my community.

3. Conclusion

In ending, identities, like languages, are social constructs that arise through interactions with others (Riley, 2007).

Cont.

My experience shed light on the complexity of linguistic identity, which is neither static nor singular, but rather an evolving construct influenced by social encounters, power dynamics, self-perception, and cultural belonging. In Saudi Arabia, the interplay between English and Arabic will remain central to identity negotiations for bilinguals like myself. It is by recognizing these complexities that we foster a deeper understanding of how language operates as both an enabler and, sometimes, a potential barrier in shaping identity. By critically engaging in these debates, we move beyond simplistic views on linguistic identity, embracing its nuanced and multifaceted realities in an interconnected world.

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The CATESOL Newsletter is Our Newsletter!

Member Submission III: Engaging Community-Building Activities in the New Post-Pandemic Classroom

Michael Akard, Gilda Ekhtiar, Kate Hey, and Sara Shore-Berger

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to remote learning through Zoom and online instruction, many returning students seem inattentive and disengaged in face-to-face and hybrid classes. This, along with the social anxiety that many may feel after becoming accustomed to online learning, can lead to classroom challenges. At our community college, Modesto Junior College (MJC), although we have shifted to a mostly hybrid and online model of course offerings, we have felt the effects of low retention and student engagement post-pandemic.

Research suggests that students are more engaged in school and more likely to succeed if they feel a strong sense of belonging (Murphy et al, 2020). To help students feel connected, we need to create a classroom community in whichever course modality they take, where students feel empowered to share experiences and common goals, trust one another, and feel understood by others. Our students need a safe space where they are willing to interact with one another while engaging in creative assignments and learning English.

In this article, we will share community-building activities that four MJC instructors have utilized in their new post-pandemic hybrid courses.

Using Themes and Study Groups to Build Vocabulary
by Michael Akard

This vocabulary-building activity is very flexible. It can be used with a small group of four or five words, or with a larger word bank. It can be done in a single day as a small group class project, or over a longer period of time. The vocabulary items can be chosen entirely by the instructor, or individual students can be allowed (i.e. required) to select one or more words. The "theme," or reading passage, can be as short as a paragraph, or as long as several pages.

The activity is based on the principles that vocabulary is the single most important element in language development, that there is no single best way to teach or learn vocabulary, that lexical items must be taught and learned with intentionality, and that for building language, extensive reading should be combined with vocabulary exercises. (For specific studies and research I recommend Keith Folse's *Vocabulary Myths: Applying Second Language Research to Classroom Teaching*. Michigan, 2004).

To apply these principles, I use a document called a "vocabulary log." I create the log on a single page, on which I insert a table with five columns. These columns are labeled respectively as New Word, Meaning, Form, Sentence Where Found, and New Sentence. In the first column, I list a group of ten new words students are to learn (it's alright if some students already know some of the words). I always choose most or all of the words. For in-person classes, I also model pronunciation of these words, with the class repeating after me.

In the second column, students must write a working definition for each word as it is used in the text. They may use a dictionary, ask each other, or infer meaning from context. This section is surprisingly difficult for my students, and answers are often wrong. Figuring out meaning from context, or even selecting an appropriate dictionary definition, is hard!

The other columns work as follows: In the third column, students must identify the part of speech for each item as it appears in the text. Again, students can use a dictionary, figure it out (Cont.)

from context, or ask each other. Then in the fourth column, students must copy the sentence where they found the word. (I grade very heavily on this section because this is how they prove to me that they read the required passage.) In the last column, students must create an original sentence making use of the new word. The vocabulary log is now complete.

Next comes the really creative stage. Each student writes a paragraph based on some prompt—perhaps to describe a past experience or a future goal. In this paragraph, the student must use some of the new words, at least four or five. Finally, in groups, students read the paragraphs and decide on the best one to present to the class.

At the end of this activity, each student will have had to focus on each new vocabulary word several times, write it, and use it in at least one original composition.

Weekly Check-Ins to Promote Sharing and Community in the Classroom
by Sara Shore-Berger

Although this activity can be used in various classroom modalities, I have incorporated this low-stakes online activity into my hybrid class (asynchronous online and face to face) courses that meet once a week to promote community building and encouragement in the class. In this activity, I use the Canvas discussion as a 'check-in' to pose various weekly questions to students. Because this is a low-stakes activity, I do not check spelling or grammar, I keep the point value low, there is no minimum word required, and the content is typically about students' personal lives rather than course content. Students seem to write more freely, and although they are not required to respond to each other, I encourage them to do so. To keep interest each week, the questions change - sometimes the focus is more 'serious', such as 'How is your week?' 'What is something that has been challenging for this week?' 'Is there anything that you want to share that was difficult with you this week?' and other times, the focus is fun and lighthearted - 'What is your favorite restaurant in town?' 'What is your favorite thing to do to relax?' 'Where would you go if you could travel anywhere?''

However, as this particular class is a listening/speaking class in which students present in front of their peers, sometimes our weekly check in question is related to the following week's presentation. Here is an example of the weekly directions, with the specific question for the week:

Directions:

Our class meets **in-person** only once a week, and the rest of the class is online. I want us all to feel connected in and out of the classroom, so let's do a weekly check-in (*a check-in is when you contact someone to see how that person is doing*) to share with each other.

You are not required to respond to other classmates, but you can! It's a great way to get to know your classmates. I might also share something that I learn in our in-person class.

Sometimes I might also post, but I will always respond to you when I grade in a separate comment.

Week 11 Check-In Questions

Next week, you are going to present in front of the class! How are you feeling about that and about your semester? We're in Week 11 and things are getting busy!

Having done this activity with multiple sections during a semester, I have been pleasantly surprised to find that students readily respond and share about their lives, but also that several respond to other classmates even though they are not required to do so. Many students (especially females) are ready to give words of encouragement to others. It is heartening to see that as their instructor, and I know that if I were a student, I would appreciate these words as well! (Cont.)

Member Submission III- (Cont.)

At times, I respond to the discussion board as well, and I have also received encouraging words from my students!

As a classroom extension activity, I sometimes show the previous week's discussion board on the overhead during our face-to-face class and choose a few students' posts to highlight. I did this recently before an in-class presentation; the previous week's question asked how students were preparing and how they felt about this presentation. As I read a few discussion posts to the class where students shared that they were feeling nervous, I pointed out that almost everyone feels nervous and that it was normal! We all laughed, and I could feel the room relax. That is the goal of this activity - to show students that are in this journey together and here to support each other.

Tell Me About Your Country: Engaging ESL Students through Google Slides Presentations
by Gilda Ekhtiar
In my ESL classroom, I have successfully implemented an activity called "Tell Me About Your Country," which can be adapted to "Tell Me About Your City" if many students are from the same country. This activity is designed to enhance students' engagement and speaking skills through the use of Google Slides, making it versatile and suitable for various proficiency levels.

Before diving into the speaking presentations, I lay the foundation by teaching a lesson on "How to Greet Visitors to Your Country." We explore diverse places to visit worldwide, exploring the vocabulary associated with travel, cultural exchange, traditional foods, and greeting customs. This lesson also incorporates the learning of participial adjectives as a grammar point.

To reinforce their understanding, students participate in two preparatory activities. First, they play bingo with the newly acquired vocabulary, and second, they pair up to compose sentences using the words. These exercises set the stage for their Google Slides presentations.

When introducing the presentation guidelines, I instruct students to use Google Slides to present their chosen country or city. Their slides should include pictures, artifacts, and be used as a natural speaking aid, discouraging reliance on notes. I provide a comprehensive list of slide content ideas, such as country or city name, location on a map, seasonal weather, notable places and monuments, traditional foods, souvenirs, traditional holidays, and customs.

Additionally, I give students a list of vocabulary and grammar points to incorporate into their presentations. To facilitate the technical aspect, I offer written instructions on creating Google Slides and share a video tutorial link for additional guidance.

Following the presentations, students bring in a sample of their traditional food and copies of the recipe, fostering a sense of community. This food-sharing activity encourages students to talk about their countries and facilitates recipe exchanges and cultural learning.

In summary, using Google Slides in ESL classrooms offers several advantages, including content reinforcement, increased engagement, enjoyable picture-finding and slide creation, and the opportunity for students to confidently introduce their city or country to their peers, eliminating nervousness associated with public speaking.

Lastly, I encourage educators to adapt and customize this Google Slides presentation for their specific audience and classroom needs. Adding a personal touch enhances engagement and effectiveness. Best of luck in implementing this interactive and enriching activity!

(Cont.)

Member Submission III- (Cont.)

Developing Descriptive Writing by Creating Stories
by Kate Hey

This last activity can be used in a writing class and can help students develop their descriptive language skills while engaging everyone in class. I teach a low intermediate reading/composition class where students learn to write a paragraph and then progress to writing an essay by the end of the course. At this level, I often notice that students' paragraphs tend to be underdeveloped with low word count due to lack of descriptive language.

Before introducing this activity, I cover the basics of descriptive language such as the importance of details, adjectives, adverbs, and senses. I also do a short activity, where I give students a sentence, for example: *He has things in his backpack,* and I ask them to make it more descriptive by applying what they have just learned. A sample of a student's response could be: *An ELIC 20 student whose name is Jose is carrying two books and a pencil in his small black leather backpack*.

To start the activity, I play sounds for students from a YouTube video titled "Storytelling through Sound Effects." There are other videos with great sounds, but what I like about this particular one is the fact that it only has audio and no visuals. It is important to me to have only audio as I want the students to be able to focus on the sounds and use them to create images in their mind rather than having the images from the video do it for them.

After listening to the sounds, students are encouraged to work in groups and list the sounds they heard. I then list the sounds on the whiteboard and we listen to the sounds again and put the sounds in the order they occurred in the audio. Depending on the students' language level, I sometimes go over the meaning of the new words like *thunder*, *engine*, *windshield wipers*, etc.

And, here is where the fun begins. The students are asked to work in groups and create a story based on the sounds they heard using descriptive language skills. I encourage the students to talk in groups and plan out their story before they start writing. This eliminates stories that begin with sentences like this one: *She left the house and got in a car.* It is important to address a group that might start a story this way and encourage using the descriptive language by asking questions such as: Who is 'she'? Why did she leave the house? What car did she get into and why? When was this? Yesterday? A hundred years ago? Where did this happen? Big or small town? These types of questions usually prompt students to think and use details that help to make their stories interesting, fun, and most of all descriptive.

I usually have students write their stories on big sticky notes and hang them on the walls in the classroom. Students are then encouraged to walk around and read each group's story. To practice their descriptive language skills further, students fill out a form that asks them to find and list adjectives, adverbs, senses, and certain details about the story (Who? Where? When? Why?). Here is an example of a story created by students based on the sounds from the YouTube video:

> *Javier is a doctor in Kaiser Permanente hospital in Modesto California. He is 40 years old and he has been working there since 2005. He got a call from the hospital to make an emergency surgery. It was a cold and raining day. He was an a hurry and he ran to his car, which is parking across the street, as fast as he could. He opened his old red Nissan car door and he turned it on. He got another call. However, he did not answer because he was driving. He started to play some old music in order to relax before the surgery. The phone rang again. He increased the volume of the rock and roll music in order to avoid hearing his phone. Then, he saw a train coming and he tried to stop his car too fast and he crashed his car into a fence. Fortunately, he did not get hurt. However, he was not able to make the surgery anymore. He leaved the car and he called the insurance.* (Cont.)

Member Submission III- (Cont.)

I have used this activity in synchronous and asynchronous writing courses. In a class where students do not meet face-to-face, I utilize Google Slides and have students share their stories there. The four activities described above give students an opportunity to collaborate with classmates which, in result, helps to create a community in the classroom. With collaboration and engagement, students are more likely to persist and succeed in our courses.

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NNLEI & RW-IG Report: Exploring NNEST Lived Experience Through Narrative Inquiry!

Mrina Khater

Attending a multilingual educator panel sharing experience in a simple yet impressive narration was one of the most encouraging experiences for me as a recipient. It was a two-part session with different linguists in each panel.

The first panel included three educators from different cultural backgrounds with practice in teaching their native languages, for natives and foreigners, as well as teaching English as a second language for different audiences and various purposes.

The second panel highlighted ethnography and simplified the journaling process; topics that lead the way for apprentice writers and clarify how to start with a simple question while avoiding derivative ideas.

Panel 1
The bilingual and multilingual educator panel members, Jonas Vilaire, Henry Nguey, and Alyin Baris Releya shared similar educational backgrounds. As bilingual or multilingual, they taught their own fellow native speakers a foreign language, such as French or English, or both, in the case of Mr. Vilaire, which paved the road for them to practice teaching their native languages to non-native learners.

Also, all of them contributed to providing their students with an immersive environment or worked in immersion schools for either English or their own native languages.

The teaching style of the multilingual educators was not limited to a specific learner age or level of need. The multilingual educators worked with elementary and high school students and immigrants as well.

For some, their career was mainly a source of income for living, but all share the vocation that encouraged them to pursue their own education and earn higher degrees. Even though sometimes a native speaker feels that they are needed for the immersive environment that can be offered to learners, they don't let this feeling diminish their enthusiasm and devotion for their students.

Culture always shapes people's style of communications, expectations, and perceptions. Mr. Vilaire was aware of his physical characteristics and how this would help in monitoring and managing his classes. Mr. Nguyen's focus was the outcome of the job and the salary but this has shifted with time to consider education not only a source of income but a preferred career.

Regardless of the differences, I can confirm that as an educator myself, I have my own convictions about education from when I first started teaching Arabic to non-native speakers. By saying this, I want to share how I associate my life experience in regard to choosing my career and continuing my education with Ms. Releya. She is originally from Türkiye, and I am originally from Lebanon; in both cultures, parents have an idealized vision of success for their kids. The path is as follows: high school graduation at the age of eighteen, pursuit of a bachelor's degree from a prestigious school, and a professional degree in either medicine or law.

Any other degree is looked down upon. I chose to study Arabic literature and language teaching, and I practiced teaching for twelve years in Lebanon. Similar to what Ms. Releya mentioned, teaching the language and its literature, back home, is to offer knowledge to learners; knowledge mostly about writing and using the correct formal language while practicing their various jobs. However, the purpose of learning a foreign language varies; it can be just to use the language while traveling, for one's own fascination with languages, or to perform specific tasks including national security.

In conclusion, this panel confirmed a belief that educators have in common more than they know. And, holding this kind of forum to share experience would make educators see themselves as a member of a large community - across borders.

Panel 2

The second panel was more informative while sharing experiences and lessons learned. Panel members, Ms. Khaled, Ms. Gage, and Ms. McDonald shared experience with journal editing and ethnographic and autoethnographic research.

Writing a paper or action research would require knowing what questions to ask and knowing which methods to use after looking into the questions or the problem from different perspectives and dimensions. The goal is to focus on one idea and not go after sub-ideas that would redirect the research from the main purpose and complicate the flows of the paper or action research components.

Ms. Gage shared about her experience focusing on one question to search and write about. This research question provides awareness for researchers who get entangled with related sub-points of the main topic. This is a universal problem that can be alleviated by the support of counselors, editors, and experienced researchers. A writer needs to be open to suggestions, ready to adjust plans, and redirect focus.

Ms. Khaled pointed to the difference between subjective and objective teaching. Early in their professional life, foreign language teachers are inclined to transfer to learners knowledge integrated with their own beliefs, cultural norms, and personal opinions. With time, work and life experience lead to objective teaching, and educators transfer their own stories to learners in a broader social and cultural manner in order to shape the learners' knowledge, according to needs and purpose of learning. I resonated with what Ms. Khaled presented due to my own experience. Once I started teaching Arabic at DLIFLC, I used the language and tried to transfer it to learners the same way I did when I taught native speakers, but this time, mixed with my nostalgic emotions. Gradually, I reverted my role and performance to meet my students' needs without excluding the culture that would be integrated accordingly as a component to learn the language and understand its use like natives and make "life experience intersect with career" as Ms. Khaled stated.

Regarding journaling, Ms. Khaled echoed Ms. Gage that writers should start "small" with a simple question for the research and avoid sub-topics, and for methods used for the research, Ms. Khaled pointed to the importance of ethnography which requires researchers to immerse themselves in the environment related to their work, to ask questions, interview people, collect data, and then analyze.

While ethnographic research focuses on others, learners, teachers or any other subject matter experts related to the research question, the autoethnography opens the door for the researcher to use his/her own life and career experience to connect with people subject to study. The challenge of auto-ethnographic research is that the writer analyzes data based on personal views and experiences that allows for possible bias. Work ethics is the defense line to personally use to compare and not to impose results.

In summation, this two-hour session of sharing and discussion during this narrative inquiry was a great forum where linguists, teachers, and researchers shared experiences that echoed with the audience and created a bridge for future communication.

Top IG Report: Honoring CATESOL Voices – Highlights from the First Authors Showcase

Marsha J. Chan

Debuting at the 2025 State Conference, the CATESOL Authors Showcase offered attendees an inviting opportunity to browse books written by members of our vibrant organization and to celebrate the scholarship and creativity of CATESOL authors. Coordinating this event for the first time in recent institutional memory, I invited our 3,000-plus members to attend the conference and display a book they had authored. Throughout Friday and Saturday, October 17 and 18, participating authors took turns staffing the table—conveniently located next to the CATESOL table—welcoming visitors throughout the day. Attendees stopped by to leaf through the volumes and speak directly with the authors. Authors met each other and conversed about their books and careers. Responses from participating authors included the following:

The author's showcase was a wonderful experience. Thank you for providing it! I displayed my books and had wonderful interactions with fellow authors. I even made a new friend who suddenly appeared at the table while I was reading her book. Thanks again for providing this opportunity! - Barrie J. Roberts, author of English for Dispute Resolution: Mastering Negotiating, Mediating, and Alternative Dispute Resolution. EDR introduces non-native English speakers to negotiation, mediation, and ADR as generally practiced in the US. Includes a free online teaching guide with activities.

I really enjoyed the authors table. There are a lot of great people writing books. I also really enjoyed talking to the people who came to the table and sharing with them all the great work at the table because, displaying books at the table, we got to know each other. We were able to read excerpts of each other's books and share these writers with conference participants, which was a lot of fun. It was a great event! - Ondine Gage, editor of Interdisciplinary Sustainability Education: Collaborative Intercultural Learning for Positive Change. This edited volume features the transformative intercultural experiences which culminated in the application of Virtual Exchange or Collaborative Online Intercultural Learning (COIL) course designs.

The author's showcase was very valuable. It felt like a home base, where I had a lot of conversations with people about the books. I liked the camaraderie between the writers. I enjoyed seeing the incredible variety of books that were written by CATESOL members. - Julaine Rosner, co-author with Marsha J. Chan and Marianne Brems English for Child Care: Language Skills for Parents and Providers, Second Edition. First in the only series devoted to both language development and child development, this text helps prepare adults to care for children and to work in early childhood education.

The vibe was collegial and friendly. It was nice interacting with fellow authors, sharing stories and tips. Some attendees stopped by, and the discussions that ensued were mutually inspiring. It was a successful inaugural event on a beautiful day. - Coumba Diouf, author of The African Princess, a cultural children's storybook for the purpose of teaching English through storytelling.

Community and Literacy: Using Reflection as a Culturally Responsive Practice in Family Literacy

Elizabeth Gray

This article is a lightly edited version of one published in the June 2025 issue of Children & Libraries, a publication of the Association for Library Service to Children.

Public libraries have been leaders in parent education and Early Literacy through the Every Child Ready to Read Initiative and other means (www.earlylit.net). In California, the State Library's Literacy Services (CLLS) funds family literacy programs[1]. Many libraries using CLLS Family Literacy funds provide early literacy and family literacy workshops for parents and caregivers.

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Our library, in northern California, receives CLLS family literacy funding and provides regular Family Literacy workshops for parents with low literacy. We use our program funds to advance the public library's goal of helping children succeed in school by supporting parents in their role as their child's first teacher and best advocate.

Through the process of reflection, which we imbed in all aspects of program development, family literacy workshops provide information that addresses their specific experience and cultural background. The foundation of effective family literacy training is to support the parents' life experiences and create learning opportunities from these shared experiences. Adult learning and engagement in their children's education depends on the effectiveness of the workshop in building trusting relationships[2]. A facilitator from the community, with the same or similar culture, makes it more likely for participants' values and upbringing to be understood and recognized.

In addition to using reflection, the workshop is best when using a trauma-informed approach- specifically addressing safety (emotionally and physically), peer support and mutual self-help, and cultural and gender issues. To use reflection as a culturally responsive practice in a family literacy workshop, there must be a safe space to share. A facilitator trained in trauma-informed practices and nurturing parenting practices, in addition to early literacy practices such as Every Child Ready to Read, will be better able to handle sensitive situations that may arise.

A safe space means that workshop participants understand ground rules and that the ground rules reflect participant's values and cultures. A culturally responsive approach to a program such as family literacy is one that "…involves being attuned to and responsive toward not only the program itself but also its larger cultural context and the lives and experiences of program staff and participants."[3] As we built our family literacy programs, we didn't use the term "Culturally responsive"- it is not a well-known term in our library community. I am using it here to summarize the elements that we find best serve the communities we work with. Here is one definition from the Center for the Study of Social Policy:

> "Culturally responsive programs are those that are designed for a specific population and grounded in that group's needs, values, and perspectives. To improve their effectiveness… programs… may be culturally adapted, meaning that some program elements, such as language or example scenarios, are modified to better meet participants' cultural norms and values." [4]

Community and Literacy—(Cont.)

Three methods keep our Family Literacy workshops grounded in the culturally responsive approach: i) use natural language rather than a scripted language, ii) use reflection to welcome participant's and staff's life experiences including cultural background, and use a well-trained facilitator to develop peer support within each workshop.

Grants abound with requirements that make it difficult to avoid forms and checklists when registering workshop participants. In our Family Literacy programs, we use these forms not as scripts but as guides: in this way, we hear authentic stories that better inform us about the information needs of our participants. By encouraging natural conversation over scripts, we bring the program in alignment with the needs of the participants rather than forcing everything to fit pre-determined grant outcomes.

Reflection about the family is used in our workshops and helps acknowledge the whole person. In our workshops, we use the question: "What does your family enjoy doing together?" This builds common understanding and can lead to reflections on common struggles. Our family workshops ask participants about what positive challenges they have faced: one parent shared their success in calling the school office about their child's absence. Often, once the group starts sharing, they find common struggles related to language, cultural or economic barriers. For example, participants might share stories about the difficulties they have had arranging a meeting with their child's teacher – and the group can build community over this common challenge. We find that many institutions are not able to adjust staff work schedules to meet with working parents. Therefore, one of the most impactful adaptations that we make for each program is adjusting the time and day of the workshops to accommodate the values and commitments of the participants.

This use of reflection helps build connections. Our family literacy coordinator, Leticia Flores, BAECE, emphasizes that shared experiences help participants feel safe to speak about their own challenges. When I asked her about the best way to build connections in workshops, she said that even above sharing the same language, she sees people build connections over shared challenges such as navigating their child's school system or finding a good doctor. When the group feels comfortable sharing, she brings the focus back to literacy. "What do you remember about your reading experiences when you were a child? What does learning together look like for your family?" These reflection questions are adult learning techniques – reflecting on their learning helps adults access their background knowledge and apply that to new learning. "Adults have a higher sense of self-direction and motivation when using their life experience to facilitate learning objectives. Adults are more focused on achieving goals when exposed to an environment like their own and that is based on their own family needs and interests."[5]

Reflection by program managers and staff builds awareness of biases that might affect program development. When planning our Family Literacy workshops, we are guided by our grant requirements and commitment, yet we also make it a priority to include the following: i) Library staff who facilitate the workshop are from the same cultural background and speak the same language as the participants; ii) Library staff who have agency and bring their cultural knowledge to the planning, implementation, and assessment; iii) Facilitator (s) who will create a safe space for participants to voice concerns and share their challenges; and ensure that participants will have input on what they want to learn about and how the topic can help them in their daily life. This extra planning is worth the effort since we see how participants become more engaged.

Building the workshop is an exercise in building a community of support. In the course of the workshop, the group will become a peer group and build relationships and friendships on common goals and challenges. They start to turn to each other for encouragement, help each other (Cont.)

get to class, and to problem solve. The facilitator can be an important part of the peer group by bringing in trusted people from various organizations and building the social capital of the group. In addition, the facilitator will probably communicate with participants outside of the workshop – either to make sure they can make it to class or to follow up and get feedback. We found that our workshops using reflection and cultural responsiveness result in a group of parents who want to be involved in more learning opportunities – at the library or at other community organizations that offer parenting classes and resources. Some of our participants have realized that they want to start their own family childcare business.

To create a culturally responsive workshop that allows reflection to be used effectively, use reflection as part of program development. The program manager, facilitator, and evaluator might ask themselves or each other "How might your lived experience impact your view in developing this program?" In practice, our literacy team reflects each year on our effectiveness in reaching our community. We listen to what our participants wanted from the program and ask ourselves if we met that expectation and how we could do better. We reflect on our limitations, our cultural barriers, and our blind spots. As a team, we help each other see what otherwise might be missed. It is often difficult to see your own bias or know what you don't know.

Used formally and informally, the practice of reflection in our program has shown great results. We see workshop participants returning to our program and other community programs with more agency, confidence, and leadership. We hear from our participants that they want more opportunities for community building, peer learning, and continued education. Family Literacy Workshops using reflection as a culturally responsive practice can truly achieve the public library's goal of supporting parents in their role as their child's first teacher and best advocate.

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Member Submission IV: Preparing single-variety learners for realistic linguistic ecology: Korea, Britain, California

Kieran Rimmer

This article explores how single-variety learning environments can affect learners when migrating to multicultural and linguistically diverse contexts. Numerous EFL learning environments encourage acquisition of listening and speaking skills primarily through controlled input through prestige varieties (ie. General American (GA) and Received Pronunciation (RP) (Jones & Blume, 2022). Such methods include abundant test-preparation audio and teacher-talk which is geared towards classroom norms (Kang et al., 2025) This contributes towards expectations of what 'correct' or 'clear' English sounds like, which migrate with learners when they travel to new linguistic environments. California, like Britain, is a highly multicultural, multilingual, and therefore, multidialectical context (Novicoff et al., 2024) which troubles expected realities by offering diverse Englishes in workplaces, academia, and social situations. The question therein is whether prior exposure to 'standardized' Englishes adequately prepares learners for speaker-specific variation in prosody, pace, and lexis, and whether educational institutions (i.e. universities) can support such transitions (Diaz & Iqbal, 2024).

For my MA TESOL dissertation at Edge Hill University (Ormskirk, UK), I examined South Korean EFL learners who had migrated to Britain as students or on working holidays. The research focused on their expectations of, exposure to, and experiences with diverse English varieties they encountered in Britain (Rimmer, 2025). Participants described limited exposure to diverse Englishes while studying in Korea due to the media, which emphasizes standardized accents (Baratta & Halenko, 2023), and schooling, which favors inner circle varieties in guest English teacher (GET) recruitment and General American English (GA) in both its private and public curricula (Choe & Lee, 2021). Consequently, input weighted towards 'standard' Englishes limited exposure to the pluralistic linguistic reality of Britain and other multicultural contexts as World Englishes and regional accents were comparatively underrepresented in Korean EFL.

Upon arriving in Britain, the participants experienced challenges navigating diverse Englishes in employment, academia, and daily life (Rimmer, 2025). Learners generally felt that their limited awareness and exposure to regional British accents, Indian Englishes, and other World Englishes during their EFL education had contributed to these struggles. Participants were most often challenged by intonation, speech rate, and pronunciation. Societal notions of standardization had convinced the participants that certain English accents were more correct, desirable, and prestigious than other varieties. However, increased exposure to diverse Englishes encouraged most participants to reassess their perceptions of English as a tool, which in turn led them to reevaluate their self-perceptions as English learners. A shift that was noticed was from 'accent-label' judgements to 'speaker-specific intelligibility' which was supported by simple strategies such as asking for repeats and asking for paraphrases.

In the conclusion section of my dissertation, I posited that future studies could explore how Korean learners, or learners from similar contexts with a particular focus on standardised accents like Received Pronunciation (RP) or GA, might adapt to other diverse environments (Rimmer, 2025). After discussions with this newsletter's editor, Dr. Kara MacDonald (who specializes in Korean TESOL), we concluded that California would be an appropriate context for comparison given its rich sociolinguistic diversity.

Why California? California is one of the USA's most linguistically rich states, with speakers of various languages, dialects, ethnolects coexisting and often using English as a lingua franca (Cont.)

(Migration Policy Institute, 2023; Novicoff et al., 2024). Furthermore, California has the highest Korean population in the US (AAPI Data, 2024), and Korean American university students account for 4.8% of CA's total international student population (Institute of International Education, 2024). Of course, Californian university campuses often feature a patchwork of varieties from both the faculty to the study body. Nevertheless, the South Korean English education system, with its emphasis on GA (Shin & Walkinshaw, 2023), may underprepare newcomers for life in California due to its exclusion of the manifold English varieties coexisting in California and elsewhere. Furthermore, Korea is not the only educational context which exhibits preference for one English variety over others (Janevska, 2022; Tsang, 2020). Consequently, such conditions suggest that English language institutions and instructors in California may benefit from orientation and listening support which acknowledges local and international variation. Such strategies could include laddered listening exercises of the varieties common on campus or the local area, listening sequences with short clips from popular media, and assessments which credit confirmation strategies and clarification.

This discussion highlights an issue found broadly across TESOL: the status and scope of so-called "standard" English varieties. Terms such as "American English" and "British English" typically refer to prestige varieties, namely GA and RP respectively, and consequently do not represent the diverse catalogue of varieties spoken within the national contexts (Baratta & Halenko, 2022). Considering sociolinguistics and language ecology, representing a population as vast as the US's as speakers of a singular language variety is descriptively unsubstantial. Furthermore, a category of "California English" would be understood as a range of overlapping varieties found within the state borders (i.e. vowel shifts, ethnic-heritage vernaculars, contact-induced patterns) rather than a uniform standard (Cheng et al, 2023; D'Onofrio et al., 2019). Practitioners should counterbalance such native-speakerist assumptions and practices through prioritization of intelligibility, accommodation, and wider exposure to diverse English speakers

These observations align with critiques of standard language ideology (Lippi-Green, 1997), which spotlight the inconsistencies between prestige forms and actual language use across regions, groups, and intersectional categories. Nation-level generalizations commonplace in TESOL and beyond obscures regional diversity. For example, equating "American English" with a single variety erases Texan dialects, African American Vernacular English, and dozens of other varieties. Therefore, a more descriptively adequate and pedagogically visible stance is to use the plural 'Englishes' when referring to varieties within specific geographic boundaries. This is particularly useful in California, where all three of Kachru's circles interact regularly, and English exists as a spectrum across diverse groups, social classes, and contact varieties, rather than a monolithic entity. In practice, building requires practitioners and learners to set realistic learning goals (i.e. troubling native-speakerist assumptions which undervalue non-standard Englishes), and legitimising repair as a communication skill rather than a deficit.

Consequently, EFL learners instructed in single-variety settings often arrive with test-ready skills but limited exposure to diverse Englishes present in everyday life in dialectically plural locales like Britain and Calfiornia (Diaz & Iqbal, 2024). For TESOL practitioners, exposing learners to diverse Englishes (especially those within the target context), encouraging repair strategies, and feature-focused listening provides learners with opportunities for greater inclusion, accuracy, and wellbeing. Instead of a monolith, representing English as a spectrum supports the linguistic reality of its plurality, destigmatizes speakers of non-standard varieties, and invites learners to fully participate in professional, academic, and social situations with reduced anxiety and increased confidence. Future work in California could systematically test these comparisons, but the pedagogical reasoning is sound. (Cont.)

Learners prepared for linguistic diversity are better prepared for life in multicultural, multilingual, and multidialectical locations.

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Teacher as Learner: Learning, Teaching, Becoming: A Multilingual Journey Through English and Native-Speakerism

Sunipa Mallick

I grew up in Kolkata, a city in eastern India that is always humming, sometimes with traffic, sometimes with people, but mostly with languages. The city's soundscape shifted constantly around me: Bengali filled my home, warm and familiar; Hindi across markets and street corners; and English within the walls of my school, where it was positioned as the gateway to academic success. I learned early on that language was not a single path but a set of parallel roads, which shifted depending on who I was with or what I needed to express. At the time, I didn't think of this as a multilingual identity. It was simply the way life unfolded around me, layered in sound and meaning.

Those early linguistic experiences were not theoretical to me then. They were ordinary. Only years later, inside seminar rooms in Liverpool, encountering the work of García (2011) on dynamic bilingual ecologies and García and Li Wei's (2015) perspectives on translanguaging, did I realize that the everyday fluidity of my childhood, the seamless transitions among Bengali, English, and Hindi, depicted precisely the kinds of flexible, context-responsive practices these scholars describe. What had felt natural to me in growing up would eventually become the conceptual backbone of my identity.

Growing Up Between Languages

My early encounters with English came through television, a mix of cartoons, foreign sitcoms, and English films that introduced me to accent patterns and idiomatic expressions long before I fully understood them. In India, English exists in a complicated sociolinguistic space: it carries traces of colonial history, but also promises access to upward mobility, global participation, and intellectual prestige. English is everywhere and yet strangely distanced: embedded in education and bureaucracy, but still rhetorically framed by some as "not ours".

And despite this distancing, the ability to speak English fluently continues to function as a powerful marker of education, social class, and intellectual prestige. Canagarajah (1999) describes this ambivalent relationship as a hallmark of postcolonial contexts, where English holds both instrumental promise and ideological tension. As a young learner, I absorbed English through entertainment, but I also absorbed these social meanings, even without naming them.

Books quickly became another form of immersion. Indian English authors offered linguistic familiarity that aligned with the English used in my school, a variety shaped by local norms and cultural references. But when I transitioned to British and American novels, the friction appeared: metaphors rooted in other cultures, unfamiliar idioms, sentence patterns that worked differently from the English I knew. At the time, I thought this difficulty was a personal shortcoming. Later, through my higher education, I understood what I experienced was what Kachru (1985) theorized decades ago: English is not a singular entity but a constellation of varieties shaped by the sociocultural realities of their speakers.

Matsuda (2018) argues that English today is fundamentally plural, its global spread has produced multiple centers of legitimacy, even if global perceptions lag behind. My teenage struggles with "foreign" English were not failures; they were encounters with plurality. This realization would eventually shape my sensitivity as a teacher: learners don't just learn English; they learn *an* English, the one shaped by their context, community, and exposure.

Language Teachers as Language Learners: The (SLA) Wisdom of Japanese Teachers and Fitness Influencers

Roger Anderson

According to their review of the cognitive literature, this sequencing of learning happens regardless of instruction. Yet this seems to contradict their own understanding of the consensus view on how learning happens: "learners *create* a linguistic system based on data they are exposed to and that the evolution of this system is constrained by learner-internal mechanisms coupled with the kind of input data they are exposed to (Lichtman & Van Patten, 2021, n.p.). Instruction, by virtue of providing input, will therefore impact learners' creation of linguistic systems.

As cognitive linguists, such experiments typically occur in highly-controlled environments. Unlike instructors, researchers need not be concerned with learners' enjoyment (Akkas et al., 2024), or the cultural components behind language (Kramsch, 2013) that make language learning worth learners' (substantial) investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015).

Recently, exercise videos have overtaken my YouTube algorithm. Short videos have inspired me to try some new, invigorating workouts at the gym. One influencer's videos are particularly motivating, but also provides a useful approach to language instruction.

Wise fitness influencers and Japanese teachers

In his videos, the young man demonstrates how to develop your physical, daily movements into impressively challenging exercises. For example, he demonstrates how simply getting out of a chair can be gradually developed into performing a pistol squat, which is done while balancing only on one leg:

If you can sit down (in a chair) nine times, you can get up once. If you can get up ten times, you can do one squat. IF you can do ten squats, you can do one explosive squat… if: ten explosive squats, then: one assisted pistol squat… if: 7 assisted pistol squats, then: 1 pistol squat negative… if: 5 pistol squat negatives, then you've unlocked the pistol squat (hk fitness2, 2025).

While I have yet to successfully do a pistol squat, I find his approach to be identical to one my Japanese instructor uses. Taking a community college Japanese course has been more intense and more fun than I anticipated. As a completely online, synchronous class, the instructor uses well-sequenced slides and activities that require students to engage in short dialogues. Doing so builds our skills and confidence in speaking this notoriously difficult to learn language. (Recently the President of the United States even suggested that Japanese is the most difficult language to learn [DRM News, 2025]).

Gradual gains, following a logical process

One common refrain my instructor repeats is ""If you can (1), then you can (2)… If you can (2), then you can (3)…". This creates linkages between prior and current learning. For example, having learned a handful of verbs and daily activities, we then learned the names for days of the week. "If you know the days of the week, you can describe your weekly activities", she explained. This led to a short, semi-scripted dialogue in which we asked each other about our weekly activities.

Later, we learned how to count numbers 20-99. "If you can count 20-99, you can give someone your age. This proved to be important content for the next task: performing semi-scripted dialogues between peers, asking each other's age.

Her approach draws from the classical format, "Present, Practice, Produce", which has been criticized as too rigid, among other criticisms (Weller, 2020). And yet, in our online context, its simplicity is its elegance. As a language learner and fellow language teacher, what impresses me most about (Cont.)

most about it is the sense of utility of the new material learned, which flows immediately into a new, communicatively-meaningful task. Without it, we would not be able to accomplish the task.

"Ordered Development Theory"

Cognitive research offers insights into learning but also challenges instruction. Lichtman & Van Patten (2021) concluded that the evidence is stronger than ever before that an ordered development exists within second language learning. This sequence extends beyond the acquisition of morphemes, as Krashen posited in the 1980's. Thus, the scholars suggest that Krashen's Natural Order Hypothesis should more accurately be reframed as the Ordered Development Hypothesis.

According to their review of the cognitive literature, this sequencing of learning happens regardless of instruction. Yet this seems to contradict their own understanding of the consensus view on how learning happens: "learners *create* a linguistic system based on data they are exposed to and that the evolution of this system is constrained by learner-internal mechanisms coupled with the kind of input data they are exposed to (Lichtman & Van Patten, 2021, n.p.). Instruction, by virtue of providing input, will therefore impact learners' creation of linguistic systems.

As cognitive linguists, such experiments typically occur in highly-controlled environments. Unlike instructors, researchers need not be concerned with learners' enjoyment (Akkas et al., 2024), or the cultural components behind language (Kramsch, 2013) that make language learning worth learners' (substantial) investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015).

Aligning instruction with "ordered development"

As researchers continue to uncover the "ordered development" of language learning, which is more or less universally applicable, instruction should keep pace. Ideally, if instruction was armed with such knowledge, it could expedite the learning processes that are already underway inside learners' cognition. Without such detailed knowledge, instruction should continue to prudently develop learners' competence by moving from simplest to most challenging learning, following a thoughtful sequence. It should do so by explicitly highlighting the connections between old learning to new learning. Doing so builds hope in learners like me that, one day, I will be able to converse in the notoriously difficult language Japanese. Maybe I'll even be able perform one pistol squat by then.

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Member Submission V: Pandemic Partners

Victor Turks

Introduction

Written in 2021, at the height of global uncertainty, this poem by an ELT educator comes from the lived reality of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time when classrooms transitioned into screens. Its relevance today lies in how the pandemic did not simply *end* but *lingered*. The poem speaks to ongoing exhaustion, learning gaps, and the redefinition of connection in education.

"I shall conclude the account of this calamitous year…"

A Journal of the Plague Year, - Daniel Defoe

In our pandemic world
The San Francisco Bay Area
Puts the world's people
In our good company
Treading Destiny's paths

Masked Montpellier Freddy
Brings a caffé latte to my round table in the sun
Outdoors at the Depot in Mill Valley
With pandemic partners all around
I pull down my Mask to sip my frothy drink
And picture a faraway sea
"I'm French" Freddy smiles
"I'm from Montpellier on the Mediterranean Sea"

Next day Hong Kong Bowie
Brings me a latte and warm croissant
To my sidewalk table

Coffee To the People

Next door to where I grew up
The SE corner of Haight and Masonic
At that time the Lone Ranger wore a mask
"I'm Victor What's your name ?"
"Bowie as in the singer David Bowie"
Bowie's studying Nursing online
And loves the vast beauty
Of Golden Gate Park.
"No park like that In Hong kong," Bowie
says through her Mask.

Deji from Lhasa, Tibet
Moved from Pacifica to Foster City
With her two kittens NinetyNine and ShyShy

Practicing coast to coast social distancing
Deji is enrolled online
In a New Jersey University
Studying hard
To become an English teacher
Deji and I met when San Francisco City College
Was offering face to face instruction
Deji volunteered to be my teaching assistant

Love and human nature
Are strong
Friendship flies in the face
of calamitous pandemics

By God's grace most of us
Have not perished in the night
Of the world's tragic news
Written in the stars
So many plucked pandemic partners
In our earthly garden
No more

Medical experts cry
"We're not out of the woods yet" (Cont.)

Member Submission V: (Cont.)

The brand-new rule
Isolate don't congregate
Face shields and masks
Keep away from others
Hug your computer
Don't go out
Go online

No shoes No shirt No service

Mask on the everyday world is ours
The bakery Some schools
The gas station and grocery store
Even an in person visit
With our dentist and doctor
Bless her
At San Francisco General Hospital
Nurse Maggie holds out hope
Just a shot away

Maggie pulls up my sleeve
And the sleeves of my Pandemic Partners
Poking us with the COVID-19 Phizer vaccine.
65 and over, San Francisco residents
Can walk-in from 9 to 3,
Building 30, San Francisco General Hospital.

"We're aiming for herd immunity" a friendly
masked nurse directing inoculation traffic
Says with smiling eyes
San Francisco
March 15, 2021